

**“Where the Otters Play,” “Horseshoe Bay,” “Footprint” and Beyond:  
Spatial and Temporal Considerations of Hydroelectric Energy Production in Northern  
Manitoba**

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## Abstract

Manitoba Hydro is a public utility located in Manitoba and operates a vast hydroelectric network in Manitoba. Energy produced in northern Manitoba is carried south through an intricate web of transmission towers, lines and other facilities. The vast hydroelectric network throughout Manitoba cuts across many indigenous territories and the regions discussed within this study in northern Manitoba are the homelands of *Ith-in-e-wuk* (Cree peoples). The histories and timelines discussed as part of this study point to widespread and far-reaching implications and impacts related to energy production in northern Manitoba.

A number of indigenous communities in northern Manitoba have experienced micro (individual) and macro (collective) impacts related to the production of hydro power and many *Ith-in-e-wuk* have experienced impacts on their lands, livelihoods and in their communities. Thus, many places, sites and histories have been greatly affected.

This study aims to chart a chronology of hydroelectric energy production in northern Manitoba. It also seeks to inscribe a critical perspective concerning hydroelectric energy production in northern Manitoba and aims to carry forward the decolonizing traditions, ushered in by the Cree who became the Northern Flood Committee in the mid 1970's.

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### Glossary of Cree terms:

*As-ki*: typically translated as or denotes “the land;” “includes all living things such as the animals, the plants, the trees, the fish, *the rivers, the lakes*, and including the rocks. *Askiy* also includes our concept of the sky world” (Young, 2017).

*Cha-pan*: (translation) “great-grandparent.”

*Ith-in-ne-si-win*: (translation) “living in the way of *Ith-in-e-wuk*;” “Cree way of life or being.”

*Ith-in-e-wuk*: (translation) “the people” or “people;” may also appear as “*Ith-in-e-wuk*.”

*Mi-tho pi-ma-tis-i-win*: (translation) “a good life.”

*Misi-pa-wi-stik*: (translation) “grand rapids”; Cree place name for “Grand Rapids.”

*Neetha*: (translation) “me.”

*Ni-he-tho-we-wuk*: (translation) “people who speak with the four winds.”

*Ni-he-tho Isk-wew*: (translation) “Cree speaking woman.”

*Ni-ka-wi*: (translation) “my mother.”

*Ni-pi*: (translation) “water.”

*Ni-si-cha-way-a-si*: Cree place name for lands/territory surrounding Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation.

*Ni-wah-ko-man-o-wuk*: “our relations” (Young, 2017).

*Noo-ta-wi*: (translation) “my father.”

*O-chi-ni-win*: “consequences when we break our natural laws” (Young, 2017).

*O-te-tis-ke-win*: (translation) “footprint.”

*O-na-si-chik-e-wina*: “our sacred laws” (Young, 2017).

*Pas-to-win*: “consequences when we break our natural laws” (Young, 2017).

*Pimicikamak*- Cree place name for the community known as Cross Lake.

*Tataskweyak*- place name for the Cree First Nation now known as Split Lake; “split lake.”

*Ti-pi-ni-sim-o-win*: own[ing] ourselves (Young, 2017); power and to make and enact decisions.



*Wa-ko-to-win*: “how we relate to one another” (Young, 2017).

*Wa-Ni-Ska-Tan*: (translation) to “rise up” or “wake up.”

*Wa-pa-si*: Cree (*Ni-si-cha-way-a-si*) place name for Leftrook Lake.

*We-sah-ke-chak*: an important Cree cultural icon; has also been referred to as the “trickster.”

**List of Acronyms:**

AFP- Augmented Flow Program

CASIL- Community Association of South Indian Lake

*CIA- Comprehensive Implementation Agreement*

CRD- Churchill River Diversion Project

LWR- Lake Winnipeg Regulation

*MIA- Master Implementation Agreement*

*NFA- Northern Flood Agreement*

NCN- *Nisichawayasihk* Cree Nation

NFC- Northern Flood Committee

NWCN- Norway House Cree Nation

OPCN- *O-Pipon-Na-Piwin* Cree Nation

SIL- South Indian Lake

TCN- *Tataskweyak* Cree Nation

WPLP- *Wuskwatim* Power Limited Partnership

***“Elders have been telling us for years that in order to move ahead we have to know where we are in the present and where we have been. Once you are grounded in the present and the past, you can move forward”***

*(Dumas, 2013, Introduction).*

***“To tell you this story I need to go back in time, back to memory”***

*(Kovach, 2009, p. 3).*

## Nanaskoomowina

*Na-nas-ko-mo-wi-na* derives from the Cree term “*na-nas-ko-mo-win*” which means “to be thankful” or “to give thanks.” *Na-nas-ko-mo-wi-na*, loosely translates as “to those who I give thanks” or “acknowledgement” and can be used as a way to express or denote one’s gratitude.

It is important to begin this study by giving thanks and acknowledging the many *ith-in-e-wuk* from the study region described in this study, in northern Manitoba, who helped shape my ideas about the subject matter contained herein, who helped contribute to my critical thought processes and who, in their own ways, taught me about “being” Cree.

Over the last decade I have befriended and been befriended by many people who demonstrated a willingness to share their respective stories, experiences, histories and complex forms of knowledge, and I am deeply indebted and inspired by their courage, kindness, humility, generosity and showing me *ith-in-ne-se-win* in practice. I am grateful for the words of encouragement in the various forms they have taken, when I have been in need of them, and I am also grateful for the gentle nudges that compelled me to think critically.

I am particularly grateful to *ith-in-e-wuk* like Noah and others from Fox Lake, who, in addition to sharing stories of Hydro’s footprint and impacts in their territory, have shared important and rich histories relating to Fox Lake and to histories that include my maternal grandmother. The stories and renderings of community experiences and histories have been invaluable. Thank you for making me feel like this history was (is) also a part of mine. Robert and Melanie of *Tataskweyak* demonstrated tangible and pragmatic examples of what courage, humility, love for the land and the community looks and feels like at a grassroots level and in a contemporary context.

Gerald, a longtime friend, has shared some the best “one-liners” (along with some of the

funniest stories) I have encountered in Cree country. His incredible and visionary genius is also noteworthy. Betty Lou taught me much about indigenous womanhood and the importance of family and community (which is a topic that warrants a study in its own right). Eugenie has given me the gift of friendship and *wa-koo-too-win* and has spent many hours listening to my progress and findings. Eugenie, like many other *Ith-in-e-wuk* I have met along this journey, carries a passion for land/water/culture/people. *Ki-na- nas-ko-mi-ti-na-wow mis-ta-heh*, I am immensely thankful.

I met Mr. Nelson Miller in March of 2004 during my first expression of public “dissent” as it related to the Wuskwatim “Partnership” at that time. Mr. Miller’s teachings and insights continue to inform my thoughts and musings on the subject matter discussed in these pages. Mr. William Osborne and Tommy Monias, though they probably do not know it, have also shaped a number of my thoughts on the subject matter. The individuals noted directly above hail from Pimicikamak, and together, these remarkable individuals have informed and contributed to my growing and critical views concerning contemporary expressions, exercises of, and resistance to colonialism in our homelands, particularly where the production of hydroelectricity is concerned and I thank them for sharing their knowledge and insights with me.

To my advisory committee: *ke-sta ki-na-nas-ko-mi-ti-na-wow* (I am also thankful to you). I am indebted to your patience and appreciated your words of encouragement throughout this long journey; the ways you pushed me to think critically, explain or elaborate on themes or perspectives I brought to the page helped shape and frame the dialogue and the study that appears in these pages. The “hands on” learning and opportunities that you have provided or facilitated have also been invaluable. I would also like to acknowledge the academic will and encouragement you carried with me into this journey; your understanding and confidence

allowed me to reach into and draw upon the teachings, principles and methodologies from within my own indigenous community and as a *ne-he-tho isk-wew* (Cree woman) respectively.

My intermittent and extended absences throughout this study have undoubtedly been difficult for my family and my little ones. I am indebted to each of you for allowing me to pursue this work as I endeavored to seek out people stories, *as-ki* (land) stories, *ni-pi* (water) stories and stories of decolonization in the homelands of our ancestors. *Ki-sah-ke-ti-na-wow mis-ta-hih*.

It is important for a brief moment here to acknowledge the lives and being of my maternal and paternal grandparents, as well as my maternal *cha-pan* (my great-grandmother) Jean McDonald (nee *Ke-we-tin*). The lives of these remarkable people began much the same way: they were born on the land and lived on the land with their families (until those moments described below which disrupted their lives). Contemporary expressions and the tangibility of settler-colonialism in their respective lives and histories, including the residential school experience for at least one of them, would influence and affect the outcomes of their lives in very different ways and to varying degrees. Although I did not know my paternal grandparents, I am thankful to them and recognize and acknowledge the kinship carried through them.

Admittedly, I know very little about my paternal grandparents. My paternal grandfather, Eli, along with his children, were directly impacted by a number of government policies that were ultimately aimed at assimilating First Nations and included the now infamous residential school system. If his residential school experience was anything like those that have been documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a small part of me is grateful for not knowing the details of his time at Elkhorn Residential School. I have been told that he was removed from his home and family at *Tataskweyak*, and taken by train to Elkhorn Residential School where he would spend many years. I have been told by those who knew him that he had difficulty

adjusting once his time at the school was over and that the institutionalization had impacted him. Not surprising.

My paternal grandfather would eventually join the Canadian army and the efforts of World War II, which of course for him, as “treaty Indian,” meant enfranchisement (which is perhaps another story for another time). I share a bit of his story and history here because the study and critical enquiry contained in these pages represents *a turn away* from the kind of education that was thrust upon my grandfather, his parents, his community and indigenous families and communities like his, which was damaging to its core.

I know even less about my paternal grandmother Elizabeth (nee Anderson) other than she was born at York Factory, she raised her young family across the tracks near the town now known as Gillam, in northern Manitoba, and she liked to laugh. I am sure that she grew up on the land and experienced the land as her ancestors did, first at and around York Factory and later, on the lands and on the waterways near what is now the town of Gillam.

When I left *Nisichawayasihk* to pursue an education I was completely unsure where that path would take me or what it could represent and although I lacked direction, vision, and was not able to fully comprehend the implications of obtaining an education (in a Western sense) in those early years, I believe that the Treaty elders of long ago knew the emancipation and power attached to an education *complemented by and grounded in Ith-in-e-se-win* (emphasis added).

A cursory reading of texts pertaining to treaty and treaty negotiations, particularly as they relate to education, indicates that early indigenous leaders understood the importance of access to education (Ray, Miller, Tough, 2000). The efforts of early treaty makers, together with efforts of contemporary indigenous leaders, underscores the degree to which indigenous peoples understood and understand the importance of education as decolonizing tool.

Indigenous peoples and contemporary indigenous scholars can and have expanded upon the critical indigenous theories, praxes, teachings and perspectives that locate, challenge and/or reject colonial ideologies and practices that seek to oppress us. Such insights have been articulated to varying degrees and forms by indigenous scholars such as Smith (1999), LaRocque (2010), Simpson (2011), Coulthard (2014) and Kovach (2009), among others. It is my hope that I can carry forward in their footsteps.

The leaders from long ago entrenched access to education in the Treaty texts, and this was a gift to their descendants (to us): they recognized the power of *learning about* the processes and mechanics of settlers' doctrines and pathways. I believe that they knew and understood the importance of learning the mechanics and ideologies associated with the settlers' systems which were imposing themselves rapidly throughout our territories so we could recognize and confront them in culturally appropriate ways.

Resistance, resurgence and decolonization, is necessarily tied to learning the languages and mechanics of the colonizer at the highest levels. For me, access to education is critical to confronting the effects of colonization as well as the "psychology of colonization" (LaRocque, 2010, p. 6). Treaty elders knew the importance of studying and learning the mechanisms and systems of the colonizers which now includes the language of the academy, the language of the policy makers, the language of law makers and the language of dam builders.

Contesting the ideas, processes and consequences of colonialism necessarily entails acquiring a degree of understanding relating to broad political, social, cultural and economic forces at play where indigenous peoples are concerned, and for me, this study represents a fruition of the vision of the Treaty elders who, during Treaty making eras, demanded access to education. I hope I have understood their teachings, as it has been captured and reproduced in



various texts, and I hope my pathway here honors their visions.

*Ith-in-e-wuk* in northern Manitoba have important stories to tell and these stories concern our numerous encounters with colonialism and our own efforts at decolonization. Indeed, as Dr. LaRocque (2010) writes, “Native writers are an extraordinary group of people whose critical, creative, and life writings have, until recently, been ignored or relegated to ethnographic and personal ‘narratives,’ which, if read differently, actually contain much anti-colonial theory, or, at least, much theoretical possibility” (p.12).

The educational experiences and outcomes between my grandfather and myself are, thankfully, disparate. I take this opportunity to recognize his experiences, his encounters with colonialism, the outcomes of these encounters, and particularly the outcomes associated with his residential school days and the struggles stemming from that experience, and dedicate this study to his memory and offer it as a testament to the resilience, strength and power of our communities, our cultures and our indigenous languages. The teachings and experiences of our ancestors persevered through our languages, our ceremonies, and through the use of our lands and were carried forward in spite of repeated and ongoing attempts at assimilation. Their spirit and their resolve live on in the stories, teachings, values and histories which have found their ways into pages like these.

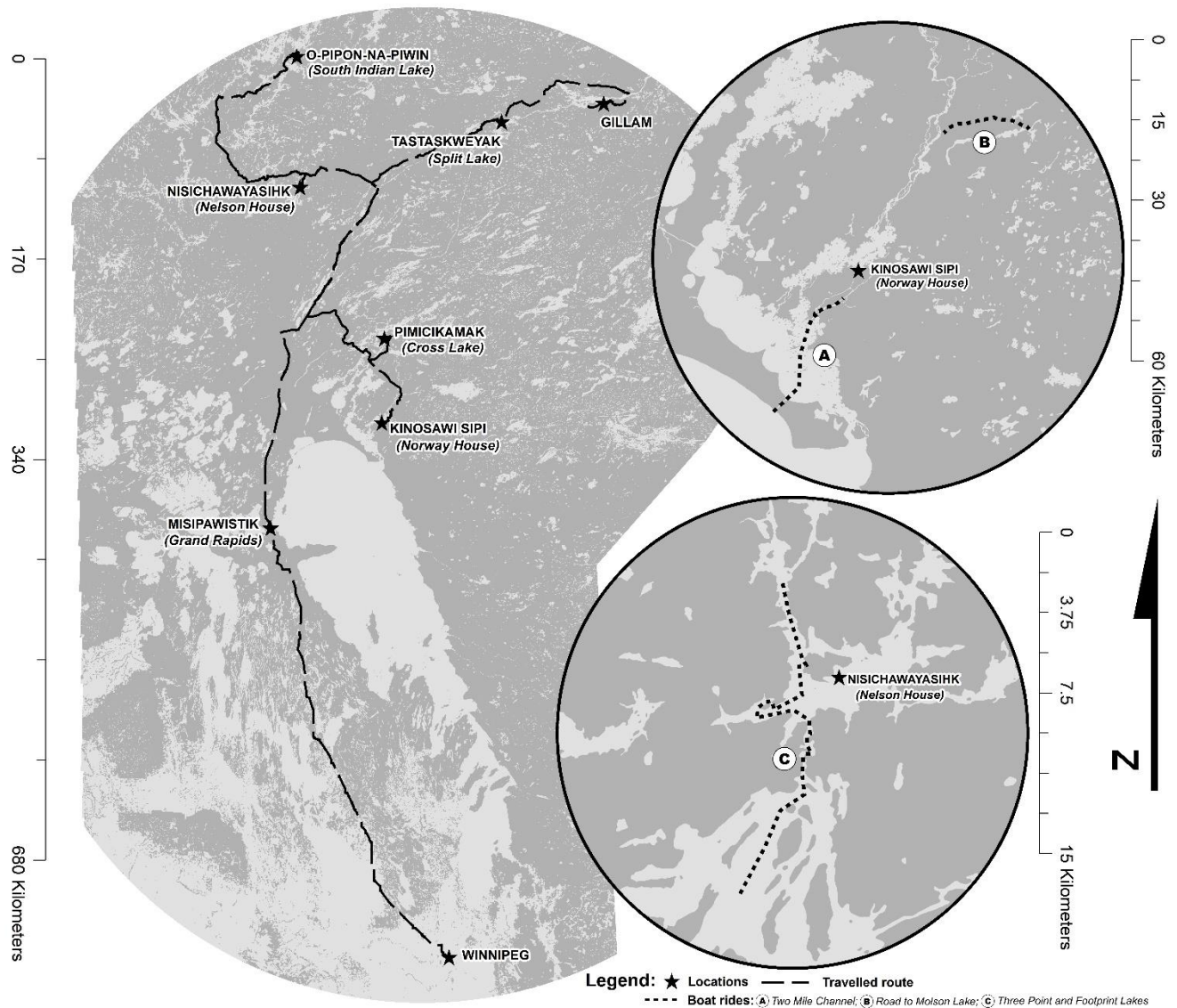
I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) who provided me with a generous doctoral award to undertake this study. The Manitoba Research Alliance (MRA) also provided support and through this support, I had the opportunity to “flush-out” ideas related to my research. The *Wa Ni Ska Tan* alliance, a relatively new research group consisting of indigenous grassroots peoples, including Hydro-affected Cree, university researchers and non-government organizations, also

provided assistance as well as much needed moral support which helped me complete this study.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support I received from the Nelson House Education Authority, now known as *Nisichawayasihk Nehetho* Culture and Education Authority Inc. in my community of *Nisichawayasihk*. Many administrators have passed through their doors since beginning this scholarly endeavor and the words of encouragement and support from staff and various administrators has been invaluable.

It is my hope that this study generates curiosity and that the curiosity will lead to further questions and enquires about the many issues related to the production of electricity in northern Manitoba discussed and described in these pages.

*Ekosi. Ki-na-nas-ko-mi-ti-na-wow.*



**Figure P.1: 2016 *Wa Ni Ska Tan* “Hydro Tour” Route<sup>a</sup>**  
**Image Credit: Grima, 2017a. Used with permission.**

<sup>a</sup> “Projected Coordinate System: North American Datum (NAD) 1983, Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM), Zone 14N. Data Sources: Natural Resources Canada, GeoGratis Application. (n.d.) CanVec. Retrieved 2016: <http://geogratis.gc.ca/api/en/nrcan-rncan/ess-sst/23387971-b6d3-4ded-a40b-c8e832b4ea08.html>; Google Earth. Retrieved 2017; Grima, V. GPS tracks (personal information) 2016.”

## Prologue

*The idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities, is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary indigenous life. It is very much a part of the fabric of communities that value oral ways of knowing. These contested accounts are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that so many people carried. The means by which these histories were stored and through their system of knowledge. Many of these systems have since been reclassified as oral traditions rather than histories” (Emphasis in original. Smith, 1999, p.33).*

As will be discussed in the following chapter I am from an indigenous community in northern Manitoba that has experienced and continues to experience the impacts of hydroelectric production occurring throughout the region. My familial lineage connects me, genealogically, to a number of Cree territories and communities in northern Manitoba; these same communities and the territories and landscapes within these territories are connected by a recent presence, one that has little to do with Cree kinship or Cree culture: Hydro.

This study is grounded in indigenous methodologies. This methodology lends itself to the “auto-ethnographic” methodological approach taken herein, which is described later in this study, and together these approaches allow for a critical review of the impacts generated by the production of hydropower in northern Manitoba. The many stories and histories encountered on my academic quest point to the multi-dimensional impacts of energy production in northern Manitoba.

A boat ride along affected waterways, or a journey over or through the land in the study region discussed in chapters to follow, would quickly reveals the degree to which the territory, and *Ith-in-e-wuk*, have been affected by energy production. oral histories of indigenous peoples and communities within the study region speak to ways they have experienced the many

disruptions imported in the name of energy production. In some instances, our genealogies have also become sites we use to discuss impacts and effects.

Like the many Cree who inhabit the territories in northern Manitoba, the landscapes and waterways have also been deeply scarred by the production of hydropower. In many ways it represents a case study of a contemporary colonial encounter. As will become evident throughout this study, Cree histories and futures have been affected by government decisions and developers' plans.

The latest encounters between Hydro developers and several Cree communities in northern Manitoba, briefly described in chapter four, appear to signal a shift away from the unilateral approaches that were characteristic of the earliest encounters between hydroelectric developers and Cree in northern Manitoba. The newest agreements, also briefly described in chapter four, which allowed developers to grow the hydroelectric network, appear more equitable and conciliatory than agreements reached in earlier eras of dam building. A closer view, however, reveals a more complicated story.

Ultimately, this study examines aspects of the history related to the production of hydroelectricity in northern Manitoba. It will explore the spatial and temporal histories and realities concerning the production of hydroelectricity in the homelands of the Cree. Specific objectives related to this study will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter and it should be noted here, at the onset of this study, that other indigenous communities, such as Sagkeeng First Nation located south-east of Grand Rapids on the Winnipeg River, have also felt the impacts of hydroelectric energy production.

The experiences and histories of communities like Sagkeeng are important but because this study is concerned with Hydro histories and experiences of Cree communities' in northern

Manitoba, *north* of Grand Rapids, the stories, histories and experiences of indigenous communities' south of Grand Rapids affected by hydroelectric developers, do not appear here simply because they fall outside the study region.

Following the methodological approach of Plains-Cree/Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2009), who in turn builds upon the methodological approach from Maori scholar, Graham Smith, I begin this study with a prologue. Kovach writes:

“A prologue is a function of narrative writing that signifies a prelude. It encompasses essential information for the reader to make sense of the story to follow. While not every written narrative needs a prologue, it can be a useful device. Within Indigenous writing, a prologue structures space for introductions while serving a bridging function for non-Indigenous readers. It is a precursory signal to the careful reader that woven throughout the varied forms of our writing – analytical, reflective, expository – there will be story, for our story is who we are” (p. 3-4).

### **Some Stories**

These introductory musings reflect my own encounters and forays into territories and waterways affected by production of hydroelectricity. As such, this occasion may be slightly protracted but aligned with with story-telling practices and customs of my indigenous community. Over the course of more than a decade, I have journeyed to several Hydro-affected communities in northern Manitoba and have learned about the ways peoples, lands, waters and waterways have been impacted as a result of the production of hydroelectricity.

Figure P.1. depicts various routes I traveled during the many research trips to Hydro-affected communities during this research. These travels took me through Hydro-affected lands and on Hydro-affected waterways. Though the map does not capture the full breadth of the routes traveled in the last decade or so, it depicts routes journeyed in 2016 when colleagues and I traveled north. An important objective of this particular research trip was to acquire images and

photographs of Hydro-affected lands and waterways; our first stop was *Misipawistik*: “where the otters play.”

“*Misi*” is a Cree term meaning “grand” or “large” and is typically used as a prefix. The English term “colossal” might also adequately describe the meaning attached to or conveyed by this term. “*Pawistik*” is the Cree term for “rapids.” Amalgamating these terms results in “*Misipawistik*,” and refers to “big” or “grand” “rapids.” As such, *Misipawistik* is the term used by the Cree to describe the powerful rapids that once flowed past the community of the same name. That is, *Misipawistik* is the Cree place name for the First Nation once known as Grand Rapids in central Manitoba.

Along on this trip were two experienced and talented videographers and another graduate student. We talked and we visited with our friend Gerald at Grand Rapids who also served as our “guide” on this leg of our research trip. At one point during our visit, my colleagues wandered into the bush and were focused on collecting pictorial data. It was a warm and beautiful fall day with a nice breeze. Gerald and I walked toward a path and then onward toward a slight ridge; this ridge, I would learn during our walk, was the shoreline that once contained the powerful Saskatchewan River.

My friend and I stood at the embankment. This was where a powerful river once raged, surged and flowed, past ancient tree lines; in their grandeur, the rapids would have once emptied into the waters of Lake Winnipeg. We stood at a spot at the south bank of the now hollow expanse. Another slight ridge was visible to the north of where we stood. Gerald pointed across the empty shrub filled expanse and motioned to a small area on the opposite embankment. He told me a story: as a child he traveled up the river in a boat with his family. A small slope caught

his eye during this brief boat ride up the rapids. He asked about the area that caught his eye, asking what it was. The reply was: “that’s where the otters play” (McKay, 2016).

Grand Rapids has a rich cultural history like many other indigenous communities in Manitoba. It also contains an important history in terms of colonial history in Canada because the Saskatchewan river, which lies between the town of Grand Rapids and the First Nation known as *Misipawistik*, served as a water route or gateway into western Canada. A historic tramway was operated for many years at Grand Rapids and remnants of this historic site can still be seen in the community today. Early Canadian settlers and entrepreneurs used the tramway to move goods up and down the Saskatchewan River, alongside the once mighty and imposing rapids.

Unbeknownst to many peoples in Manitoba, Grand Rapids and *Misipawistik*, was the site of another historic “milestone” in that it was the site of the first major hydroelectric generating station to be constructed within the province of Manitoba. Completion of this station ushered in “new” possibilities and opportunities.

Construction of the Grand Rapids Generating Station began in 1960 and was completed in 1968 (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.; Waldram, 1988, p. 85). Waldram (1988) and York (1990) provide informative and respective accounts relating to history, impacts and implications of this particular generating station in the lives of indigenous peoples and communities situated behind the dam, notably Easterville (Chemawawin) and Moose Lake. As a result of the construction of this generating station, Grand Rapids, together with Easterville, were among the first indigenous (Cree) community in the northerly regions of Manitoba to experience Manitoba Hydro on a large scale.

As I stood there with Gerald that fall day looking upon what had once been the grand rapids at *Misipawistik*, I thought about another journey we had taken earlier in the week which



took us to other Hydro-affected lands father north. Earlier that week we spent time with elder Noah Massan. Noah lives in Gillam, is from Fox Lake Cree Nation, and grew up on the land near Gillam and made trips with his family to York Factory. Noah's trapline is deep in Cree territory and lies near the town now known as Gillam, Manitoba. The lands and water around Gillam has also been ravaged by the production of hydroelectricity.

That day, standing there with Gerald, I also recalled a research trip that a group of mostly southerners, took earlier that same year (in June). This particular trip has since become dubbed the "Hydro tour" because participants journey into lands and waterways that have been directly impacted by hydro developers. The Hydro tours typically begin at Grand Rapids because it has become somewhat of a tradition to commence the Hydro tour here at "ground zero" (McKay, 2016). Gerald, our unofficial guide and occasional but very welcoming host explained during one of the many trips, that he uses the term "ground zero" because Grand Rapids is the place where large scale dam building began in Manitoba.

As I stood at the ridge gazing across the vast expanse with Gerald in the fall of 2016, I thought back to June "Hydro tour" which commenced at Grand Rapids. We visited, enjoyed fresh and locally prepared pickerel and our group had the opportunity to see the lands and sites near what had once been the *misipawistik* (the powerful and grand rapids). We heard stories about the two communities at Grand Rapids, the First Nation and the municipality, and learned about the various impacts related to the construction of the Grand Rapids Generating Station which had occurred more than five decades prior.

After our fill of fish, stories and a "tour" of the impacted lands at Grand Rapids, our group carried on and arrived at Norway House Cree Nation (NWCN). On this particular leg of the trip we "toured" Play Green and Molson lakes located near Norway House Cree Nation.

At Norway House we spent part of our morning with Band officials, local resource users, elders and other community members at an informal meeting in the council chambers of the Norway House Cree Nation. Again, as in Grand Rapids, one objective of our visit was to learn first hand about Hydro impacts on the lands, waters and



**Figure P.2: 2016 Hydro Tour: Pictographs at Molson Lake. Image Credit: Personal Photo (2016).**

Cree livelihoods in northern Manitoba. Once the tour was finished, the visitors from the south learned about the impacts and devastation generated by hydroelectric industry presence in the north. Perhaps more importantly, we learned about indigenous grassroots resiliency and determination.

While at Norway House, we were treated to a boat ride on Molson Lake. This outing provided our group with an opportunity to view ancient “rock paintings” or pictographs at Molson Lake. This brief excursion at Molson Lake also provided our group an important counter view to the environmental devastation we would witness on the remainder through Hydro affected lands and waterways in the north. For this brief stretch, our group would travel on lands and waters untouched by Hydro.

The time spent at Molson Lake affirmed what older generations of Cree in northern Manitoba speak about when they reflect on the loss of the land’s beauty and the pristine state of the water; indeed, the land is (must have been) beautiful These generations experienced and

knew a world *before* Hydro (emphasis added); my generation and generations following mine, who are born into world affected by Hydro— *after* Hydro, will never experience or know the land or water the way our parents, grandparents and great grandparents did.

In northern Manitoba, *Ithinewuk* speak of Hydro as a tangible entity. In the north, the production of hydroelectricity is not simply viewed or understood as an inert or abstract activity or event. For many Hydro affected *Ithinewuk*, Hydro is an experience, a tangible process that has caused and continues to affect change on and in the water, the land and to the livelihoods of indigenous peoples within the north.

Following our boat ride to the pictographs near Norway House, our small group traveled on the waters of Playgreen Lake. On this boat tour we experienced the “2 Mile Channel.” 2 Mile Channel is an artificial, that is to say a “manmade,” channel that was carved through a section of land which acted as a natural buffer between Lake Winnipeg and Playgreen Lake to the north and is described in greater detail in chapter three. 2 Mile Channel is one of several “diversion channels” created in northern waterways by Manitoba Hydro. The channels located throughout the north have been blasted and excavated through naturally occurring tracks of land and/or rock. They are not natural straights; these channels are effectively designed to aid the regulation and water flows from various lakes and tributaries in northern Manitoba.

Playgreen Lake is affected by the project known as Lake Winnipeg Regulation and according to industry “Lake Winnipeg Regulation is a key to hydropower development on the Nelson River... [it] provides more reliable flows from the lake for generating stations on the Nelson River in northern Manitoba” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.g).



**Figure P.3: 2 Mile Channel. A view toward Lake Winnipeg.  
Source: Personal Photo (2016).**

2 Mile Channel is one of three channels created by Manitoba Hydro to “bypass natural constrictions in the Nelson River” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.e). Industry’s description of the channel holds that: “2-Mile Channel: helps to ‘unplug’ Lake Winnipeg by augmenting the natural outlet at Warren Landing. The channel cuts across the narrowest point of land between the north end of Lake Winnipeg and Playgreen Lake, about 10 km northwest of Warren Landing. The bottom width of the channel averages 112 metres” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.e). In other words, a channel was cut through a stretch of land that naturally separated Playgreen Lake from Lake Winnipeg. The 2 Mile Channel allowed Hydro to artificially increase the water flows from Lake Winnipeg into Playgreen and then eventually onward into the Nelson River system.

During the Hydro tour in 2016 generations crossed paths over Playgreen Lake. Although our paths would cross more than a century apart, it was a powerful reckoning realizing that my family, and families like mine, traveled these waters. That my grandmother’s grandfather traveled these same waters without the contemporary luxuries of outboard motors and aluminum boats, like those we used that day, made this realization all the more remarkable. That summer day was the first time I traveled on Playgreen but I quickly recognized its importance to me at an

individual level but also knew the rich cultural heritage tied to the waters and waterways like Playgreen Lake in northern Manitoba.

Samuel Gaudin and his wife, Anna, were missionaries in Nisichawayasihk (Nelson House), Tataskweyak (Split Lake) and Pimicikamak (Cross Lake) in the early 1900's. Both Anna and Samuel left rich descriptions about their time with the Cree in two distinct and respective accounts of their time in the north. Mr. Gaudin penned a memoir of the decades spent in proselytizing and living in northern Manitoba while Mrs. Gaudin's experiences were captured in a biographical manuscript penned by Nan Shipley (1955).

The writings as shared in the works of the two Gaudins offer valuable insights into the livelihoods, character and culture of the indigenous peoples with whom they worked. Their narratives also leave descriptive accounts of the arduous and treacherous routes traveled as they journeyed from community to community. The texts also provide glimpses of the Cree boatmen and laborers who journeyed with the Gaudins. One such laborer was my great, great, great grand father Adam Spence.

As our boat swayed along, sputtered, and eventually stalled, on Playgreen Lake, I could not help but recall the travels described by Reverend Gaudin which included my great, great, great grandfather Adam. Gaudin and my grandfather likely traveled past the very same lands, over the same waters we had just passed, en route to Warren's Landing but our views would be remarkably disparate. The pristine lands, waterways, along with a number of the waterfalls, that they would have travelled over, through and around to reach Norway House are likely no longer in the state they had been when my *cha-pan* (great grand-parent) had seen them. Lands have been flooded, entire islands have disappeared, and vast amounts of shoreline have eroded along the breath of the Churchill Diversion (CRD) and Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) systems.

As our tour group arrived at and traveled through 2 Mile Channel, I thought of my great grandfather: surely the suggestion that such a large parcel of land would be disappeared, at that spot, would have been absurd to him. The day before having this moment at Playgreen Lake and 2 Mile, I had *sat at the bottom* of the emptied riverbed of the once mighty Saskatchewan River. Again, the Cree a century ago, the generation of my great great great grandfather, would have found this feat ridiculous, laughable even: that a single corporation could alter the landscape and waterways to the degree that it has and does.

In another moment during one of my numerous research trips to northern Manitoba in 2016, I found myself standing on the riverbank near one of the latest proposed sites, Conawapa, with Noah. The landscape was ablaze with colors of fall and the air was cool and damp. Behind us stood a fully functioning and well equipped construction camp. I had met Noah a couple of years earlier during the Keeyask Clean Environment Commission (CEC) hearings which were held in the far away southern metropolis of Winnipeg, a place far from where we stood that cool and damp fall day. Noah and I stood there, at the banks of the Nelson River, downstream from the large generating stations.

Noah, knew my grandparents and family from Fox Lake, and as we stood there I asked him if our families traveled along the that same river where. His reply: “yes.” He told me earlier in the day, while driving over the Limestone Generating Station, that his grandparents would remind him: “*Ka na wa-ni-ki- ki-si ki-min-ni-kwa-kun*” (don’t forget your cup) as they prepared to get into boats to journey on the water (2016). Noah and his family drank right out of the river: it was that clean. After asking if his family, or mine, would have traveled this river, Noah replied affirmatively: they would travel this river to get to the trading post known as York Factory, the place of my maternal grandmother’s birth. He told me that once you get closer to “the Bay,” the

smell of salt water hits your nose. He also said small marine mammals used to travel near where we stood.

In the same way that Gerald pointed across what was once a mighty river at Grand Rapids, Noah pointed across the Nelson to a large concave opposite to where we stood. He explained that the local people call(ed) that place “Horseshoe Bay” because of the shape and the landmark was created by moving winds. Standing there with Noah, I looked at the waters flowing past us. Again, I reflected on the stories, community histories and experiences tied to the water that flowed past us. I also thought of the ways of my familial genealogies were connected by and through the water. It was as though the heritage and histories of my maternal and paternal lines converged, metaphorically, in the water that flowed past us. No longer was it just genealogy that connected me to Fox Lake, Split Lake and NCN, Hydro’s generating stations and transmission lines also connected our histories and futures.

As I stood there with Noah, I thought of my families and the communities and territories they came from; their respective and contemporary collective histories converged in the waters that flowed past us: my mother’s family lived and relied on the waters farther up the system, near where the waters flowed into the Burntwood River. These waters eventually empty into the Nelson River. These waters then flowed not far from my paternal grandfather’s community at Split Lake and carried on past the community of *noo-ta-wi* (my father) and emptied near the birthplace of my paternal grandmother (York Factory). The water that I looked upon that day with Noah was attached to rich community and cultural histories. Our local stories and histories *are contained in the waterways and landscapes* (Emphasis mine. Kulchyski, 2005). In that moment of reflection, I was immediately troubled by the quick realization that this site could

possibly, be destroyed along with “Horseshoe Bay” if the project known as Conawapa is ever constructed.

For many *Ithinewuk* in northern Manitoba, our connections to and with the land and water are longstanding and deep. Hydro, its history, including the ways it has changed the water and the landscapes throughout the region, is not. Ours is a history that has been deeply affected and interrupted by various encounters with colonialism. Most recently, our colonial histories have been connected by and through the hydroelectric power that is produced in the region.



## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Neetha (Me)**

I am a woman from an indigenous community in northern Manitoba characterized as “Cree.” We know ourselves to be *Ithinewuk*, which roughly translates as “the people” or “people,” or *Nih-itho-we-wuk* (*Nihithowewuk*) is another term that is used to describe *Ithinewuk* and refers specifically to the language spoken by *Ithinewuk*. I have been told that a deep translation of the word refers to interconnectedness or wholeness of the being and the ability to speak as a whole being: from the heart, mind, soul and body<sup>1</sup> (Hart, 2016). Officially registered at Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), myself, my eldest children and my grandson are members of this “Indian” “Band.” We share a rich and deep history on the lands and waters in our territory with people from our community and throughout the territory. My mother’s “nuclear” family made the long and grueling journeys to Wuskwatim Lake during the warm months in her childhood and in her adolescence. Wuskwatim was the “fish camp.” Her “extended” families lived in camps at *Wapasi*, Leftrook Lake.

My paternal grandmother was from the First Nation which has taken the name Fox Lake Cree Nation and my paternal grandfather was from *Tataskweyak*, also known as Split Lake. *Noo-ta-wi*, my father, is a member of the Fox Lake Cree Nation and had lived with his family in the area around Gillam during his childhood. Through him, our family has a history that connects us to the people, land and water in and around the Gillam area. My father and his family had rich histories, connections and relationships to and with the lands and waters up and down river from

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<sup>1</sup> The terms as they appear here are phonetic renderings of the Cree terms as they have been shared with me. I acknowledge that these spellings and renderings may deviate from the more common spelling of these terms and I have opted to use phonetic renderings so as to retain and utilize the dialect specific terms and terminologies from my home community. I would like to acknowledge and thank Mr. and Mrs. Donald and Phyllis Hart who have spent countless hours patiently and generously translating and teaching me the about the meaning, teachings and philosophies contained in our language.

where Noah and I stood that fall day, across from Horseshoe Bay (which was described in the previous chapter).

Until quite recently my parents, their parents, their parents and so on, relied almost exclusively on the lands and waters within our homelands for their sustenance. *Oteteskiwin* (footprint) Lake blankets my community. My family, extended family, and families like mine, along with the land, water and wildlife, have been and continue to be deeply affected by waves and successive waves of colonial incursions dating as far back as the fur trade. The fur trade history, including some of its effects on Cree lives and livelihoods in northern Manitoba, have been documented in the works of Brightman (2007), Ray (1998) and Tough (1997), among others. The Hydro history is now coming into focus and this, along with the various waves of colonial incursions that occur and continue to occur in northern Manitoba could be said to represent colonialism and/or “settler colonialism” in a contemporary context.

In the recent past, the indigenous communities in northern Manitoba, like so many other indigenous and Cree communities in this country, have been deeply impacted by energy development. In Manitoba this energy production takes the form of hydroelectric power and has been touted as “clean” and “green” by developers and others who seek to profit from the hydroelectric energy produced in the very waters that sustained my parents, their grandparents, their grandparents and their grandparents, for generations. This so-called Hydro “development” came rapidly and unexpectedly to the Cree, and it came and continues at the expense of a way of life, our way of life.

Hydro’s impacts in the north have been well documented (see for example McCallum and McCallum, 1975; Waldram, 1993; Tough, 1997; Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources, 1998; Chodkiewicz and Brown 1999, Martin and Hoffman,

2011). Scholarship undertaken as early as the 1970's, not long after the waters were diverted and lands flooded, has clearly demonstrated and pointed to the cultural, political, social and economic impacts of energy production in our territories and perhaps only now can we begin to broadly appreciate and analyze the cultural, political, social, and economic impacts of "green" energy production in northern Manitoba. In the same way that we are only now beginning to learn about devastating impacts of residential schools, perhaps through the rendering of our stories, Manitobans can begin to appreciate, address and correlate the impacts and effects settler-colonialism occurring as a result of energy production in the north.

Telling our stories is a necessary step towards decolonization and emancipating our histories, our lands, our waters and ourselves but LaRocque (2010) reminds us that, "even if, at institutional and constitutional levels, decolonization was achieved, we know that the psychology of colonization lingers centuries after colonialism as an institution has expired. Perhaps more relevant to all Canadians, can we move on when we have barely begun to understand the colonial process, especially as lived and now being recorded by First Nation and Metis peoples?" (p. 6). Can we move on? Of course, but moving forward might entail engagement and frank conversations.

Articulating the community histories and personal experiences attached to narratives the histories of hydroelectric energy production may be painful and challenging, but these stories can be sites of reconciliation and/or "resurgence" (Simpson, 2011) and telling these stories can represent movement towards decolonization and a step toward reclaiming our cultures, languages, and moving toward *pimatisiwin* (towards "living a good life").

Consideration will be given theoretical constructs such as "colonialism," "decolonization," "settler-colonialism," *pimatisiwin*," "stories" and "story telling" in the

following chapter but suffice it to say that stories, and the telling and hearing of these harrowing stories can be difficult but can nonetheless be important to moving forward together.

When beginning my doctoral program many, many, years ago, I knew that I would write about and “research” the production of hydroelectricity in northern Manitoba. I also intuitively knew that work would be positioned within the context of decolonization as described and discussed by Smith (1999). Not only through the inscribing of a history, and a counter narrative as told from the vantage point of the colonized and flooded, this study seeks to move *beyond* the stories and experiences that tell of the varying degrees and types of violence and displacement experienced by *Ith-in-e-wuk* so that we can begin to move toward the type of decolonization alluded to by Mr. Dumas in the first pages of this thesis.

That there are children and young people in our communities who have not experienced the power and spirit of the land and waters, and who know no other way of life than that found in the colonial administrative epicentres known as “reserves,” is disparaging. Telling our stories, however, can represent an opportunity to move *beyond* the telling of the upheaval, displacement and “*how it used to be*” before the flood and a move toward a reawakening, a kind of “resurgence” (Simpson, 2011; Coulthard, 2014) rooted in the land, our language and stories that connect us to our land and to each other.

Since beginning my formal research into the many issues surrounding hydroelectric production and its impacts in northern Manitoba, I have befriended and been befriended by humble, honorable, kind, generous, intelligent, resilient and funny water/land/Cree/cultural champions. I have visited with and traveled to a number of the hydro affected Cree communities in north and have seen devastated landscapes and shorelines that have fallen and continue to fall into rivers and lakes. I have traveled along and on murky waters and have heard many stories and

histories from Hydro affected Cree. The local narratives and histories counter official narratives told in the south about responsible and clean energy production; many communities, landscapes, shorelines and waterways throughout northern Manitoba bear the scars and tell a different story.

I have been to “where the otters play,” “Horseshoe Bay,” “Footprint” and beyond and have witnessed the comprehensive, cumulative and widespread impacts of energy development on our lands, waters, rights and have witnessed the effects on the Cree lives and livelihoods. Families, and communities like mine have experienced the spatial and temporal impacts of Hydro both directly and indirectly and at micro (individual) and macro (community) levels. Equally noteworthy is that I have also witnessed the resiliency, power, strength and generosity of *Ithinewuk* as they forge ahead in spite of the ongoing encounters of colonization.

Nishnaabeg scholar and activist Leanne Simpson (2011) writes, “when resistance is defined solely in political mobilization, we miss much of what has kept our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive. We have those things because our ancestors often acted within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they could to their children, to occupy and use our lands as we always had” (p.16). Indeed, that our cultures, languages, knowledges, histories, ceremonies and customs have survived despite the waves and successive onslaught of government policies, political, economic and social interference, has been the result of the Noah’s, Robert’s, Gerald’s, Hilda’s and countless other *Ithinewuk* out on the land and in the water exercising their rights and living the customs and practices which have had been handed down for generations.

The study that follows represents a relatively short timeframe, when considered relative to the broader historical trajectories of the collective indigenous histories and land use practices in northern Manitoba. While the era discussed in this study spans a mere four decades or so, it is

become an important and distinctive part of the history of indigenous peoples and northern Manitoba because of the abrupt changes to life and livelihood ushered in during this era. This particular saga of “settler” colonialism is beginning to resemble other calamities that have now come into focus on the historical record.

Telling the wider story relating to the production of hydroelectricity in northern Manitoba, and contemplating telling this story, has been agonizing because of the common narratives of displacement, disruption and pain. I have found solace in the language, customs, strength, humour and histories of the people I have encountered. The willingness to share knowledge with me, through interviews and/or through informal talks and visits, has been invaluable and these have been important sources of information.

Public forums such as the Clean Environment Commission Hearings (CEC) or the Public Utility Board (PUB) hearings processes, which themselves can be flawed, are sites or sources of information. On occasion, critical indigenous perspectives in these forums articulate the ways developers have impacted the lives and livelihoods of indigenous peoples in the study region. These records can be sites that house important counter perspectives, stories and histories. A number of *Ith-in-e-wuk* have taken the opportunity to share, on the public record, powerful stories and are thus asserting an important counter narrative and while it is important to note that the records contain a small collection of these counter perspectives and stories, it should be kept in mind that many Hydro-affected Cree have not had such an opportunity (for a variety of reasons).

## **The Study**

Manitoba Hydro is a major crown owned public utility and producer of hydroelectric energy in Manitoba. According to the Crown owned utility “96 per cent of the electricity Manitoba Hydro produces each year – 30 billion kilowatt-hours on average – is clean, renewable power generated at 15 hydroelectric generating stations on the Nelson, Winnipeg, Saskatchewan, Burntwood and Laurie rivers [in northern Manitoba]” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.b). This impressive northern hydroelectric network lies deeply and within the homelands of *Ithinewuk*. Generations of *Ithinewuk* have been and continue to be impacted by this generation.

As already noted, this study is concerned with documenting the pathways and footprints of Manitoba Hydro’s hydroelectric network in northern Manitoba. A related objective of this academic endeavor is to tell the hydro saga in the words and from the vantage point of those peoples who watched the waters rise and shorelines fall. As such, it is intended to “amplify” the voices, stories and perspectives of those on the shorelines of development not typically heard.

As will be outlined in the pages that follow, a number of indigenous peoples and communities who live along and within the project areas discussed in this study, have experienced direct, indirect and abrupt changes to their ways of life. Proponents and the government tend to portray and celebrate the projects as accomplishments in terms of political, technologic and/or engineering advancements (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.j), which may have been the case during early construction phases, but this cannot and should not excuse or downplay the widespread impacts to Cree life and livelihoods in the north.

Reports and scholarly work by McCallum and McCallum (1975), Waldram (1988), Tough (1997), Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources (1998), Chodkiewicz and Brown (1999), and Martin and Hoffman (2011) began the task of describing

and cataloging many components of the expansive Hydro network in northern Manitoba. A critical reading of these documents can point to the ways indigenous communities within the study region have and continue to experience effects from Hydro's physical presence in the region. A number of Cree communities in northern Manitoba can speak to the spatial and/or temporal impacts of hydroelectric energy production occurring in or within the vicinity of their homes, communities or traplines; they have *experienced* Hydro's impacts in tangible ways on their homelands, traplines and/or "camps." Many of these same people can also share narratives of intergenerational impacts.

At the most micro level, examples of the spatial and/or temporal impacts of energy production in northern Manitoba can be observed within individual family units. As noted previously, my maternal family comes from Nisichawayasihk and is more commonly known as Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN). NCN is "Indian Band" number 313 and became such through the Treaty adhesion process related to the making of Treaty Five. The settlement at NCN has become the colonial and administrative epicentre which has seemingly come to define the community since 1908.

Kulchyski (2005) writes that "communities [like Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation], as they are constituted in the north, are relatively recent accommodations and their basic infrastructures are colonial inspirations: the housing designs, the educational systems, the presuppositions of concentrated human occupation at a specific site for a lengthy duration, all come with colonialism" (p.15). Not that long ago, within the last forty to fifty years, families from NCN, including mine, traveled in the waters, journeyed vast expanses and occupied lands within our territories. This branch of my family has directly experienced four generations of Hydro impacts and is evidenced in the formal agreements that have been endorsed by my community.



*Ni-ka-wi*, “my mother,” her mother, her mother and her mother, all of whom I have seen during my lifetime, lived off lands and waters within our territory and raised their families from the land. My mother and her family enjoyed the land as their ancestors had for generations. They did not experience Hydro until the 1970’s. In other words, until the mid seventies, for my mother, her mother, her mother, and her mother, the land and water was pristine; no agreements, no Hydro intrusion, no compensation, then came the flood. In less than four generations the cultural, political, social and economic transformation of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) occurred and rapidly and in ways that would surely trouble my grandparents and great grandparents.

In the span of just over forty years, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, like many other Hydro-affected communities, went through a dramatic and abrupt change. While systems of colonization have been present in the north for centuries (the fur trade, “Indian” Affairs bureaucracy including its agents, residential schools etc.), our families continued to lived off the land and did not, for the most part, have to grapple with contemporary southern economic interests due in part to remote location of the community. While this work will refrain from commenting on political and economic maneuvers used to achieve the fairly recent Hydro deals, suffice it to say that the shift in values and direction that occurred as part of the processes reek of settler colonialism because underlying “colonial domination” remains intact (Coulthard, 2014).

The genealogy, family and community connections on my paternal side, still deep in Cree country, contain more Hydro stories, complete with their own set of Hydro experiences and histories and hence has peaked my interest, academic curiosity and research into the subject matter. *Noo-ta-wi*, my father, a member of the Fox Lake Cree Nation along with his father, a veteran from *Tataskewyak*, have stories which in their own ways link them to the Hydro saga in

northern Manitoba. It is important to include a note here on the geographical boundaries, or rather starting points, used in this work.

“The north” in Manitoba, as marked in these pages, is taken to commence at or after the 53<sup>rd</sup> parallel. More specifically, in this study, the north represents the geography beginning at or past Grand Rapids so as to allow the Grand Rapids Generating Station to be included in this study because, as my friend from Grand Rapids has stated time and again, this is “ground zero.” In the chronology of energy development in Manitoba that follows, Grand Rapids is viewed as the starting point of hydroelectric development in the north despite the fact that Kelsey was technically the first generating station to be constructed in the north (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.c) partly because Kelsey was constructed to meet the needs of the INCO mine located in Thompson.

Many stories, genealogies and histories in northern Manitoba are as interconnected to one another as the transmission lines that dot the landscape. Both sides of my family were and are deeply impacted by energy production and parts of the narrative, reflections and observations that appear here are only one story of many, are not atypical of the experiences many people had.

Storytelling as methodology will be discussed in greater detail later in this work but it is worth noting here that this study actively utilizes and incorporates knowledge transfer as expressed through and contained in “story-telling” practices of our communities because “stories, unlike data, contain the affective legacy of our experiences” (Millon, 2014, p. 31). This study will also draw upon standardized Western based academic traditions (with this work being one example) and will incorporate theories and methodologies rooted in western academic forms and will be discussed in turn in a subsequent chapter. This work will not however, entertain

discourse and discord that challenges the dialectic of storytelling, nor will it provide a stage whereby the practices of storytelling are interrogated or rendered suspect.

Whether told to me, or contained on some public record, stories and experiences *are told* about the contested and virtually unknown history concerning hydroelectric energy production in northern Manitoba. This land, this space, also happens to be the homelands of *Ith-in-e-wuk*. Seeking out narratives in various form is important to this scholarly endeavor because these stories help articulate and locate local impacts and effects of a particular contemporary exercise of power attached to hydroelectric production because:

Issue[s have] been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to *rewriting* and *rerighting* our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a *very powerful need to give testimony to and restore spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying*. The sense of history conveyed by these approaches is *not* the same thing as the discipline of history, and so our accounts collide, crash into each other [sic] (Emphasis added Smith, 1999, p.28).

In this work, storytelling and “listening” (Kulchyski, 2005) is employed as methodology and is meant to assist in documenting and inscribing lesser known (or valued) histories, silenced histories, or in some cases contested histories, concerning the history of energy production in northern Manitoba. In utilizing these stories and narratives, I am keenly aware that “the academy has continually proven its refusal to recognize and support the validity, legitimacy, rigor and ethical principles of [indigenous] intelligence and the system itself” (Simpson, 2014) but I will share this story nonetheless because sharing these kinds of narratives and counter views are ways that we can directly “*rewrite*” and “*reright*” the record (Smith, 1999).

I undertake this study with the awareness that our “stories” may not always be regarded or respected as legitimate sites that can contain histories. The challenges in using our oral

“traditions” to document moments, histories, and knowledges has been described by Smith (1999):

For indigenous peoples, the critique of history is not unfamiliar...the idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities, is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary indigenous life. It is very much a part of the fabric of communities that value oral ways of knowing. These contested accounts are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within the weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried. The means by which these histories were stored was through their systems of knowledge. Many of these systems have since been reclassified as oral *traditions* rather than histories (Emphasis in original, p.33).

It is important to include another caveat to this study at this point: this study will not examine the community based processes or politics involved in agreement making used to reach or to the negotiate agreements in any of the Hydro-affected communities mentioned here. To do so would ultimately serve the interests of those who benefit from factions and disagreements regarding “development” in the north and in our communities. Instead, this study concerns itself in part with mapping Manitoba Hydro’s network. It also aims to draw out insights at the micro level, from the vantage point of individuals who are most directly affected by industry presence, as conveyed through direct “key informant interviews” or as captured on the public record. As such, this study will include general, and somewhat technical “facts” concerning components relating to the hydroelectric network in northern Manitoba and will include information relating to the chronology of agreements as they exist today.

Finally, the research that appears in these pages seeks to fill an existing gap in the literature relating to energy production in northern Manitoba, as told through the voices and experiences of those included in this study. In the spirit of transparency, it is important to include discussion on some limitations of the study.

As this work seeks to develop a counter narrative to the Hydro story in northern Manitoba, it will not iterate or reiterate propaganda that has been used in the south to glorify this particular energy source. A quick review of industry literature and/or the “new” partnership models and agreements on a number of First Nations websites celebrates the partnerships and new movements forward *with* developers and this study will refrain from celebrating the agreements. This work can be viewed as a critical inquiry into Manitoba Hydro’s footprint in northern Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro began constructing hydro electric generating stations and supporting infrastructure in northern Manitoba in the late 1950’s. Successive projects in the decades that followed facilitated the growth of the crown corporation’s energy enterprise and the public utility now produces more than 5500 megawatts of hydro electricity (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.c). According to the government of Manitoba, “the Churchill River Diversion [CRD] is used for the generating stations on the Nelson River, which account for about 75% of power generation in Manitoba” (*sic*, n.d.).

### **On the Organization and Structure of Thoughts and Ideas**

This study aims to document key components and features of the hydroelectric network in northern Manitoba and aims to capture narratives concerning impacts and effects as experienced by a number Hydro-affected Cree in northern Manitoba. As such it provides a glimpse of the spatial and temporal impacts of “development” as understood by the Cree who experienced the disruptions caused by the production of this energy source. A sample of community perspectives, as they relate to impacts and effects of hydroelectric production and as understood and experienced by the peoples who have lived through more than four decades of

activities are presented later in this study and illustrate the polarizing nature of relationships, opinions and experiences on the matter.

In addition to documenting the path of the hydroelectric footprint in northern Manitoba, this study is also intended to document community, local and localized understandings, experiences and perspectives as they relate to the various impacts of the Churchill River Diversion (CRD), the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) systems as well as some of the most recent ventures and agreements. It should be noted that this study will refrain from critiquing macro level decision making processes and outcomes (as previously noted), with the exception of *Pimicikamak*, a Cree community who has taken firm stands on a variety of Hydro related issues as captured and expressed on the public record and contained in existing literature. In other words, this study is partly aimed at acquiring a broad understanding of the impacts and implications of hydroelectric energy production as understood at a local level by *Ithinewuk*.

Personal narratives and observations are presented throughout this work because they serve in part as a case study of the ways intergenerational impacts have been experienced. That is, looking inward at my own family and their experiences, a timeline where four generations have experienced three distinct and formal agreements involving two distinct waves of activities comes into view; each of the agreements ostensibly promised more than the last. Drawing upon personal observations, following my genealogy, together with seeking Hydro stories, facilitates a glance at the breadth of the system and though not discussed in any detail here, it should be noted that much political maneuvering occurred throughout the last four decades which ushered in the system and facilitated its growth.

The following chapter briefly explores theoretical themes and methodological approaches that guide and inform this study. It begins with a concise overview of key concepts deriving from

and informed by the field of Native Studies. Since this study is positioned primarily from within this discipline, considering and reviewing indigenous epistemologies and research methodologies is useful. Chapter two will succinctly outline key themes in Native Studies. The discussion will shift toward and include other theories and methodologies guiding this study including “colonialism,” “decolonization,” and “settler-colonialism.” Concepts such as *pimatisiwin*” and the use of “stories” and “story telling” will be succinctly considered in addition to terms and practices involving “totalization.” “Indigenous resistance” and “resurgence” will be reviewed in turn.

Personal observations, stories and other anecdotes contained in first person perspectives are embedded throughout this study and will be undertaken as part of an “autoethnographic” approach. Attention will shift toward contextualizing and locating the spatial (that is, the geographic) and the temporal (timeline or longitudinal) footprints associated with the production of hydroelectricity in northern Manitoba; chapters three and four, respectively, chart these spatial and temporal components.

“Water stories,” or narratives relating to the waters, waterways, streams, rivers and lakes that have been altered and affected by the production of hydropower, as observed and experienced by the Cree are compiled in Chapter five. This chapter aims to draw out and document perspectives of *Ith-in-e-wuk* directly affected by Hydro. Chapter five will also draw out examples of the ways indigenous peoples and communities are resisting and surviving despite recurring disruptions occurring on the lands and in the water. As will become obvious, the north is home to a people with a rich culture. It is also home to many inspirational, resilient, determined and committed water/land/cultural warriors who are actively demonstrating what it

means to have *pimatisiwin*, to live a “good” life, and who, in their own ways, *are* demonstrating the power of teachings contained in the land.

As in many places through Canada, energy development in northern Manitoba affects many facets of life for both indigenous and non-communities. For indigenous communities, energy “development” and the politics of “development” can have implications on Treaty, Aboriginal and/or inherent rights. It can also result in an array of devastating environmental impacts as well as impacts on or to culture.

Again, issues relating energy production in northern Manitoba that are reviewed in this study are limited to charting the pathways and footprint Hydro along with mapping the longitudinal (temporal) scope of various projects and agreements. An array of issues that could have come into focus but did not include: impacts on Treaty, Aboriginal and inherent rights, environmental impacts, cultural impacts, economic impacts or social impacts just to name a few. There is certainly opportunity for further critical enquiry.

Another and final introductory note concerning this study relates to terminology: a nominal explanation regarding terminology is required because the cotemporary reality of being Aboriginal and more specifically, First Nation (i.e. “Indian”) is and can quickly become complicated, particularly where “development” is concerned.

The term “Aboriginal peoples” (emphasis added) may appear in these pages and does so in a specific context that expresses a politically correct way of discussing or locating the “Indian, Inuit and Metis” peoples in Canada as a collective of peoples whose rights are recognized and protected under Canada’s constitution. It should be noted that “peoples,” used with an “s,” is used deliberately in this study and in a manner that recognizes the *diversity* among indigenous peoples and communities in Canada. Dehumanizing language and terms like “Aboriginals,” or



generic references to “Aboriginal people” (no “s”) *will not* appear in these pages unless it appears in this manner in source materials; instead, and in the same spirit exercised by LaRocque (2010), I will use the term terms “Aboriginal peoples” because doing so “identifies the phrase as a resistance self-designation in response to the massive depersonalization [and dehumanization] to which [*Ithinewuk* -the ‘Cree’] have been subjected” (p.8).

While there is a real and legal meaning attached to to term “Indian,” which has become entrenched in the legal fabric of Canada, the term “Indian” will only appear here contained and confined within quotations so as to alert the reader to its antiquated origins and to mark it as a term of “colonial phraseology” (LaRocque, 2010, p.8) which has been used to “other” us. If there is need to invoke the legal term as it is understood and used within the Constitution, treaty texts or *Indian Act*, “First Nation” or “First Nations” will appear in place of “Indian.” In this study, the term “indigenous” appears interchangeably, and at times, in place of the term “Aboriginal Peoples” the following pages to denote those peoples who posses constitutionally recognized and protected rights.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Considerations and Other Important Contexts**

*“the means of transportation I have chosen for this journey of journeys  
besides language and spirit is a canoe...  
my canoe is a place of cultural understanding  
it transports it connects me to the forest and the water and to my spirit  
it conveys it acts as a place gestation of birthing  
in transit and final worldly threshold for generations milleniations of my  
relations  
if ever there was a home for our migrations  
it is this form this vessel this tree relation”*

*(sic, Cole, 2006, p. 21 and 23)*

While in the midst of drafting this dissertation I had an opportunity to listen to a presentation by Dr. Lorrain Weir. In a one-hour presentation Dr. Weir discussed her experiences related to work on a land mark Aboriginal rights case and shared insights concerning colonial encounters in the courtroom. A focal point of her talk centred the implications and impacts of the Court’s use of indigenous oral narratives and histories and her observations that day concerned the ways the oral narratives, histories and customs of indigenous peoples were utilized, and in some cases silenced, in the court proceedings with which she was involved.

While there were many interesting and noteworthy points shared throughout her talk, a phrase stood out which went something to the effect of “that’s settler problem” (2016). If I recall correctly, this phrase was used to describe the rigid nature of legal proceedings, and technicalities associated with, that were used as part of a legal proceeding. The technicalities associated with legal procedures referenced by Dr. Weir threatened to silence the voices of indigenous peoples in that particular case. In short, for me, what was important about her talk was the discussion concerning Western-based institutional processes, procedures and problems.

The rendition of the Dr. Weir’s described above is of course my interpretation of what was presented at the noon-hour colloquium in 2016 and the phrase “a settler problem” might not have carried as much meaning, or resonated as it did, had it not been for the oral defense

component associated with the candidacy examination I had undertaken in the days before listening to Dr. Weir where I had been clearly “disciplined” by discipline.

On the matter of “discipline” Maori scholar, Linda Smith (2013) recently explained that,

Academic knowledges are organized around the idea of disciplines and fields of knowledge. These are deeply implicated in each other and share genealogical foundations in various classical and Enlightenment philosophies. Most of the ‘traditional’ disciplines are grounded in cultural world views which are either antagonistic to other belief systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems. Underpinning all of what is taught at universities is the belief in the concept of science as the all-embracing method for gaining an understanding of the world. Some of these disciplines, however, are more directly implicated in colonialism in that either they have derived their methods and understandings from the colonized world or they have tested their ideas in the colonies. Classification systems were developed specifically to cope with the mass of new knowledge generated by the discoveries” (p.128).

Smith goes onto state:

Insulation [within disciplines] enables disciplines to develop independently. Their histories are kept separate and ‘pure’. Concepts of ‘academic freedom’, the ‘search for truth’ and ‘democracy’ underpin the notion of independence and are vigorously defended by intellectuals. Insularity protects a discipline from the ‘outside’, enabling communities of scholars to distance themselves from others and, in the more extreme forms, to absolve themselves of responsibility for what occurs in other branches of their discipline, in the academy and in the world. In the context of research and at a very pragmatic level researchers from different projects and different research teams can be in and out of the same community (p.132).

For Kulchyski (2000), Native Studies is a “critical challenge to the existing constraints of disciplined thought” (p. 20). I like to think that I found a new way to think about the vexatious theoretical issues I had been dealing with.

I walked away from the colloquium that fall day with a new way to think about issues and theoretical, epistemological and methodological conundrums I was encountering as an indigenous Native Studies student embarking on one of the greatest and challenging tasks of my life: writing, reflecting on my academic training and observations, grappling with my own cultural understanding and experiences encountered through and throughout the research process

and attempting to synthesize or collate these varied activities into a cohesive product—my dissertation.

I was, and continue to, regularly contemplate the nature, origins, fixation and at times, imposition, of theories rooted in Western traditions and frameworks and problematize the practices, ideologies and traditions that underlie the development and distribution of theories emanating from Western paradigms and praxes and wonder how the theories, epistemological and theoretical frameworks I encounter, from my own vantage point *within* the regionalized/culturally rooted indigenous communities I work in not only fit within but contradicted and/or the problematize the intellectual spaces within the academy reserved for theory and knowledge created there.

Reflecting on his work within the field of education, and considering the scientific and philosophical knowledges associated with astronomy and the sciences within the western educational tradition, long time indigenous educator Wilfred Buck (2009) has penned rich descriptions and narratives of Cree knowledge and stories related to the constellations and astronomy. In reflecting on forms of the knowledge carried by his own people, which are articulated through stories which tell indigenous versions of the stories associated with the heavens, stars and constellations, Buck effectively places indigenous knowledge, philosophies and teachings on par with Western science and philosophically based practices and traditions. For Buck, “mainstream education has, and still often does suggest that European thought and perspective represent the pinnacle of knowledge and others must accept and employ such thoughts and perspectives in order to be regarded as intelligent” (p.81). His work clearly tests these assumptions and poignantly points out the implication of these assumptions writing that such practices and privileging ascribed to Western thought and knowledge left him with “the

impression that [his] people were not smart enough to have such perspectives as those that can be associated with [knowledge making]” (p. 81).

Not long before listening to Dr. Weir’s presentation (2016), described above, I had been in the midst of processes related to my doctoral program. In retrospect, the examination process I underwent served to reinforce the academy’s fixation with theory. I also realized that theories that I had explored and not explored as part of my program, and my doctoral work, could invade, possibly threaten, and no doubt challenge, the epistemologies and indigenous methodologies and frameworks that informed my doctoral work. I have yet to engage a deep level with the teachings, stories and methodologies shared by my community and other indigenous communities like mine over the course of this study.

Indigenous scholar Leanne Simpson writes of “cognitive imperialism” and describes it as those process[es] “aimed at convincing us that we are weak and defeated people” (2011, p. 14) and as she and others point out and demonstrate (Smith, 1999; Kovach 2009; LaRocque, 2010; Coulthard 2014), we are not weak nor are we defeated. Reflecting over the course of my studies, which spans well over a decade, it seems to me that there are many learned scholars, including scholars and researchers who are “on our side” from various schools/disciplines/fields informed by various canons, theories and methodologies with deep rooted traditions emanating from those traditions that (still) believe we are a weak people and that we continue to be primitive in action and *in thought*, though many might not recognize it.

Indeed, it might seem, as Linda Smith (1999) observed and wrote about almost two decades ago, “the act, let alone the art and the science, of theorizing our own existence and realities is not something which many indigenous [and non-indigenous] assume is possible” (p.29) but as indigenous peoples, who possess distinct, languages, histories, territories and

cultural practices and customs, *we do have* distinct theories about how we view, experience and philosophize about the world around us and our place within it which fall outside the realm of the “Academy which claims theory as thoroughly Western, [and] which has constructed all the rules by which indigenous world has been theorized” (Smith, 1999, p.29).

*I know*, through hearing the stories (*acathokina*) and histories (*acimowina*) told in my own language from elders, land users and other knowledge keepers, and by observing the ways knowledge holders interact with one another, including the ways they interact with the land, water and those beings within it, and witnessing the land-based principles which ground their actions and thoughts, we do have theories and praxes that stem from our longstanding relations and relationships with the land. These “place-based” practices and associated form[s] of knowledge are captured by the work of Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) who, in addition to providing theoretical insights from an indigenous perspective, has done extensive work with Western theoretical frameworks. Scholars like Coulthard have begun the difficult task of articulating indigenous critical, post/anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist principles and praxes.

For Coulthard (2014), “the theory and practice of Indigenous anticolonialism, including Indigenous anticapitalism, is best understood as a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around *the question of land*—a struggle not only *for* the land in the material sense, but also deeply *informed* by what the land as system of reciprocal relations and obligations can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms” (Emphasis in original, p. 13). Clearly, indigenous scholars like Coulthard are beginning to express indigenous theoretical frameworks that are not predicated or rooted exclusively within Western based traditions.

While Coulthard draws from Western theories and theorists like Marx, Engel, and others including contemporary anti-colonial theorists like Fanon to critique and discuss capitalism, dispossession, and colonialism, Coulthard is able to draw out and point to indigenous principles and practices stemming from land-based practices and principles which are “deeply *informed by what the land as system of reciprocal relations and obligations can teach us about living our lives in* relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms.” Coulthard’s “grounded normativity”, affirms the presence of principles, experiences and development of theories rooted in and guided by indigenous customs. Indeed, “new ways of theorizing by indigenous scholars are grounded in a real sense of, and sensitivity towards, what it means to be an indigenous person (Smith, 1999, p. 38).

Marx and Marxism provide important critical perspectives on class, class struggles and dispossession, and are used by Coulthard in his treatise but Coulthard moves beyond the typical uses attached to these theoretical frameworks and is able to draw out *indigenous* anti-colonial and anti-capitalist paradigms and practices within Dene intellectual thought and praxis as expressed and articulated, for example, in the “Dene Declaration” of 1975.

Not only is Coulthard able to frame Dene understandings of Dene roles and relationships using critical theories such as Marxism, which could then perhaps be said to possess anti-colonialist or anti-capitalist characteristics, Coulthard’s analysis gives rise to and articulates an indigenous theory and ethic where land based principles, including “place-based practices,” are paramount. It would seem then that an indigenous land-based theoretical foundation, rooted in “grounded normativity,” guided the Dene as they articulated, expressed and manifested their opposition to pipeline development in the 1970’s. In short, Coulthard clarifies that “grounded

normativity” espouses a “place-based cultural foundation” which provides a basis on which indigenous “critiques of capitalism and imperialism” originate (p 53).

Coulthard offers a pragmatic example and manifestation of “grounded normativity” in his analysis of events which transpired over the course of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline process, where the Dene found themselves up against developers and governments intent on transporting oil through their territories. Through his analysis, Coulthard is able to point to anti-colonial/anti-capitalist critique, as manifested in the Dene Declaration. Indeed, the earliest positions relating to Hydro’s excursions in northern Manitoba assumed by *Ithinewuk* in their respective territories mirror the “grounded normativity” which informed and guided the Dene in their respective stance on “development.”

In short, Coulthard’s work has taken up the task of drawing theoretical meaning from the relationships indigenous communities have with the land while articulating the ways land-based and place-based practices inform critical theories and practices. He has articulated an important theoretical presence and understanding which guided and informed indigenous resistance to the ongoing exploitation of lands, waters and cultures. While he has continued in the tradition of articulating an indigenous anti-capitalist and anti-colonial framework, which was started so long ago by scholars and activists like Cardinal (1969) and Adams (1975), he moves toward articulating an indigenous critical theoretical framework which properly situates the importance, spirit and power of the land which helped frame indigenous resistance in the 1970’s. Incidentally, Coulthard also appropriately warns readers of the perils associated with State sanctioned forms and exercises of “recognition,” which for Coulthard “remains *colonial* to its foundation” (emphasis in original, p.6). I will return to Coulthard’s work later in this chapter.



Margaret Kovach (2009) points out that many indigenous peoples are exposed to critical theory from an early age, even if the discussions are occurring at a kitchen table over tea. Recalling my first of many visits to *Pimicikamak* during the summer of 2005, affirms and provides evidence for her claim. On one of these visits, also commonly known as “field” work, I was immediately struck by the level of critical inquiry and theory I was exposed to in my visits with local community people which was firmly rooted in and originating from local *ith-i-ne-si-win* (Cree ways of life and knowing). I was not sitting in a university classroom learning about indigenous knowledge, translated by indigenous or non-indigenous cultural translators and theorized in some abstract text or form, I was at kitchen tables drinking tea and receiving as it were, first hand lessons of analytical *ith-i-ne-si-win*, “Cree” customs and worldviews.

In same manner as expressed by LaRocque (2010) concerning inscribing and consciously and explicitly pointing out the “humanity” of indigenous peoples (p.), if it has not been made clear yet, it is important to state here, and affirm, that Indigenous communities do have their own theories and ideas that emanate from cultural understandings and deep relationships originating in the land and the “animate” and inanimate” beings within it. In many ways, being compelled to explain, understand or regurgitate processes and ideas deeply entrenched within Western theories or disciplines is an example of Simpson’s (2011) “cognitive imperialism”

As indigenous peoples and researchers, that we are often compelled to conform to those very processes, practices and theories that have dehumanized us (Smith 1999; LaRocque, 2010) is problematic, even if doing so allows us to speak back to the academy. Disciples using the language(s) of the colonizer and being compelled to use texts and canons of the colonizer represents an act of colonialism in its own right.

Indigenous scholars, some of whom will be discussed in the pages to follow, have clearly articulated critical theoretical frameworks stemming from their respective cultures and from their relationships with the land. As will be discussed, there are instances or moments when “the land [is] reflected in [our] thought and philosophy” (Simpson, 2014, p.18) and drawing upon indigenous writings concerning perspective about the land helps articulate a theoretical framework useful for framing the struggles of *Ithinewuk* in northern Manitoba.

A way around or through the theoretical conundrum I had experienced during my candidacy examination, where I encountered a friendly struggle over theory, became clear as I left the presentation by Dr. Weir (2016). In no way is this original or ground breaking but it might become necessary to challenge those academic traditions or processes that seek to or result in the conscious/unconscious subordination of indigenous peoples and knowledge.

It is important to recognize and challenge the privilege of theoretical frameworks within Western academic constructs because that is where they are constructed and nurtured. Moreover, as Christian (1988) reminded us decades ago that “theory has become a commodity that helps determine whether we are hired or promoted in academic institutions—worse, whether we are heard at all” (p. 67). Echoing the words of Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson (2011) “I am not so concerned with how we dismantle the master’s house, that is, which sets of theories we use to critique colonialism; but I am very concerned with how (re)build our own house, or houses” (*sic*, p.32).

Perhaps the fixation with theory can be considered a “settler problem,” in the same way that Dr. Weir described the court’s use of oral history, because academic and Western intellectual traditions are deeply entrenched in paradigms, practices and traditions that can (inadvertently) dehumanized us and colonize our knowledges. Indigenous scholars must be able

exercise and explore our intellectual freedom as indigenous peoples who possess distinct cultures, customs and ways of seeing and experiencing the world. In short, we must be able to contest “cognitive imperialism” (Simpson, 2011; Battiste, 2013) using our own theories and paradigms.

It is important to note here that it is not my intention to generalize western based theories because there are critical theories and counter discourses which lend themselves to work within Native Studies and to work being undertaken within indigenous communities; for example, the work of early critical theory and theorists such as Franz Fanon (1963) and Edward Said (1978) has been invaluable. Fanon’s treatise on colonialism was important to understanding or locating the ways in which colonialism affects both the colonizer and the colonized. Said’s seminal work located the ways the ideological constructs of the “other” and the perceived “inferiority” of “others” justifies or invites the imposition of West; he also articulated that “anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the orient [other]—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or general aspects is an *Orientalist* and what he or she does is *Orientalism*...Orientalism lives on academically through its doctrines and theses” (p. 3). More contemporary critical thinkers speak to the ways Europe [and “the West”] has portrayed colonization of the European colonies (Blaut, 1993).

The following chapter will briefly consider “colonialism” as expressed in the work of Fanon (1963) and as understood and located in contemporary indigenous scholarship. It will also consider “settler colonialism” as discussed and theorized by indigenous scholars such as Coulthard (2014), Simpson (2011), and Kovach (2015). It will also draw on the work of Edward Said (1978) whose treatise on the power of representation and ideology has been important in locating the ways “others” have been constructed and construed by colonizing forces.

Critical theoretical frameworks such as these help to articulate a necessary critical discourse useful in locating the types of colonial encounters and relationships prevalent in the endeavors to expand the hydroelectric network in northern Manitoba. Put another way, succinctly reviewing applicable theories stemming from critical theorists provides a language from which to engage, counter and name the various acts of settler colonialism that are present in the push for energy in northern Manitoba. This work will also lean heavily on theories and scholarship produced by Native Studies and indigenous scholars because these perspectives lend themselves to the study that follows; for example, Cole’s metaphoric canoe, as articulated at the onset of this chapter, is a well-suited vessel for my critical journey through the meandering, dammed and diverted rivers and lakes in my homeland which is in part why I have opted to cite it here.

### **Native Studies and Indigenous Methodologies: Towards a Theoretical Framework**

*“People of color have always theorized—but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic” (Smith, 1999, p. 68).*

Being as I am, a student of Native Studies, it is important at this somewhat early onset to discuss key ideas, practices, methods and methodologies stemming from the field because as a student of Native Studies I am deeply influenced by the critical and anticolonial perspectives found within its discourse. As a *ne-he-tho-Is-kwew* I am deeply impacted by the teachings, philosophies, principles and influences of my family, community, and culture which are in turn impacted as they are by our understandings of *as-ki* “as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations” (Coulthard, p.13; see also Young, 2017). Together these influences inform and guide many of my academic endeavors including this study into “development” on my homeland.

It should be noted that “development” is contained in quotations in this study when discussing the activities undertaken in northern Manitoba and will be contained in this form to denote my attempts at challenging and problematizing the assumptions associated with notions of progress which are typically attached to development, and resource development in particular, in lands and territories like the ones I come from in northern Manitoba. “Development” transformed our environments and waterways and has thus impacted our ability to access and exercise the ways of life of our parents and grandparents. “Development” has also impacted our communities internally and externally; so too has “development” resulted in intergenerational, cross community and cross regional impacts. Indeed “development” as experienced through our eyes and on our shore lines has not yielded the promises of betterment touted by developers and bureaucrats to our communities in the 1970’s.

Regarding some of the characteristics of and within Native Studies, longtime activist and Native Studies scholar Peter Kulchyski (2000), writes that Native Studies attempts to “set right” many wrongs, including the erasure of peoples, places and place names (p.13), seeks to reconfigure knowledge and/or create new knowledge as it relates to or as informed by indigenous peoples/communities (p. 14), attempts to forge a new relationship between the academy and indigenous peoples (p.16) and doing so “in a turn towards the qualitative” (p. 21) meaning that it seeks to move beyond the researcher/subject dichotomy. In addition to compelling researchers “to question his or her narrative practices, sources of evidence, reasons for pursuing a particular topic, and techniques of inquiry” (Ibid.), Native Studies facilitates the naming of “historical trauma” experienced by indigenous communities to [be named and located within historical and legislative contexts] (Kulchyski, 2000).

As noted above, Native Studies as a discipline aspires to, and more often than not, approaches research with an underlying understanding of responsibilities to those with whom we work, or with indigenous communities, in the aim to fulfilling “professional scholarly inquiry” within the academy, which might entail as part of the process, questioning the limits of “academic freedom” (p.15). Put another way, Native Studies has questioned the degrees to which research can be undertaken in the name of “academic freedom” because indigenous peoples, cultures and communities have, throughout various moments in history, been subjected to harmful practices in the name of “research” (see LaDuke, 2005 for example).

Scholars within the field of Native Studies have been known to challenge and confront ideas, assumptions and the historical record in instances where it has been shown to reinforce colonial ideologies and assimilative practices aimed at continued dehumanization and dispossession of indigenous peoples and communities. Kulchyski writes:

Native Studies is structured around an ethical approach and an ethical call, the call of Aboriginal peoples for justice, the call to name forms of oppression, to search out mechanisms that will respond to the call...there is no way to work within the field of Native Studies while ignoring this call; there is no way to avoid taking an ethical stance (Kulchyski, 2000, p. 14).

The kind of ethics discussed by Kulchyski and others (see Simpson, 2014 for example) is one that respects, recognizes and stems from the indigenous communities that ground Native studies.

For me, Native Studies ultimately represents a kind of resistance writing (LaRocque 2010) that stems from indigenous methodologies and values (Kovach, 2009; Kulchyski, 2000; Simpson and Smith 2014; Smith 1999), re-affirms the interconnectedness and importance of the indigenous community and the land (Cole, 2006; Kulchyski 2005; Coulthard, 2014); is active and crosses into other academic disciplines that are helpful in naming and framing forms of colonialism that have been exercised on indigenous peoples in Canada. Native Studies is also

fundamentally rooted in a canon stemming from indigenous epistemologies, experiences, and ontologies (LaRocque, 2010; Kovach 2009; Simpson and Smith 2014; Cole 2006) outside “the West” (Said, 1973) and is not a field that concerns itself exclusively to the study of “Indians”. Rather, Native Studies examines the multifaceted intersections of the colonizer and the colonized.

It should also be noted here that “Indians” in Canada and indeed throughout the continent have been invented and re-invented for centuries (Berkhoffer 1979; Francis, 1992) and the legacy of these ideas and imaginings have been long lasting and damaging for and to indigenous peoples, their communities and to Canadian society as well. In many ways, the manner by which many indigenous peoples have been represented and depicted falls within the line of critique and observation offered by anticolonial scholar Franz Fanon (1963) concerning the characteristics of colonialism and its effects. These false and erroneous portrayals also fall within the critical views advanced by Said (1978) about the power of ideas and representation (both of which are captured in the work of Cree-Metis scholar Emma LaRoque, 2010).

While there is important critical discourse surrounding the uses of the term “Indian” (see LaRocque, 2010 for example), the reality is that it also possesses a tangible legal dimension in Canada. As used or understood in its legal sense or meaning, the term “Indian” and the obligations attached to it may create a new set of issues which may not at first glance appear to be issues or problems at all, relate to the predicament of “recognition” and accommodation problematized by indigenous scholars such as Coulthard (2014). Take for example the following conflicting perspectives:

Section 35 Aboriginal rights are recognized and affirmed by the *Constitution Act, 1982. Addressing Aboriginal rights through negotiation is key to advancing reconciliation with Aboriginal people in Canada. Negotiations lead to positive solutions that balance the rights and interests of all Canadians and provide*

Aboriginal communities with *access to new economic development opportunities* that create jobs and economic growth (Emphasis added, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada, 2014).

The colonial power [in Canada transformed from] a structure that was once primarily reinforced by policies, techniques, and ideologies explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusion/assimilation double, to one that is now reproduced through a seemingly more conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices that emphasize our recognition and accommodation. Regardless of this modification, however, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state has remained colonial to its foundation (Coulthard, 2014, p. 6).

In Canada, “Aboriginal peoples” encompasses three collectives or groups of indigenous peoples: “Indian,” Inuit and Metis peoples. Each of these groups have their own distinct customs, practices, cultures, languages and histories simply meaning that they are diverse in range and breadth.

Indigenous peoples mobilized in 1982 to have their place and their rights acknowledged. As a result of efforts of early indigenous leaders, “Aboriginal peoples” and their rights were written into the Constitution of Canada (see Harold Cardinal, 1969 for further reading relating to this struggle and Kulchyski, 1994 for further reading regarding conflicting interpretations associated enacting these rights). While there has been varying and largely contested interpretations of what these rights entail, there is clear recognition of these rights. There is also a clear colonial framework attached to and confining many of these rights and hence, critical analyses arise from the imposition of colonial ideologies and systems (Coulthard, 2014). This chapter will consider critical perspectives regarding the dangers attached to the politics of recognition and accommodation and will be discussed later in this chapter but it is important to explicitly acknowledge here that there a number of complexities attached to identity politics and the imposition of colonial terminology.



While it is not a major focus in this study, it should also be noted that contemporary scholars have been and are actively challenging misrepresentations and misunderstandings concerning indigenous peoples, as noted at the beginning of this chapter. In Canada, the 1960's and the 1970's ushered in the emergence of "pan-indigenous" activism which would arguably help usher in indigenous and critical anticolonial scholarship. During this era, critiques aimed at exposing, naming and resisting the mis/mal-treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada was being pioneered Harold Cardinal (1969), who was among the first to expose and resist and confront Canada's treatment of indigenous peoples. Howard Adams (1975) and Cree/Metis scholar Emma LaRocque (1975) were also among this pioneering group being among the first to confront Canada's colonial hegemony in a systematic and scholarly manner.

Indigenous scholarship produced since the 1960's has countered, and has on occasion forcefully responded, to the settler colonialism expressed through and in the exercise of policies and processes aimed at marginalizing and assimilating Aboriginal peoples. Cardinal (1969), LaRocque (1975; 2010) and more recently, Coulthard (2014) and Simpson (2011), among others, are examples of indigenous thinkers who have articulated the marginalization experienced by indigenous peoples in a Canadian context and have directly confronted the erroneous presumptions, assumptions and ideas held about Aboriginal peoples. These expressions are examples of the presence of an anti-colonial struggle which has been present in Canada for centuries. How or why is this relevant or applicable to this study about energy development in northern Manitoba?

As will become evident in the chapters that follow, "in the minutiae of quotidian life, the presuppositions of service providers, in the structures of State actions and inactions, in the continuing struggles over land use, in a whole trajectory of policies and plans, the work of the

conquest is being completed here and now” (Kulchyski, 2005, p.3). The “work of the conquest” is unfolding in the development schemes occurring on our lands which likely begin with proposals in the board rooms and meeting tables outside our communities, appealing to simple desires from the poverty stricken circumstances promulgated by various mediums, offering us “solutions” and partnerships with promises of progress, with promises of better futures and economic development opportunities, buttressed no doubt by our demands for recognition and accommodation.

Clearly, indigenous peoples in Canada have been and continue to be marginalized but no longer are we silent spectators watching from the margins. As demonstrated in the creative artistic and literary works of indigenous intellectuals and artists from Thomas King (2003; 2012), to Peter Cole (2006) to local Aboriginal artists, K.C. Adams (2015), whose work “Perceptions” directly confronts and challenges mainstream assumptions/stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples, indigenous peoples are actively resisting and confronting “acts of colonization” occurring on many axes (Buddle-Crowe 2006; LaRocque, 2006); for example, Smith (1999) writes:

A critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history and indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts. Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to *rewriting* and *rerighting* our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying (p. 29).

When considering the emergence of indigenous scholarship and critical inquiries, it is important to note the presence of non-indigenous scholars and allies who are producing critical works which names, locates and counters the hegemony imbedded in varying outlets of colonizing

practices in Canada (see for example the works of Kulchyski, 1996, 2005, 2007 and 2013; Martin & Hoffman, 2011; Tough, 1997; Waldram, 1993).

As demonstrated in the work by Kulchyski (2000, 2005), LaRocque (2010), Simpson & Smith (2014), Simpson (2011), Smith (1999), Native Studies represents one front from which resistance to the western canons is occurring and responding (LaRocque, 2010, p. 75). Native studies, along with those working with and within Indigenous communities, and indigenous intellectuals themselves, have much to offer as they create and affirm the importance, richness and resilience stemming of knowledges stemming from our communities.

### **Concerning Colonialism and “Totalization”**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission describes [settler] colonialism in this way:

Colonization was undertaken to meet the perceived needs of the imperial powers. The justification offered for colonialism—the need to bring Christianity and civilization to the Indigenous peoples of the world—does not stand up to legal, moral, or even logical scrutiny...the so-called discovered lands were already well known to the Indigenous peoples who had inhabited them for thousands of years. Indigenous peoples were not, as colonists often claimed, subhuman, and neither were they living in violation of any universally agreed-upon set of values... They did not need to be ‘civilized’... Indigenous peoples had systems that were complete unto themselves and met their needs. Those systems were dynamic; they changed over time and were capable of continued change. Taken as a whole, the colonial process relied...on the sheer presumption of taking a specific set of European beliefs and values and proclaiming them to be universal values that could be imposed on the peoples of the world. This universalizing of European values—so central to the colonial project—served as the prime justification and rationale for the imposition of a residential school [and other] system[s] on the Indigenous peoples of Canada (TRC, 2015, p. 21).

For Coulthard, colonialism can be described as “a structure of domination predicated on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples’ land and political authority” (p.151).

Kulchyski (2005) writes about the processes, and/or the product(s) stemming from colonialism and offers that “totalization has been *experienced* by Aboriginal peoples in Canada

as a state policy, characterized by many scholars as ‘assimilation,’ which has worked to absorb them in the established order” (Emphasis mine, p. 23-24). An analysis of the imposition of the State form of “democracy” which was imposed on the indigenous community is but one pragmatic example of colonialism, or totalization in practice. Regarding the emergence and imposition of the “vote” in First Nations communities, Kulchyski writes, for example, that “the vote is an abstraction it represents the whole political speech and activity of individual citizens, from whom other forms of political speech and activity are no longer required, and indeed discouraged. The vote is then equated with democracy and invoked constantly as a new mantra: where there is a vote, there is democracy. In Canada, this mantra was deployed by the State through the late nineteenth century when it began imposing its voting through the band electoral system on Aboriginal communities in the interest of ‘educating Indians about democracy’ and incidentally, undermining, through a veto, traditional leaders” (p.59).

Clearly, scholarship has proven that while colonialism and totalization stems from abstract concepts and constructs, the implementation and deployment of various tools takes many forms and is *experienced*.

### **Settler Colonialism and a Canadian Context**

Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) explores issues related colonization and “settler-colonialism” in the Canadian context; indigenous resistance and resurgence in Canada and the state’s deployment of bureaucratic mechanisms ultimately aimed at fortifying colonial dominance over indigenous peoples and their lands is also considered in *Red Skin White Masks*. As such, Coulthard’s text helps frame, locate and helps foster an understanding of “settler colonialism” on Canadian soil explaining for example that:

a settler-colonial relationship is one characterized by a particular form of *domination*, that is, it is a relationship where power—in this case, interrelated discursive and nondiscursive facets of economic, gendered, racial and state power—has been structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the *dispossession* of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority. In the Canadian context, colonial domination continues to be structurally committed to maintain—through force, fraud, and more recently, so-called ‘negotiations’—ongoing state access to land and resources that contradictorily provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous communities on the one hand, and the foundation of colonial state-formation, settlement and capitalist-development on the other (p. 7).

As evidenced in the excerpt above, Coulthard’s work points out consequences of contemporary colonial mechanisms or tools on or for indigenous communities: the continuum of dispossession domination. Canada’s purported “conciliatory” efforts and subsequent policy implementation are based on policies or colonial frameworks, basically the kinds of movements Coulthard challenges in this text. He also illustrates the impacts contemporary exercises of power can have on the stability of state-indigenous relationships as accentuated in his assessment of the Dene response to industry and bureaucratic encroachment on their lands (p. 59).

At first read, the text appears overly saturated with Marxist political theory and “theoretic analysis” (Atelo Jr., 2014, p. 187) which can make the text challenging and “inaccessible” (Ibid). A closer reading, however, reveals important revelations and observations regarding the “governmentality” (p. 156) and bureaucratic hegemony of the State (and industry) imposed in indigenous communities. It asserts an indigenous mode of self-determination and articulates a theoretical indigenous paradigm, one that does not exclusively rely on or require western or scholarly permission or legitimacy. In framing the broader analysis in the manner he does, Coulthard is able to locate the “inherent injustice of colonial rule...*on its own terms and in [its?] own right*” (Emphasis in original, p.11).

The departure point for Coulthard's analysis is 1969 and recall that this era witnessed the emergence of a collective indigenous awakening and mobilization. For Coulthard "it was not until the tumultuous political climate of Red Power activism in the 1960's and 70's that policies geared toward the recognition and so-called 'reconciliation' of Native land and political grievances with state sovereignty began to appear" (p.3). He describes this movement or mobilization "Indigenous anticolonial nationalism" (p.6).

Reflecting on three major moments in Canada's recent history including the comprehensive land claims process (following Calder in 1973), the recognition of self-government and the RCAP processes and the Idle No More movement (2013), Coulthard considers the ways in which indigenous peoples have responded to, confronted and resisted "settler-colonialism" in Canada. More specifically, Coulthard reviews indigenous reactions and responses to State (and industry) encroachment and through discussion of the mobilization of indigenous peoples and communities following an indigenous awakening after 1969. He also considers the impacts of the landmark Supreme Court of Canada's decision relating to *Calder* (1973) and Coulthard draws out the ways in which a "shift" in policy occurred with regard to the comprehensive land claims policy in Canada that emerged (p.58).

"Grounded normativity" describes an "ethical framework provided by...place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge" (Coulthard, p.60). Here, Coulthard introduces the existence of an indigenous consciousness and conscience revolving around and relating to the land and land-based practices of indigenous peoples. In using a case study of the ways in which "grounded normativity" (p.53) informed the Dene Nation's response to proposed oil pipeline development on Dene homelands in the 1970's, Coulthard is pragmatically philosophizing about land-based pedagogies (Simpson, 2014) informing a kind of decolonization or "anticolonialism"

rooted in “the land.” Indigenous peoples have been and continue struggles and challenge state, and industry, exercises of power.

Coulthard disputes the idea that a “conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices” introduced and implemented by Canada are incapable of repairing the historic hegemony that has come to characterize the relationship between indigenous peoples and the state. The purported “modifications” to the relationship alluded to and discussed by Coulthard emphasizes that “recognition and accommodation” [by the state] remains “colonial” to its core, meaning that while certain bureaucratic mechanisms may appear to have undergone transformations or policy shifts, the overall colonial power structure(s) remains imbalanced and settler colonialism remains intact. Indigenous peoples continue to be managed and colonized and the Hydro saga discussed in these pages attests to the continued presence of this power imbalance.

Another useful analysis not yet discussed relates specifically to the critiques levelled at the the “politics of recognition,” which for Coulthard “refer[s] to the now expansive range of recognition- based models of liberal pluralism that seek to ‘reconcile’ Indigenous assertions of nationhood with settler-state sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identity claims in some form of renewed legal and political relationship with the Canadian state” (p. 3). This particular critique is relevant to the production of hydroelectricity in northern Manitoba because it mirrors the critiques above and I would add that it does so in the form of forward looking and beneficial economic development proposals.

Another important feature of Coulthard’s analysis, which is relevant to this study, has to do with the impacts on resistance from within the indigenous community. That is, he demonstrates that certain sites/forms or sectors of indigenous resistance can become pacified

because in some Aboriginal communities, “strategies that have sought independence via capitalist economic development have already facilitated the creation of an emergent Aboriginal bourgeoisie whose thirst for profit has come to outweigh their ancestral obligations to the land and to others” (p. 42). As such, the text speaks to the emergence of an internal colonialism occurring within the Aboriginal communities. Examples could be drawn from some of hydro affected communities in northern Manitoba and as such could potentially be cited as case studies of this unfortunate practice.

### **On Decolonization and Indigenous Resurgence**

Decolonization as discussed by Smith (1999) provides a pragmatic theoretical departure point for framing and locating the context related to indigenous struggles and more contemporary anti-colonial movements, along with the philosophies informing them, of marginalized peoples in northern Manitoba as they confront and resist various acts of colonialism to which they have been subject. In other words, decolonization is a useful theoretical tool for locating and analyzing indigenous resistance and as such, part of this study will concern itself with ideological and practical examples of those processes which have been and are being undertaken by *Ithinewak* at micro and macro levels as they confront energy developers in their respective regions.

The concepts and diverse practices related to decolonization provide useful and relevant to discourses and examples of the ways indigenous communities and indigenous Native Studies scholars such as Smith (1999), Simpson (2011), Coulthard (2014), LaRocque (2007) are responding to the sites of colonialism. Another term to describe these forms of resistance could be “resurgence,” in the manner considered and characterized by Simpson (2011). When



contemplating or considering resurgence or resistance, Simpson reminds us that “when resistance is defined solely as large-scale political mobilization, we miss much of what has kept our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive. We have those things today because our Ancestors often acted within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they would to their children, to occupy and use our lands as we always had” (2011, p.16).

As will come into view later in this study, despite the disruption of “development,” individual efforts and exercises of elders and other peoples in our communities attest to a kind of “subversion” occurring on our lands at a micro level (Kulchyski, 2005, p.25-26). Subversion is a type or form resistance can take, and as such, it can be viewed as decolonization in practice. Kulchyski posits that “subversion involves a strategy of reading and a practice of redeployment where a sign or structure that has been fashioned as tool of totalization is reconfigured as a mechanism expressing cultural resistance...subversion is often a micropolitics whose traces are in the sphere of the everyday and pass unnoticed or unregistered” (*Ibid*). As compared to the more organized and collective efforts to challenge and reframe the development narrative in the north through movements such as the recently formed Wa Ni Ska Tan Hydro Alliance, indigenous peoples are continuing to challenge settler colonialism in many forms.

### **Regarding “the Land”**

[Many] Non-Aboriginal [peoples] do not always understand what we mean when we talk about our connection to the land...for us it is not just about ownership and money. The Cree concept is much broader than the Eurocentric concept of land and the environment. *As-kiy* to the Cree includes all living things such as the animals, the plants, the trees, the fish, *the rivers, the lakes*, and including the rocks. *As-kiy* also includes our concept of the sky world. We understand that human beings are only [a] small part of our environment and that humans are totally dependent on *as-kiy* for their survival (Young, 2017).

As articulated in the excerpt above, in talking about and naming the importance *as-kiy* to Cree peoples, culture and worldview, Doris Young asserts the presence of an Indigenous land-based understanding regarding the land. Although not included in the excerpt above, elder Doris Young goes on to discuss the relationships that originate or stem from the relationships between the Cree and *as-kiy* and while discussing the complex facets attached to these understandings and the principles that stem from them is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that indigenous peoples possess theories, epistemologies, ontologies and practices that stem from a deep-rooted and longstanding relationship with the *as-kiy* (as noted at the onset of this chapter).

A quick view at Canada's history reveals a deep-rooted power imbalance that has become characteristic of the relations and relationships between the colonizer and the colonized the Canadian settler colonial reality, a position which has been clearly articulated and outlined by Coulthard throughout *Red Skin White Masks* (2014). The nature and structure of Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples remains committed to the usurping of indigenous lands, resources [and "political authority"] and also speaks to the dual importance of the "Canada's" land-base for indigenous peoples/communities on the one hand and Canadian society on the other (p. 151) because as Coulthard points out "in the Canadian context, *colonial domination continues to be structurally committed to maintain*—through force, fraud, and more recently, so-called 'negotiations'—*ongoing state access to the land and resources* that contradictorily provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous societies on the one hand, and the foundation of colonial state-formation, settlement, and capitalist development on the other" (Emphasis added, Coulthard, 2014, p. 7).

Canada's increasing, insatiable and fierce appetite and demand for land and resources in recent decades including timber, water, minerals and oil, has been met on occasion by the resolve and determination of indigenous peoples and communities staunchly opposed to capitalist encroachment within their territories. Events that led to the Berger Inquiry (1974), Oka (1990), Gustafson Lake (1995), Ipperwash (1995) and most recently here in Manitoba, with the "occupations" at Grand Rapids (2005) and at Jenpeg (2014), serve as reminders that the land carries an enduring value beyond economics for many indigenous peoples; a kind of ancestral value and meaning that Coulthard alludes to in the excerpts above. He sensibly reminds and informs readers that:

[the land] ought to be understood as a field of 'relationships of things to each other.' Place is a way of knowing, of experiencing and relating to the world and with others; and sometimes these relational practices and forms of knowledge guide forms of resistance against other rationalizations of the world that threaten to erase or destroy our senses of place...*we are as much a part of the land as any other element.* Furthermore, *within this system of relations human beings are not the only constituent believed to embody spirit or agency. Ethically, this meant that humans held certain obligations to the land, animals, plants, and lakes in much the same way that we hold obligations to other people* (Emphasis added, p. 61).

Coulthard has been cited extensively throughout this chapter because as an indigenous critical scholar, he is able to draw out a critical land-based indigenous ontology which allows for a critique of the way capitalism has been imposed and experienced on the lands, peoples, political, economic and cultural realities of indigenous peoples in Canada. In this sense, Coulthard's text could serve as an anti-capitalist and anticolonial manifesto which draws out and affirms the fundamental importance and reverence for the land that underlies/informs indigenous assertions of self-determination. In locating the deception and dangers attached to development and politics of development in our territories, including the politics of recognition that may be attached to those enterprises, his text allows readers to locate possible perils that

sanctioned forms of recognition may play, actually as key roles in the usurping of lands and rights (p. 78; p. 156).

Coulthard's analysis of Dene Nation's position(s) in the 1970's allows him to locate the presence of a relationships/understanding(s) involving the Dene and their lands which is clearly opposed to the principles of capitalism and this maybe where Coulthard's work is strongest, most cohesive and relevant for a student of Native Studies studying energy development in northern Manitoba: the Dene were able to draw upon their rich and robust culture when faced with the threat of developers and governments. It also worth noting that Coulthard confronts the ways concepts and constructs related to "culture" as they took on new meaning and representation where the state was concerned. According to Coulthard: "the state began to counter [the Dene] position with a depoliticized conception of Aboriginal "cultural" rights divorced from any substantive notion of Indigenous sovereignty or alternative political economies" (p.71). The same critical perspective could be applied to the way developers and governments began to engage with *Ithinewak* in northern Manitoba. That Coulthard establishes the importance of the land to/for indigenous peoples is imperative because for indigenous peoples, dispossession lies at the heart of anti-colonialism (p.13).

A similar type of land-based knowledge, respect and/or principle grounded early leaders in the hydro affected communities as they struggled against and confronted developers and governments in the push for energy in the 1970's. Coulthard eventually calls for the "construction" of an indigenous alternative to capitalism (p. 173). Finally, Coulthard offers these reflections about what resurgence might look like:

- 1) Direct action aimed at resisting State exercises and abuses of power [and a move away from the negotiating tables] can produce results (p.167)
- 2) Indigenous peoples must create a "political-economic alternative to the intensification of capitalism on and within our territories" (p.171)

- 3) There is a need to re-establish kinship between urban and rural indigenous communities and bridge the urban/rural gap—also a necessity to decolonize urban spaces (p.175-176)
- 4) Tackle and turn away from various exercises of patriarchy “which denigrates, degrades, and devalues the lives and worth of indigenous women (p.178)
- 5) Look at alternatives and processes outside state “rights based” apparatus’ and “look to a resurgent politics of recognition” [that seek to enact responsible political-economic options to settler colonial capitalism] (p. 179).

As noted at the onset of this chapter, this study is informed, in part, by critical theoretical perspectives rooted in western academic traditions and that while this work incorporates critical discourses firmly entrenched within that academic tradition, it does so with the acknowledgement and awareness of the privilege of discourse. Because of their location within that tradition, theory can be valuable for many reasons. However, as Barbra Christian (1988) reminds us, theories [can] become and are privileged, that discourses of theory can affect the voice(s) of “others.” Her critical perspective regarding theory is useful because it provides insight into context for the way criticisms have been and are being levied by critical thinkers and emerging scholars.

Indigenous intellectuals, among other scholars, have been actively engaged in producing counter discourses relating to the colonial encounter in Canada. Clearly, indigenous peoples are continuing the practice of critically engaging with and directly confronting settler colonialism in Canada.

### **Methodology**

This work will incorporate, in part, an “auto-ethnographic” approach. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011, para 1) write:

autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural

experience. [It] challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product.

Ellis, Adams and Bochner go on to write that “auto-ethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyze experience” (para 9), they can also draw on personal experiences to draw out or illustrate aspects of their research. In short, auto-ethnographers tell stories and/or narratives with purpose. For Allen (cited in Ellis, Adams and Bochner) the story is guided by or framed within existing [methodological] tools and literature (para 8).

Kovach 2009 writes that autoethnography as “an approach with its foundations in ethnographical research, brings together the study of self (auto) in relation to culture (ethnography). Within this approach, self-reflection moves beyond field notes to having a more integral positioning within the research process and the construction of knowledge itself” (p.33).

The autoethnographic approach as outlined above lends itself to the way I have chosen to proceed in discussing the breadth of hydroelectric energy production in the territories of *Ithinewuk* affected by it. An autoethnographic approach also lends itself to way I have chosen to document the impacts of energy production in northern Manitoba because it facilitates a process whereby I can “produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience[s related to my subject matter] by first discerning patterns of cultural experience evidenced by field notes, interviews, and/or artifacts, and then describing these patterns using facets of storytelling, showing and telling, and alterations of authorial voice” (para 14). In using autoethnography in this way, Ellis, Adams and Bochner point out that “the auto-ethnographer not only tries to make personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging, but also, by producing accessible texts, she or he may be able to reach wider and more diverse mass

audiences that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people” (Ibid.).

As a product, using the autoethnographic approach as a methodology provides way to incorporate a personal narrative while facilitating consideration of a broader, widespread, cumulative and longitudinal impact and implications of Hydro’s presence as understood and experienced by a group of Hydro-affected *Ithinewuk*. Employing autoethnography as one of my approaches also respects the oral customs of the indigenous community.

The auto-ethnographic approach as outlined above lends itself to the way I have chosen to proceed with documenting the impacts of energy production in northern Manitoba and the way I have opted to articulate the breadth of impacts created by the building and the existence of the hydroelectric network in northern Manitoba. As a product, using the autoethnographic approach as a methodology provides a way to incorporate a personal narrative while facilitating consideration of a broader, widespread, cumulative and longitudinal impact and implications of Hydro’s presence as understood and experienced by a group of hydro affected *Ithinewuk*. Using autoethnography as my approach also respects the oral traditions of the indigenous community at large.

As noted above, one element of the research contained in these pages aims to document local perspectives and/or perspectives of those directly affected by Hydro’s activities in the north. This will be achieved in part by accessing and extracting information contained in existing literature, government reports and testimonies at provincial Clean Environment Commission hearings since 2004. Information will also be derived through direct engagement, that is via “key informant interviews,” with individuals who have direct knowledge and experience of Hydro’s presence in the north.

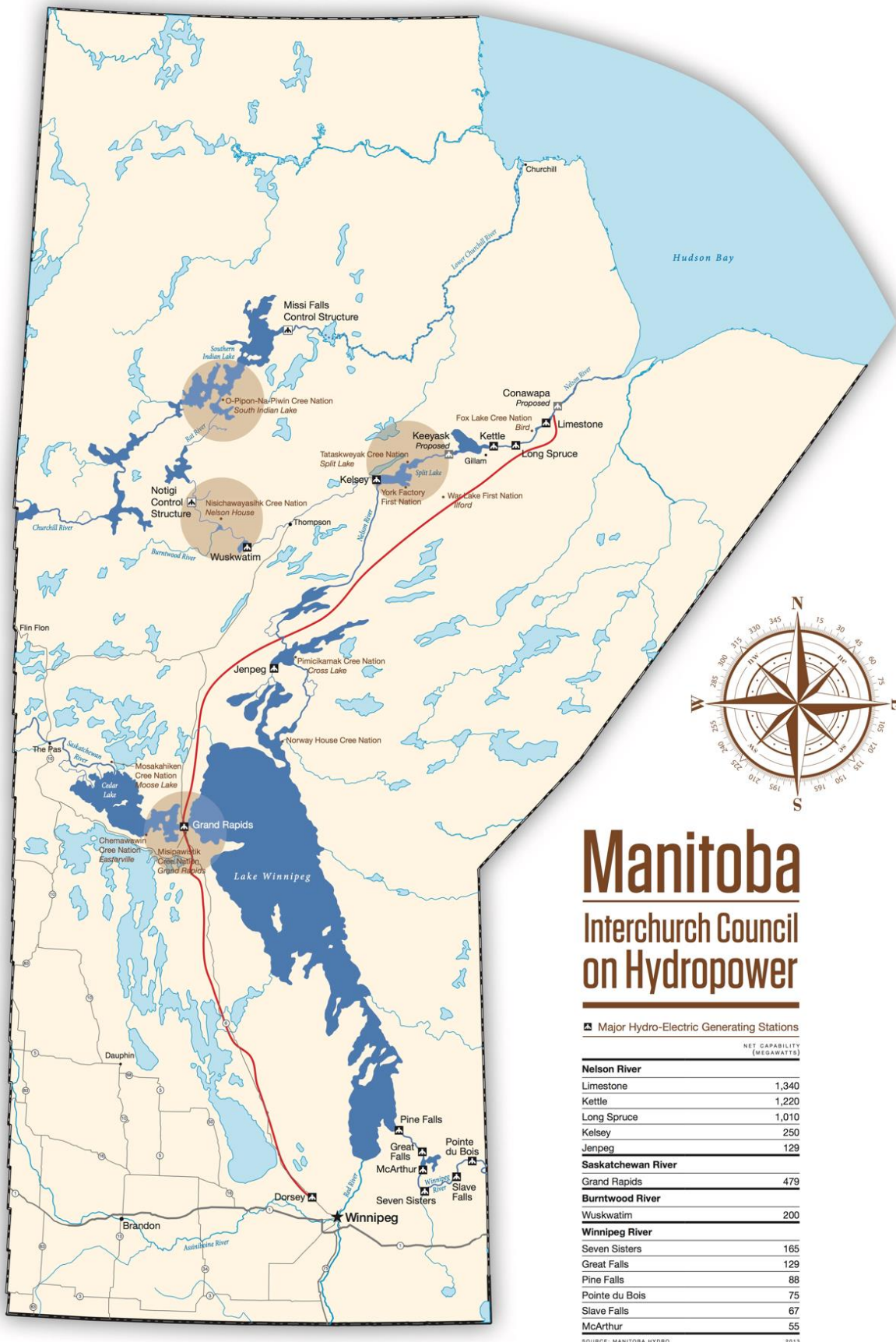
In this study “key informant interviews” are used because they contain *achimowina*. “*Achimowina*” refers to the Cree oral tradition of storytelling. Brightman (2007) describes these types of “stories” or story telling practices as “encompassing old and contemporary narratives, gossip, humorous stories and jokes, *and serious tales of bush experiences* and enigmatic encounters with non-Indians” (emphasis added, p. 6-7). As “serious tales of bush experiences” *achimowina* in the context of this study relay a historical telling of Hydro’s footprints in our territories. I have been and am actively seeking *achimowina* about Hydro’s footprints in our homelands. Local peoples, friends and relatives (who anthropologists may refer to as “key informants”) have shared *achimowina* corresponding to the two waves of hydroelectric development in northern Manitoba.

The two waves of development discussed above refers to an initial wave of development which includes the separate but interconnected systems known as the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) and Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) projects in northern Manitoba that were undertaken throughout the 1970’s. The second wave of hydro development in the north refers to the more recent era of “partnerships” affecting a select group of Cree communities in northern Manitoba; these communities would sign respective partnership agreements that began with the endorsement of the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement (PDA) in 2006.

The research contained here will also consider the broad economic/social impacts, as understood by the *Ithinewuk* at a community level which will be gathered subject to the University of Manitoba’s Ethics protocols requiring participant consent. The data collected as part of this study will help capture a sample of community perspectives on activities in the area and the research can have an important archival/historical component documenting the development of the hydro network in the north.

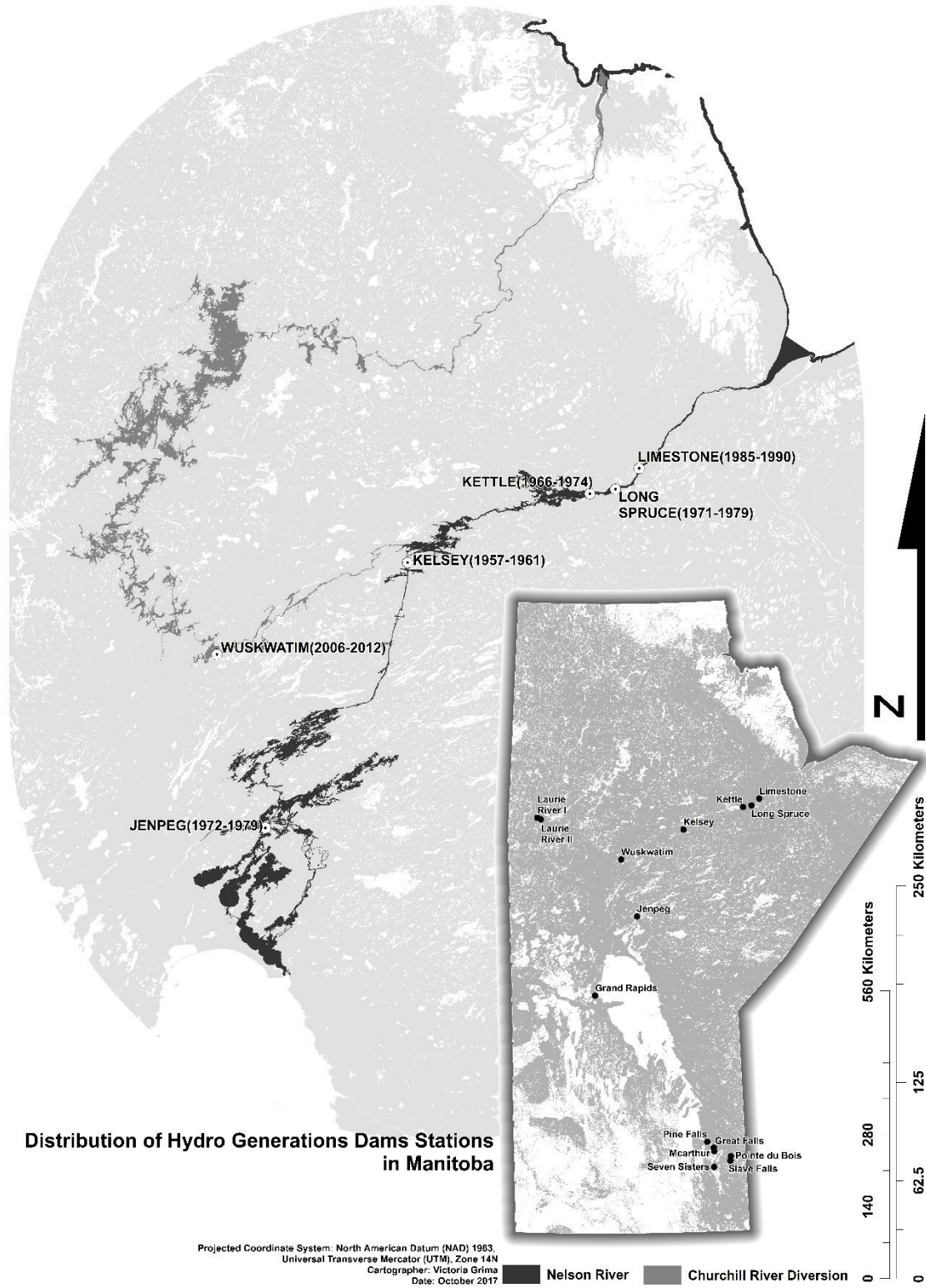


Theoretical considerations contained here provide a useful framework for understanding the encounters between the indigenous communities, industry and governments in northern Manitoba over the last four decades. The frameworks offered here also problematize concepts and practices related to “development” proposals and pathways and dispel various exercises and manifestations concerning the ways proposals have been imported into our communities. Finally, this chapter will help make sense of the critical perspectives offered by elders and community members who experience contemporary forms of settler colonialism in their homelands, at their shorelines, on their traplines and on the water.



**Figure 3.1: Hydroelectric System in Northern Manitoba**  
**Image Credit: Interchurch Council on Hydropower, n.d. Used with Permission.**

## Generating Stations [Northern Manitoba]



**Figure 3.2: Hydroelectric Generating Stations in Northern Manitoba**  
 Image Credit: Grima, 2017b. Used with Permission.

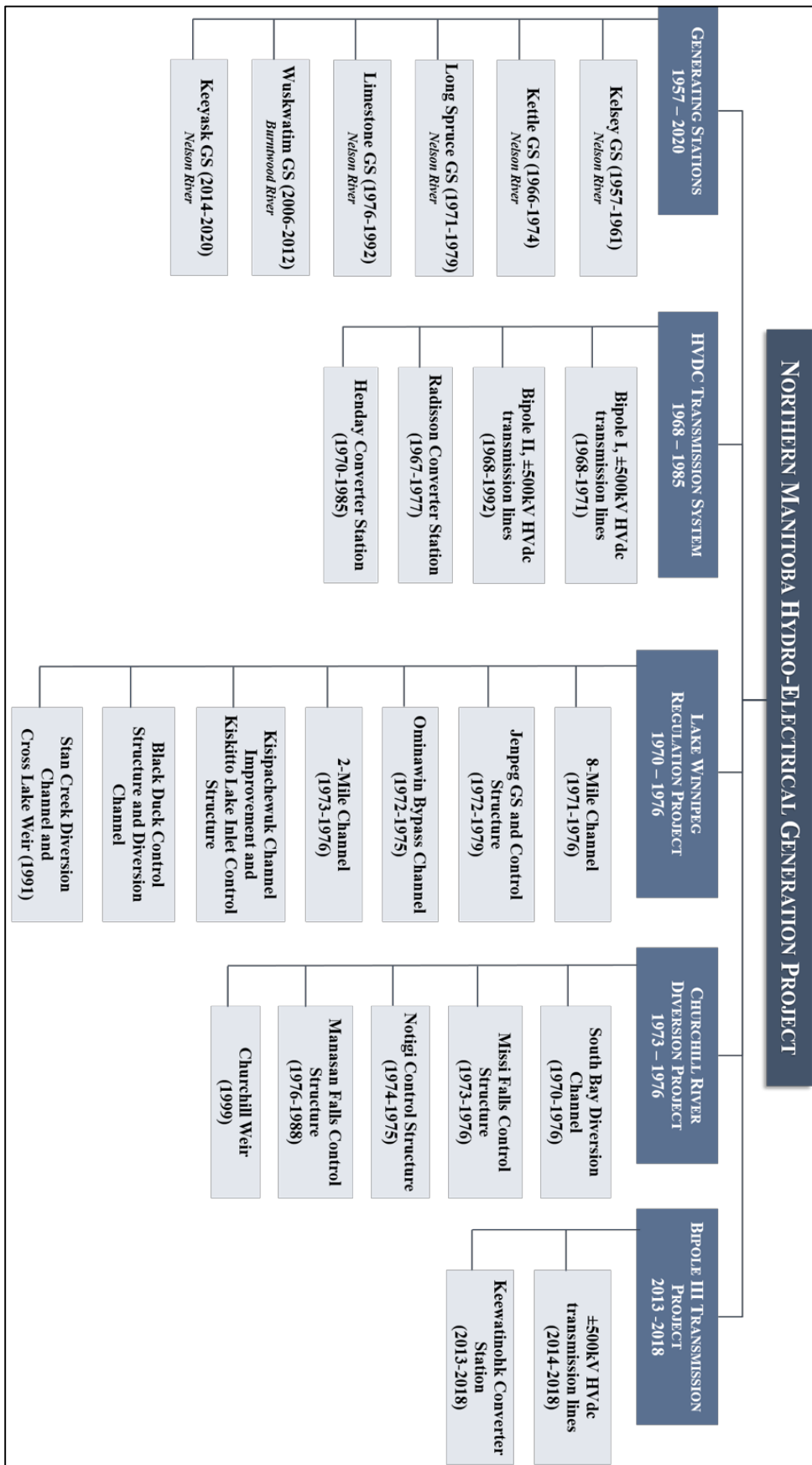


Figure 3.3: “Northern Manitoba Hydro-Electric Generation Project  
Image Credit: Grima, 2017c. Used with Permission.

### **Chapter Three:** **Spatial Contexts: Charting Hydro's footprints**

Northern Manitoba is the homeland of several culturally, politically and linguistically distinct indigenous communities and the territories. Lands and waters here carry rich narratives and histories stemming from longstanding occupation and use of lands and waters, on the part of the respective indigenous communities. Because the impacts, effects, and perspectives of those who experienced the alteration of landscapes and waterways will be considered later in this study, it is important to chart the path of activities related to construction of the generating stations in northern Manitoba.

The breadth of the hydroelectric network can be viewed and is captured in Figure 3.1. Figure 3.1 is included in this work with the deliberate intent of recognizing the important work undertaken by predecessors of the Manitoba Interchurch Council on Hydropower: The Interfaith Task Force on Northern Hydro Development. The latter group was organized in response to the diversion plans proposed by developers in the 1970's and this organization would go on to play a central role in creating critical dialogue and responses to developers and governments as will be outlined in the following chapter.

In broad terms many of the perspectives and context(s) contained in this study relate to the impacts of and effects experienced by indigenous communities located along the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) route as well as the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) corridor and is captured in Figure 3.2 above. Nominal historical context concerning the Grand Rapids Generating Station is also included in the following pages because as Hydro reports, "once the Winnipeg River's nearly 600 megawatts of hydroelectric potential was fully developed in the

1950s, power planners looked northward to meet the growing need for electricity – first to Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan River, and then the distant Nelson River” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.k).

It should be noted here, and as will be made clear in subsequent chapters, the territories, lands and waters surrounding my community, and communities like mine, carry rich narratives and histories stemming from our collective and respective longtime occupation of these lands and waters. Additionally, while oral story-telling practices and customs serve as one means of carrying forward our oral histories as well as the rich cultural legacies of *Ithinewuk* like those from *Nisichawayasi*, the land, islands, geological formations, including rocks and rock faces and/or inscriptions on the rocks, located at sites along the shores or contained in the physical landscape, house stories or can serve as “*mnemonic index*” of events, cultural icons and/or happenings of *Ithinewuk* (Linklater, 1994). Together the landscape, language, oral histories, oral narratives and various interactions served many purposes.

Recall Coulthard’s explanation and use of “grounded normativity” in Chapter 1. This theoretical tool allowed Coulthard to draw out and locate the “placed based” ethics and praxes of the Dene who resisted the encroachment and proposals of developers in the 1970’s. Subsequent chapters will consider this theoretical tool in relation to the hydro saga in northern Manitoba but it is worth pointing out here that these “place-based ethics” are carried in the stories and tied to oral narratives of tangible and “intangible cultural heritage” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, n.d.; Pawlowska-Mainville, 2014) found in our respective territories.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines intangible cultural heritage as those “traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices,

rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts” (n.d). During one of the hydro tours, a fellow colleague and I visited briefly with a Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) member and experienced a story containing elements of tangible and intangible cultural heritage tied to NCN. Years ago, in my youth, I had heard a story about “the footprints” located in the rock face not far from NCN. I had brought my friend and colleague along on a visit to local teacher hoping he could hear the story of the footprints.

That almost summer day in June 2016, we were told the story about *We-sah-ke-chak*'s foray through Nisichawayasihk. *We-sah-ke-chak* is an important Cree cultural icon and figure; has been also been referred to as “the trickster” in various texts and other literature. That day, we heard of how *We-sah-ke-chak* come to be in our territory, of how his footprints became imprinted and “inscribed” (Kulchyski, 2005) in the rock face for *Ithinewuk* to see. The meaning, promises and teachings attached to them will be discussed later in this study but suffice it to say here that the story of *We-sah-ke-chak* and the footprints have been passed on from generation to generation and in this sense, the “footprints” in my territory not only carry important and rich cultural meaning, but the story attached to the footprints, which themselves form or represent part of our tangible cultural heritage, serves as an example of intangible cultural heritage.

The importance of the land, the stories and meaning contained in the land has been described by an Nisichawayasihk citizen in this way:

*Aboriginal history, while transmitted through oral traditions, is recorded in a named historical landscape that serves as a mnemonic index for that history. While many of these named places may have tangible archaeological remains, many do not. Rather, they are natural features or landmarks at which some event in mythic time or in the near past has taken place. Together these events are timeless in their characterization of the land, providing a recognizable cartography through which stories are remembered, and by which one interacts with the landscape (Emphasis added, Linklater, 1994, p.1).*

The “mnemonic index” of the footprints in NCN is unmistakable and it is important to tell of the story of these footprints here because our histories including our “intangible cultural heritage,” as perhaps personified through the story of *We-sah-ke-chak’s* footprints, has been inundated and eroded in literal ways and by physical means. The original site of *We-sah-ke-chak’s* footprints now lie beneath flooded terrain. In their place, contemporary footprints encompassing vast tracks of lands and waters in our territories threaten our very livelihoods, histories and cultural heritage in widespread, cumulative and on-going ways. A New footprint has been carved by entities whose aim is generating hydro power for profit with some indigenous communities becoming implicated in the process via new proposals.

*We-sah-ke-chak’s* has left his mark across the territory of Nisichawayasihk, the stories of his footprints are one of many such stories which has been transmitted between generations. The telling of this story is deliberate because, as should become clear, this chapter aims to tell the story of a relatively new footprint in our territory, footprints that have been forged not by a cultural hero or icon but by developers who, with the help of governments and bureaucrats, altered, changed and flooded our landscapes beginning in the 1970’s. As Eva Linklater accurately surmised, “because of [our] integral relationship of land and history, aboriginal cultures are always seriously impacted by large scale resource development projects which destroy or alter traditional lands” (1994, p.2). Hydro’s footprint(s) span an approximate and mere forty years, and in terms of cumulative and longitudinal historical trajectory, this represents a relatively short timeline considering the rich and longstanding histories and presence of our peoples, communities, cultures and customs in the region.

This chapter aims to capture the breadth of Hydro’s network in terms of the space or geography. As such, locating the geographical footprint(s) of the hydroelectric network in



northern Manitoba and will include succinct descriptions of the projects known as Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) and the Churchill River Diversion (CRD). Although the emphasis of this study focuses on the activities that occurred along the Churchill, Burntwood and Nelson river corridors, including the LWR, it is important to include succinct consideration of the Grand Rapids dam because, this for the purposes of this study, Grand Rapids is viewed as a departure point of major hydro “development” north of this station.

The Grand Rapids Generating Station was the first major hydroelectric project, producing nearly 500 MW of hydroelectric energy, it resulted in widespread impacts for entire indigenous communities, as documented by Waldram (1988) in his book length study on components of the Hydro network in the north. Following the construction of the Grand Rapids Generating Station, as already noted, industry focus quickly moved northward and became concentrated on creation of the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) and Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) projects which took place throughout the 1970’s.

A couple of caveats are warranted here. While this chapter is concerned with locating the spatial contexts associated with the creation of the hydroelectric network in the north, that is mapping the geographical footprint of Hydro’s monopoly in the north, this feat should not be read as a complete chronology of the vast network located in the north, the breadth of which is captured in Figure 3.1. Energy produced in northern Manitoba makes its way southward through vast and interconnected transmission system as captured in Figure 3.3. Data compiled may appear to include to inconsistent dates and/or other historical information and this is due to the source data itself; that is, industry publications are not uniform in the dates provided. Definitively ascertaining data, for example regarding the amount of energy produced, or capacity, of stations, can be difficult because source data are not consistent.; for example, with

regard to Jenpeg, capacity is listed at 115 in one publication (see Manitoba Hydro, n.d.*o*) while another source reports capacity at 135 MW (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.*e*).

Due to the scope of this study, historical timelines attached to related and supporting infrastructure along the broader hydroelectric network, which together form the complete network, are absent. Little to no discussion regarding the massive transmission network is considered in this study in part because this system was not included as part of the approval proposals attached to the newest Hydro proposals (“partnerships”) offered to respective First Nation decision makers, nor is there is focused discussion regarding or locating the spillways and/or dykes with the exception that these structures might be directly referenced by through transcripts or interview quotes. As iterated above, this study is concerned with the generating stations together with considering elements of the broader Churchill River Diversion and Lake Winnipeg Regulation projects.

### **Hydro’s Network**

Manitoba Hydro is a Crown owned public utility and sole producer of hydroelectric energy in Manitoba. According to utility “96 per cent of the electricity Manitoba Hydro produces each year – 30 billion kilowatt-hours on average – is clean, renewable power generated at 15 hydroelectric generating stations on the Nelson, Winnipeg, Saskatchewan, Burntwood and Laurie rivers [in northern Manitoba]” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d. *b*). The Government of Manitoba reports that “the Churchill River Diversion [CRD] is used for the generating stations on the Nelson River, which account for about 75% of power generation in Manitoba” (*sic*, Churchill River Diversion, n.d.). This impressive northern hydroelectric network, including those

components captured in Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, lie deep within and upon the homelands of *Ithinewuk*.

Manitoba Hydro began constructing components of its hydro electric monopoly throughout northern Manitoba in the 1960's. Components of the system created during the initial flurry of activities, or "program," included 4 elements: construction of the Kettle Generating Station, construction of a high voltage transmission line [extending from the Nelson River to Winnipeg southward], regulation of water flows from Lake Winnipeg, and finally, the diversion of the Churchill into the Nelson River (Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board, 1975, p. 3). The transmission line, which would become an integral component of the overall hydroelectric network, would be the result of a joint Agreement and venture originating in 1966; through this arrangement, "the federal government agreed to provide a long-term loan of \$112 million to cover the costs of erecting transmission lines, and installing intermediary and terminal controls and structures (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.j, p. 41).

A number of generating stations and supporting infrastructure, much smaller in size compared to the stations located along the Nelson River, had been constructed along the Winnipeg River in the early 1900's. A number of these stations were constructed under the auspices of other enterprises but the company now known as Manitoba Hydro would eventually acquire the stations thus becoming part of the utility's broader operational purview (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.j). The stations are illustrated in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 respectively.

While the construction of the Kelsey Generating Station occurred between 1957 and 1961, thereby perhaps signaling the era of dam building in northern Manitoba, this study does not view this generating station as the beginning of Hydro's broader goal to create a northern hydroelectric empire partly because it was constructed with the specific purpose of serving the

mine operations and population in and near the northern municipality of Thompson (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.j, p.29). Instead, Grand Rapids Generating Station is viewed as the inaugural generating station because, as Waldram wrote (1988), “the project...represented the first phase of a massive hydroelectric development scheme which, the Manitoba government hoped, would harness the most powerful rivers in the north and turn Manitoba into the ‘electrical province’” (p. 85). This dam would also be the first to have widespread and cumulative impacts on entire Aboriginal communities.

Successive projects in decades following the completion of the Grand Rapids Generating Station and the 70’s witnessed rapid expansion of the Provincial Crown corporation’s energy enterprise which now produces more than 5500 megawatts of hydro electric power (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.j).

The preceding chapter charts the scope of agreements and succinctly considers the regulatory and bureaucratic mechanisms used to establish and grow the hydroelectric system in northern Manitoba, but the system, as depicted in Figure 3.2, will be outlined in the remainder of this chapter. The two distinct eras discussed in this chapter and depicted below spans roughly four decades, beginning in mid-1970’s to the present. During this period, three distinct types of agreements and were made spanning two distinct waves. The Cree communities whose homelands and territories lie within the CRD and LWR project regions are depicted in Figure 3.1.

The facilities, mostly generating stations and/or related control structures, are illustrated in the table below and note that this table does not represent an exhaustive catalogue of existing structures in the northern Manitoba but does illustrate the major edifices that form and can be located along the CRD and LWR corridors discussed later in this chapter:

Facility	Construction Period	Cost	Location	Purpose
Kelsey	1957-1961	\$ 50 Million	Nelson River	Generating Station: 286 MW
Grand Rapids	1960-1968	\$117 million	Saskatchewan River	Generating Station: 479 MW
Kettle	1966-1974	\$240 million	Nelson River	Generating Station: 1,220 MW
LWR	Construction: 1970-1976*; Regulation began: 1977*; Jenpeg generating station completed: 1979*	Unspecified	Lake Winnipeg (northern outlet); Play Green Lake; Kiskittogisu Lake; Kisskitto Lake; Cross Lake	2 Mile Channel: excavated channel that helps “unplug” Lake Winnipeg by augmenting the natural outlet at Warren Landing <sup>2</sup> ; 8 Mile Channel: excavated channel
CRD	1973-1976	\$220.5 million	Southern Indian Lake, Churchill River, Burntwood River, Rat River, Split Lake, Nelson River	Missi Falls: Control Dam; South Bay Diversion Channel- excavated site diverting water from Churchill into Rat-Burntwood-Nelson River corridor; Notogi Control Dam structure on Rat River controlling flow of water into Burntwood and Nelson Rivers
Long Spruce	1971-1979	\$508 million	Nelson River	Generating Station: 980 MW
Limestone	1985-1990	\$1.43 billion	Nelson River	Generating Station: 1350 MW
Wuskwatim	2006-2012	\$ 1.8 billion*	Burntwood River	Generating Station: 211 MW
Keeyask	2014-Present	Est. (2014)	Nelson River	Generating Station Currently Under Construction: Est. capacity 695

**Table 3.1: List of generating Stations and/or control structures along CRD/LWR corridors**

**Source: “Generating Stations” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.c); “History of Regulation” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.e); “The Churchill River Diversion Manitoba Hydro” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.l). “Churchill River Diversion: Project Information” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.m); “Keeyask Generating Station (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.n).**

\*As noted in “History of Regulation: Lake Winnipeg Regulation: A closer look- part 2 [video]” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.e).

<sup>2</sup> As noted in “History of Regulation” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.e).

## **The Grand Rapids Generating Station**

The Grand Rapids Generating Station is located on the Saskatchewan River near its natural outlet at Lake Winnipeg. Producing nearly 480 MW of power, construction at this station began in 1960 and concluded in 1968 and was constructed at a cost of more than one hundred million dollars (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.*d*). This was the first of many large scale generating projects to affect entire communities and livelihoods at both micro and micro levels (Waldram, 1988).

In more specific terms, the dam is situated between Lake Winnipeg and Cedar Lake on the Saskatchewan River. Waldram writes that in comparison to contemporary scale, “in the 1960’s [the Grand Rapids dam] represented something of an engineering feat. In order to facilitate this development, it was necessary to raise the level of Cedar Lake behind the dam by some 3.5 meters” effectively turning areas behind the dam into a reservoir and regulated by the turning of turbines at the dam (p. 85). Manitoba Hydro describes the technical components of the Grand Rapids Generating Station this way:

Its three units produced a total capacity of 330 MW. The generating station was re-rated to 339 MW in 1966, and to 354 MW in 1967. In 1968, the nal unit was placed in service bringing the total capacity to 472 MW. Grand Rapids operated with a 36.6-m head, or waterfall — the largest in Manitoba. The giant Kaplan turbines and generators at Grand Rapids were the largest installed in North America for this size of operating head (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.*j*, p.31).

As documented by Waldram, this construction had implications beyond the communities immediately downstream from the station. Impacts were also felt behind the dam in the newly formed reservoir where waters were held back. Entire communities were affected and some communities were forcibly relocated.

## **The Churchill River Diversion**

According to Waldram (1988) “it was not long after the Grand Rapids hydro project began operating in 1964 that Manitoba Hydro turned its attention to the enormous potential of the Churchill and Nelson Rivers” (p. 118). Citing Michael Shouldice (1976), Waldram reports that the year before, in 1963, the federal and provincial levels of government reached an agreement “to cost-share studies to investigate the power potential of the northern rivers” (p. 118) and in short, governments and developers set out to ambitiously “harness the potential energy of the Nelson River and add to that potential by diverting a major part of the Churchill River flow into the Nelson” in 1966 (Churchill River Study Board, 1975, p. 3).

Hydro reports that “the tremendous hydroelectric potential of the Nelson River had been appreciated since the early 1900s. However, it [was not] until the 1960s that it became feasible to pursue the development of the Nelson [once] the technology for the long-distance transmission of high voltage direct current (HVDC) became available” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.k). Once the technology of the HVDC became available, the provincial and federal government reached yet another an arrangement to construct the transmission lines that would carry the hydroelectric energy created in northern waterways southward to Manitobans, as well as to markets beyond the province. Under the agreement, the federal government would finance the transmission line (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.j, p.32).

Ultimately, the Churchill River Diversion Project (CRD) entailed the diversion of waters from the Churchill River into the Nelson River through engineered corridors blasted through lands and rock at strategic locations, and through a control structure at the north end of South Indian Lake that raised its water level significantly. The diversion plan ensured that generating stations that would be built along the Nelson River would have the water flow required to

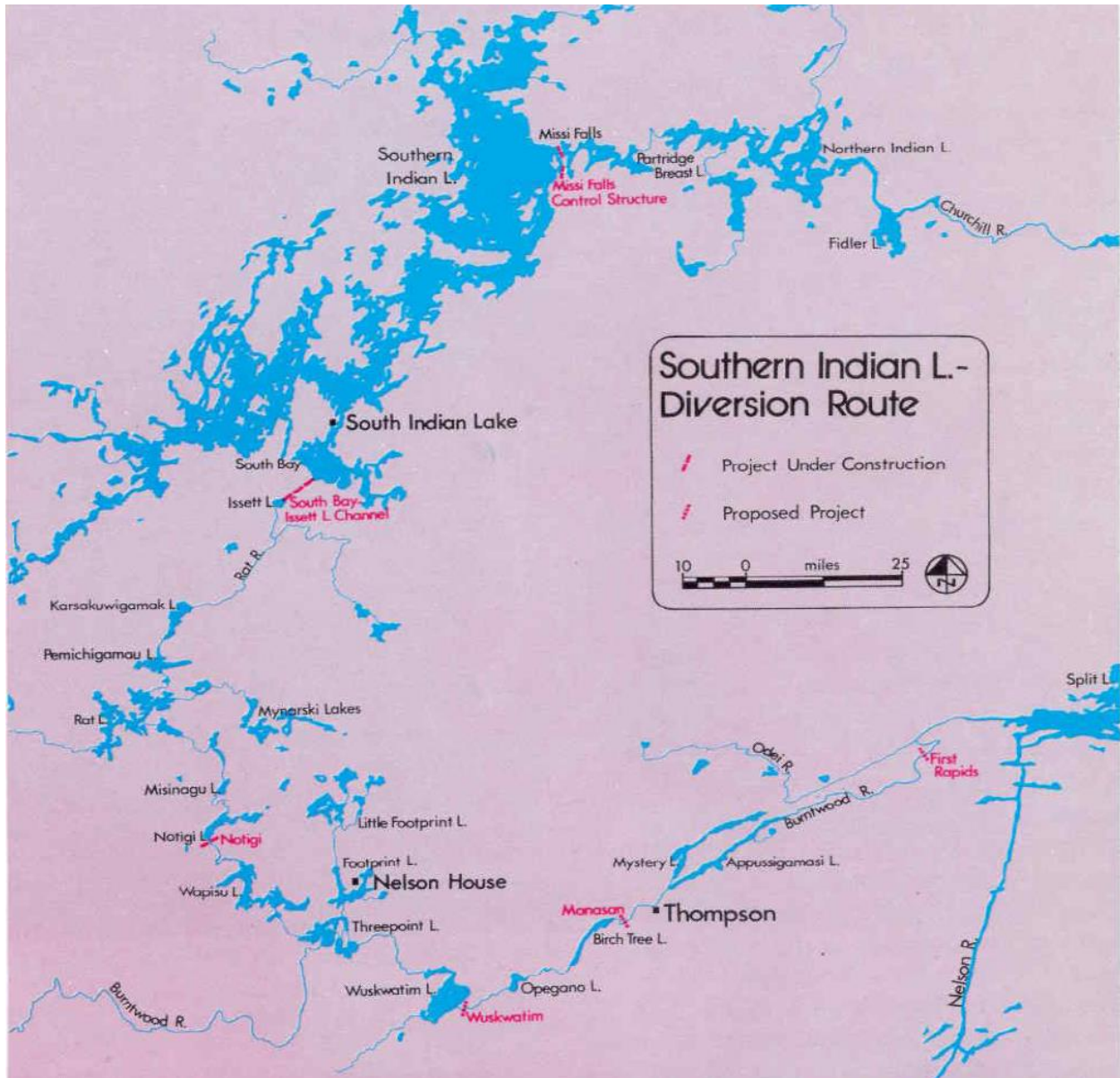
maximize profitability of the generating stations. The CRD scheme is depicted in two separate illustrations below. Figure 3.4 depicts the CRD diversion plan as it appeared in a 1975 study report, which was jointly undertaken by the governments of Manitoba and Canada, while Figure 3.5 is a more contemporary rendering of the system. The Clean Environment Commission describes the CRD in this way:

The CRD diverts a large portion of the flow of the Churchill River into the Nelson River via the Rat and Burntwood River system. A control dam at Missi Falls, the natural outlet of Southern Indian Lake, controls outflow from the lake down the Churchill River and raises the mean lake level by about 3-m above its long-term mean. A second control dam at Notigi Lake on the Rat River regulates the flow into the Burntwood River system and the lower Nelson River. An excavated channel from South Bay on Southern Indian Lake to Isset Lake on the Rat River system allows the Churchill River waters to flow into the Rat- Burntwood system and then into the Nelson River (Clean Environment Commission, 2004*d*, p.15).

Effectively, as a result of the CRD, South Indian Lake was transformed into a reservoir and lands and shoreline behind the Notigi Control Structure became inundated. Interim licenses were issued by Province of Manitoba in 1972 and 1973 respectively which governed the ways waters were held and moved through the diversion scheme. The Interim licenses regulated the levels of water at South Indian Lake and the discharges or allowable flows through the Notigi Control Structure (Clean Environment Commission, 2004, p.16).

The CRD became operational in 1976 “when an initial water flow of approximately 283.16 cubic metres per second was released through the Notigi Control Dam” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.*j*, p.37). The three main components of the CRD include the Missi Falls dam and control structure, which effectively holds back water at South Indian lake which; Missi Falls is also used to regulate water flows into the lower Churchill River (Government of Manitoba, n.d.*a*).





**Figure 3.4: “Churchill River Diversion Project-Location Plan.”**  
**Image Credit: Churchill River Study Board, 1975, p.22.**

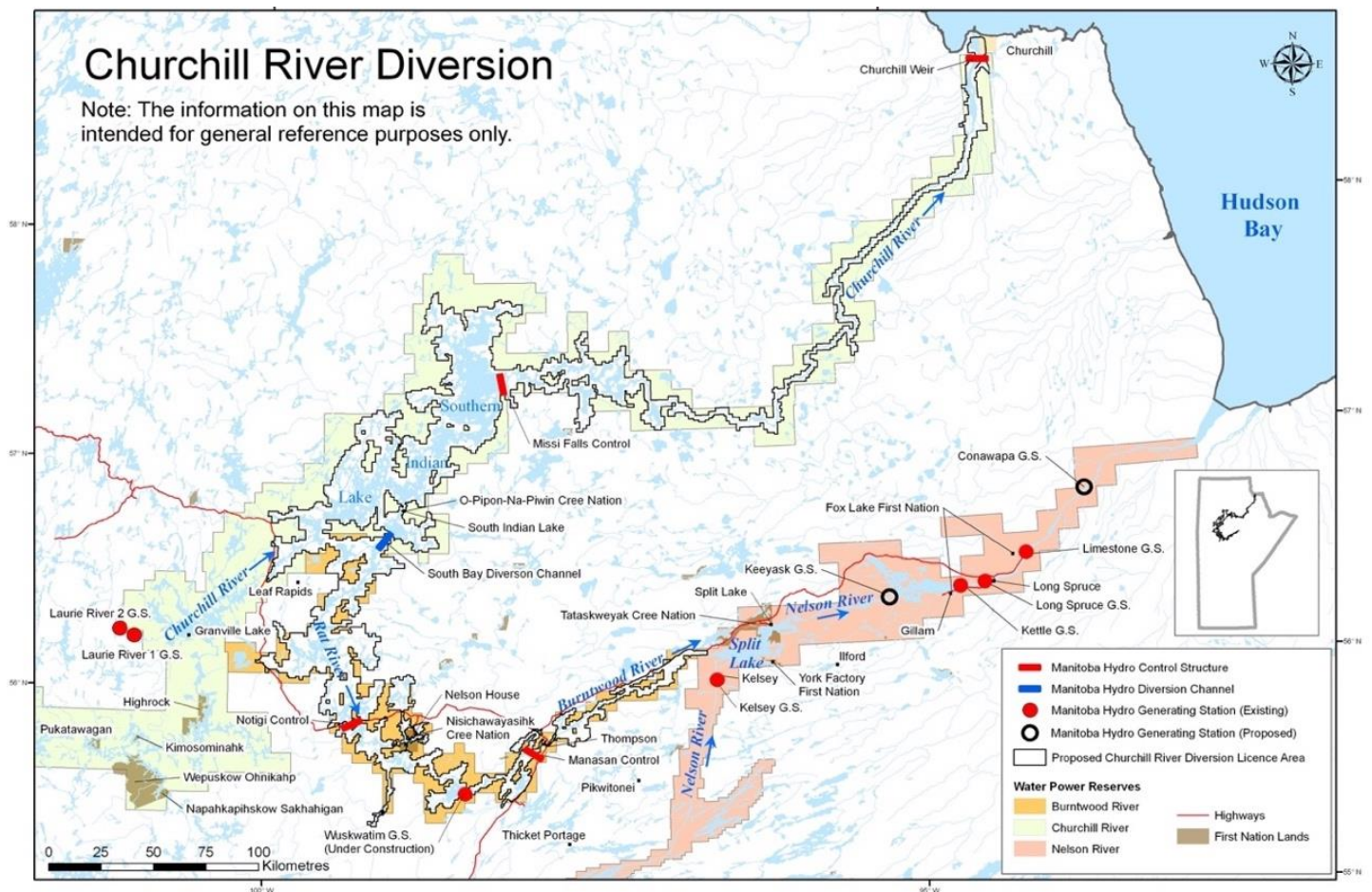
The second component of the

CRD includes what is known as the “South Bay Diversion Channel” which is “a 9.3 kilometer (5.8 mile) long, 60 metre (200 foot) wide excavated channel which diverts water from Southern Indian Lake into the Rat Lake System” and the final component of the CRD is the the “Notogi Control Structure.” Notogi functions to “regulate the volume of water released into Burntwood River system” (Government of Manitoba, n.d.a).

Technically speaking, the diversion, under the terms of the Interim License, operates this way:

Water is stored in Southern Indian Lake to a maximum level of 847.0 ft asl and may be drawn down over winter to a minimum of 844.0 ft asl. Maximum allowable discharge through the Notigi structure is 30,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) and the flow at Thompson must not exceed the average mean flow of the pre-CRD Burntwood River plus the diverted 30,000 cfs. The licence also requires a minimum outflow from the control dam at Missi Falls down the Churchill River of not less than 500 cfs during the open- water season and 1,500 cfs during the ice- cover period (Clean Environment Commission, 2004, p.16).

The diversion is complete once the waters from the Churchill empty into the Nelson River. The CRD, including structures, route and flow of waters, are illustrated in Figure 3.5 below:



**Figure 3.5: “Churchill River Diversion.”**  
**Image Credit: Government of Manitoba (n.d.b).**

According to the government of Manitoba, plans were made to proceed with the CRD in 1966 when “Manitoba Hydro in February 1966 announced its intention to divert the Churchill River as part of an overall plan of northern hydro development [and] in December 1972, an interim license to proceed with the diversion was issued to Manitoba Hydro by the Water Resources Branch of the Manitoba Department of Mines, Resources and Environmental Management. Construction contracts were awarded in 1973, and the diversion was in operation in 1977” (*sic*, Government of Manitoba, n.d.a).

Another component or rather regulatory element of the Churchill River Diversion is the “Augmented Flow Program” (AFP). This latter feature permits Manitoba Hydro to deviate from the conditions outlined in the Interim License replacing it with new limits outlined by the AFP. Under the AFP,

The Minister responsible for *The Water Power Act* approves an annual Augmented Flow Program (AFP) in response to requests from MH. The approval permits an expanded range of storage on Southern Indian Lake and changes the flow limits and levels downstream on the Burntwood River. The maximum permitted level of Southern Indian Lake is increased by 0.5 ft to 847.5 ft asl and the minimum level is decreased to 843.0 ft. This increases the maximum allowable variation of the lake over a 12 month period from 3 to 4.5 ft (Clean Environment Commission, 2004, p. 17).

### **Lake Winnipeg Regulation**

The plan relating to the Lake Winnipeg Regulation component of Hydro’s broader project scheme described above effectively entailed utilizing Lake Winnipeg as a massive storage reservoir for generating stations that would be created along the upper reaches of Nelson River system. By increasing water outflows from Lake Winnipeg together with creating the ability to regulate these flows, developers were able to manipulate the natural flow of waters from Lake Winnipeg in the operation of the generating stations further up the Nelson River. Regulation was

achieved when developers strategically excavated large tracks of land, as captured in Figure 3.4 and 3.5, allowing them to control outflows from Lake Winnipeg.

According to Hydro “the regulation of Lake Winnipeg was deemed necessary because in its natural state, the water out flow into the Nelson River is more during the spring and early summer months and less in the fall and winter months. The problem for hydroelectric generation in Manitoba is that the greater volume of out flow is needed in the fall and winter than it is in the spring and summer” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d., p.42).

Technically speaking, the diversion project began in the 1970’s and was completed by 1976. Hydro writes that the project entailed three phases:



**Figure 3.6: “Lake Winnipeg Regulation Project—Location Plan.”**  
**Image Credit: Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board, 1975, p. 20.**

“One, the two-mile Channel, the eight-mile Channel, and the Ominawin Channel, which were built to increase water out flow from the lake in winter. Two, Jenpeg Generating Station and its Control Dam, which was built at the point where the west channel of the Nelson River discharges into Cross Lake. And three, a dam was built at the outlet of Kiskitto Lake to prevent water from backing up into the lake” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.j, p.42).

Additional components of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation, not discussed above, are captured in Figure 3.3. In addition to ensuring the generations located on the upper Nelson River, the LWR scheme together with the CRD would ensure that developers could access increased and dependable water flows in the winter when demand was greatest.

### **The Latest Installments and Proposals**

The Wuskwatim Generating Station was one of the first of two new generating stations constructed along the dammed, excavated and rerouted Churchill-Rat-Burntwood-Nelson corridor which has now become known as the Churchill River Diversion (CRD). Wuskwatim represents the latest installment of the hydroelectric network in northern Manitoba. Construction of this station began in 2006 following the ratification of a business agreement, known as the Project Development Agreement (PDA), by NCN members, and was completed in 2012, (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.i.). Manitoba Hydro reports that:

The Wuskwatim Generating Station is located on the Burntwood River, in the Nelson House Resource Management Area, approximately 45 km southwest of Thompson and 35 km southeast of Nelson House. The station was developed and is owned by the Wuskwatim Power Limited Partnership (WPLP), a legal entity involving Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) and Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro operates the station as part of the Manitoba power grid on behalf of WPLP. (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.i.).

It should be noted that the Wuskwatim Generating Station (Wuskwatim) is much smaller in scope and scale compared to other stations located along the Nelson River corridor, and in comparison to the Grand Rapids Generating Station. Proponents of Wuskwatim touted the small

environmental footprint of this station during the regulatory hearings and processes attached to the proposal but it should also be noted that Wuskwatim lies along lands and is fed by waters that have already been inundated by and impacted by activities related to the Churchill River Diversion scheme from the 1970's.

As will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, Wuskwatim ultimately represented a purportedly new approach to dam building in northern Manitoba and the newest generating stations to be constructed in northern Manitoba now involve indigenous “partners” who were offered limited equity partnerships in new projects.

Keeyask Generating Station is the latest station intended to increase the capacity of the hydroelectric monopoly currently operating in the northern Manitoba. As depicted in Figure 3.2., this station is set to produce just under 700 MW of hydropower. A Federal report (2014) recently characterized the project in this manner:

[The Keeyask Limited Partnership represents a] joint venture between four local Cree Nations, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, and York Factory First Nation, and Manitoba Hydro. The Project would be located approximately 30 kilometres southwest of Gillam, 60 kilometres northeast of Split Lake and 180 kilometres north-east of the City of Thompson and would consist of a power house complex, spillway, dams and dykes, cofferdams, access roads, borrow sources, a work camp, and supporting infrastructure. A 93 square kilometre reservoir would be created upstream of the principal structures, consisting of approximately 45 square kilometres of newly inundated lands. A transmission line would be developed, owned, and operated by Manitoba Hydro to provide construction power to the Project site. Manitoba Hydro would also build three new transmission lines to transmit electricity from the Keeyask Generation Project to an existing converter station for use in Manitoba and export markets (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, p. iii).

In the description of the Keeyask project provided above, proponents of the newest proposal include several First Nations communities from the surrounding project region. The agreement governing the Keeyask venture will be described in the following chapter but only to the extent that this information is useful in helping create a chronology outlining agreements and processes

undertaken by developers and *Ithinewuk* in northern Manitoba. The site of the proposed Keeyask station is captured in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 respectively.

As already noted, the information contained in this chapter was intended to chart Hydro's footprint(s) in the Cree homelands of *Ithinewuk*. The data contained in the maps, charts and chronologies are important to understanding the physical impacts on the land and for locating the ways landscapes and waterways were altered. They do not, however, speak to or give indication of the various ways a number of artificially created routes and corridors have affected the Cree. For example, in displacing the water, on mass, grave yards were flooded; cultural, spiritual and historic sites were inundated by flood waters and have tremendous bearing on the social and cultural fabric of numerous communities which will be discussed later in this study. The following chapter will concisely summarize the bureaucratic agreements required to establish and subsequently grow the hydroelectric system that produces more than 5000 MW of hydropower in northern Manitoba.

#### **Chapter Four:** **Temporal Considerations: Charting Hydro's Agreements**

The damming of lakes and the diverting of powerful rivers in northern Manitoba required extensive planning, technical knowledge and staunch determination. As indicated in the title above, this chapter aims to chart the temporal reality attached to the Hydro network in northern Manitoba by highlighting key bureaucratic agreement making over time, which became critical to the establishment and expansion of the hydroelectric enterprise; this necessarily entailed the damming of rivers, diverting of waters and the flooding of lands.

In short, the following chapter aims to provide a brief overview of forty year's worth of agreements involving Cree decision makers, developers and indigenous communities within the study region. More specifically, the following chapter reviews key agreements between the federal and provincial government *and* developers, governments and First Nations communities, respectively. As indicated above, agreement making was key to the undertaking of the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) and the Lake Winnipeg Regulation projects (LWR); hence, the agreements governed and guided the path of "development."

This chapter examines two distinct phases of industry activity. The focus will transition toward a brief discussion concerning extra-provincial energy demands, as it relates to hydroelectric energy production in northern Manitoba. The discussion will conclude with a nominal discussion of agreements and arrangements reached in Quebec between developers, governments and the James Bay Cree because this looking to this region provides a contrasting view of deal making and dam building during the same era(s) affecting Cree peoples in another part of the country.

The study contained here focuses on two distinct periods of hydroelectric energy production in northern Manitoba, which in the view of this study was ushered in with the



construction of the Grand Rapids Generating Station in the 1960's. While Grand Rapids is neither a component of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) nor the Churchill River Diversion (CRD), it is discussed in this study because this "project represented the first phase of a massive hydroelectric development scheme which, the Manitoba government, hoped, would harness the most powerful rivers in north" (Waldram, 1988, p.85).

Despite being the first major hydro project affecting Aboriginal peoples, lands and livelihoods in the northerly regions of Manitoba, formal comprehensive compensation packages like the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) were not made between governments and the Aboriginal peoples affected by the Grand Rapids Generating station, until more recently. While settlement agreements would eventually be reached relating to the impacts of the projects, these would materialize much later and for this reason, discussion about the agreements or arrangements reached as a result of this the Grand Rapids project is absent from the chronology that follows. Instead, the following pages focus on agreements made between developers, governments and the First Nations communities north of Grand Rapids who were and continue to be affected by activities and the expansion of the hydroelectric network affecting the Churchill, Burntwood and Nelson River tributaries.

The cursory summary that will be undertaken in this chapter spans a little more than four decades. It will consider three distinct types of agreements made by Manitoba Hydro, the province of Manitoba, the government of Canada and respective hydro-affected Cree that occurred over two distinct waves of "development." As such, considering the temporal impacts of hydroelectric energy production in northern Manitoba becomes possible when looking more closely at the agreements made. Describing key components and/or objectives of the various

Hydro agreements will also help make sense of the perspectives shared by some Hydro-affected Cree contained in subsequent chapters.

While this study could be read as an account occurring in localized settings and localized contexts deep in respective Cree territories of northern Manitoba, many outcomes in the study region have been affected by events outside the province. Demands for energy are examples of these external influences which will be discussed. As such, this chapter considers the hydro history concerning the “*Eeyouch*” of northern Quebec because the agreements negotiated in this part of the country, during similar timelines, provides a glimpse at approaches taken by developers and governments in another part of the country.

Looking briefly at the expressions of self-determination, as evidenced in the ways the James Bay Cree engaged with developers and governments in this region in the 1970s, and again when negotiating what has become known as the “The Peace of the Braves” in the early 2000’s, reveals that another path regarding implementation and “future developments” (NCN Cree, n.d.) could have been possible in Manitoba. Processes, and ultimately the negotiation, of Hydro agreements in Quebec were undertaken *without* requiring the Cree to assume an equity stake in the projects, as was the case in Manitoba. Put another way, the “*Eeyouch*” of the James Bay region were able to negotiate an agreement and *were not* required to assume a risk-equity stake in the expansion activities of hydro developers in their territories. In fact, the Cree in Quebec retained a degree of control over their resources and other health and social programming (Grand Council of the Crees, n.d.) while the Cree in Manitoba received nothing of the sort.

While this study is focused on broader and collective processes affecting entire communities and regions, including acts of community resistance at a macro level, which are briefly discussed later in this study, it is important to remember that individual or micro acts of

resistance, resurgence (Alfred, 2005; Simpson, 2011; Coulthard, 2014) and/or or subversion (Kulchyski, 2005) are also taking place on the land and in the waters.

Simpson (2011), reminds us that “when resistance is defined solely in political mobilization, we miss much of what has kept our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive. We have those things because our ancestors often acted within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they could to their children, to occupy and use our lands as we always had” (p.16). Simpson also rightly points out that “indigenous peoples...are currently engaged in the longest running resistance movement in Canadian history” (p. 13).

The 1960's and 1970's in Canada ushered in an era where contemporary indigenous communities became highly visible, politicized and directly engaged in struggles over land, resources and their rights. Waldram (1988), Niezen (1998) and Coulthard (2014) document respective case studies involving “development” proposals and pathways that highlight contemporary encounters and struggles between governments, developers and indigenous peoples in the north-eastern and the north-western parts of Canada. From the efforts and struggles of the Dene in northwesterly regions of Canada, to the hydro opposition in the north easterly and respective regions of Manitoba and Quebec in the 1970's, collectives of indigenous communities have actively resisted industrial and bureaucratic encroachment on their lands.

*Ithinewuk* in Northern Manitoba live on lands and along waterways which have become valuable to one of the hydroelectric “giants” in Canada (Wera and Martin, 2008, p. 57).

*Ithinewuk* have effectively found themselves face to face with energy developers and governments who, beginning the mid-1960's, sought to create a massive hydroelectric network on the very lands which sustained the Cree and their families for generations. In the earliest

stages of energy production, *Ithinewuk* in these regions would not remain passive bystanders or observers as their lands and waters were devastated by developers and governments.

The timeline discussed here represents two waves of “development” which ostensibly began with Hydro’s activities as they relate to the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) and the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) schemes which were implemented in the early 1970’s and throughout the 1980’s. As will be discussed below, the initial wave of “development” occurred during this era and Cree opposition to the CRD/LWR projects ultimately culminated in the 1977 *Northern Flood Agreement*. The second wave of activities is represented by the newest round of activities, which for the purposes of this study was ostensibly ushered in with signing of the Implementation Agreements made throughout the 1990’s, and includes the so-called “partnership” era which was undertaken between governments, developers and four of the *NFA* Cree Bands. The three distinct types of agreements are highlighted below, along with compensation agreements which are not charted below, not only facilitated and allowed developers and governments to establish and expand the hydroelectric network in northern Manitoba, the latest agreements allowed for the expansion of Hydro’s network along the Burntwood-Nelson River corridors.

### **The Northern Flood Committee and The Inter-Church Task Force on Northern Flooding**

The era of agreement making between the federal and provincial governments, between the federal, provincial and First Nations governments, including new so-called “partnership” agreements between developers, governments and several of the Northern Flood communities in northern Manitoba, began in the mid-1960’s following the construction of the Grand Rapids Generating Station (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.j). As will be discussed, the earliest agreements and

proposals were made and implemented *without* the consent of those indigenous communities that would be directly affected by industry proposals and activities (Emphasis added). The inclusion of First Nations communities in the decision-making processes would not begin until nearly a decade later, in the mid-1970's, when the Cree collectively, actively and forcefully began opposing developers' plans.

Like their linguistic and cultural cousins in Quebec, *Ithinewuk* effectively found themselves engaged with developers and governments over hydroelectric production in the 1970's. *Ithinewuk* in Manitoba were clearly opposed to government and industry plans and responded to the unilateral presence, encroachment and actions of developers by forming the Northern Flood Committee (NFC). Comprised of chiefs from the Split Lake, Nelson House, Norway House, York Landing, and Cross Lake bands and lead by the Cree at Nelson House, the NFC was established in 1974 (Keeper, 1999 p. 99).

The newly created political body was effectively tasked with engaging bureaucrats and developers on various issues related to impacts and implications concerning Hydro's projects and proposals. The Report of the Panel of Public Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development (1975) noted [that respective *NFA* First Nations bands were] "feeling that as individuals they [were] in a very weak position in negotiating with Hydro, [and] want[ed] negotiations on their behalf to be carried on by the Northern Flood Committee, which [was] financed by the Federal Government and [had] the benefit of technical and legal consultants" (p.28). In short, the NFC was established so that the Cree would have a collective and unified front when engaging with developers and bureaucrats.

In 1973 a handful of clergy from southern Manitoba became aware of the plight of the northern Cree who effectively found themselves up against bureaucrats and developers as plans

were being undertaken that would dramatically alter their lands, waterways and livelihoods. Diversion plans were being made in the south which would entail mass flooding to the very lands the Cree relied upon for their sustenance and water flows would, in some cases, be completely reversed.

The Manitoba Aboriginal Rights Coalition (2001) wrote that in “1975 the Inter-Church Task Force on Northern Flooding held a [citizen lead] public inquiry to determine whether indigenous peoples would be severely impacted by a major hydroelectric development then under construction in northern Manitoba” [and that] “*the task force did so because the Manitoba and Canadian governments refused to do so*” (Emphasis added, Part 1). As a result, the Inter-Church Task Force forced critical dialogue about purported benefits of the projects; they also compelled dialogue about where the Cree stood in relation to developers’ plans. As a result of its activities, the Inter-Church Task Force on Northern Flooding was poised to and supported the formation of the Northern Flood Committee (Manitoba Aboriginal Rights Coalition, 2001, Part 1).

During the initial phase of Hydro activities in northern Manitoba, the Cree were staunchly opposed to Hydro’s plans. According to the Minister of Indian Affairs who supervised the negotiations of the Northern Flood Committee, Warren Allmand, the NFC bands “were opposed to the flooding, but they couldn't fight it. There was a big movement to oppose this flooding. They wanted to keep their land as it was. When that failed, [the NFA] was the next best thing. They agreed to [the NFA] agreement” (Aboriginal Standing Committee transcript, 1245). For Joe Keeper, the former Executive Director of the NFC, “the Northern Flood Committee was a modern day reaction by the Indian people of northern Manitoba to a process or an action which

had been initiated centuries earlier when the white man first set foot on the shores of North America and began his takeover of Indian lands and Indian values” (1999, p.95).

The NFC, with the support of the Inter-Church Task Force on Northern Flooding, arrived at the *Northern Flood Agreement* in December of 1977. This agreement, while not perfect, represented a tangible outcome for those Cree who had lobbied and opposed developer’s unilateral attempts to build dams, excavate diversion channels, and create artificial spillways with little to no consideration of their ways of living.

### **The Northern Flood Agreement**

The NFA consists of twenty-five articles and eight schedules (Suchan, 1999). Among other provisions contained in the agreement, the parties came to a common understanding about:

How the land was to be exchanged and used, provisions for navigation, water quality, preservations of cemeteries and objects of cultural significance and the making of detailed maps. There were also provisions to minimize damage, to offer insurance for life, accident and disability, and to deal with community infrastructure, additional clearing, and policy as wildlife resources policy, planning and environmental impact policy, trapline and fishing programs, community liaison committees, an employment taskforce, remedial works and an arbitration process (p. 37).

In Part III of its report, the Manitoba Aboriginal Rights Coalition, summarized the terms of the NFA as follows (applicable NFA articles are noted in parentheses):

- the NFC Bands would receive “new reserve land in exchange for affected lands (3.1-3.4);
- [Receive] compensation for damaged property such as docks, fish nets, boats, etc.
- free and normal navigation on all waterways (5);
- minimization of damages (10, 22);
- employment, training and job creation (12.3, 15.7, 18.5, 21);
- community social and economic development (16, Schedule E);
- maximum opportunity to pursue the traditional lifestyle (16.2), including first priority to wildlife resources within traditional resource use areas (15.1);
- compensation for death or injury resulting from effects of the Project (11);

- protection of culturally significant sites such as burial grounds (7);
- [and a process] to address disputes about implementation, the NFA makes; provision for a jointly appointed arbitrator with the power to resolve conflicts (24).

In short, the *NFA* was a mechanism intended to mitigate and/or address an array of issues created by activities associated with Hydro's projects during the initial wave of "development." It was intended to deal with issues of compensation, impacts to land, land use as well as remediation; it also attempted to address issues related to community development, among other things.

David Newman, Manitoba's Minister of Northern Affairs, and the Minister "responsible for Native Affairs" in 1999, stated the *NFA* "was based on broad principles which were intended to guide the governments, Hydro and the five First Nations in implementing and administering the provisions, as well as decisions handed down to settle disputes" (1999, p.43). According to Newman, "the reasons for both the structures and provisions of the agreement were simple. In 1977, the full effects of the Churchill River Diversion and Lake Winnipeg Regulation, including damage, were not yet known or could not be measured or calculated. There was also uncertainty about what those adverse affects would be" (p.43).

The Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission described the *NFA* in this way:

The agreement provided for an exchange of four acres for each acre flooded, the expansion and protection of wildlife harvesting rights, five million dollars to be paid over five years to support economic development projects on the reserves and promises of employment opportunities. The agreement was also to deal with any adverse effects to the 'lands, pursuits, activities and lifestyles of reserve residents.' The five First Nations were guaranteed a role in future resource development as well as in wildlife management and environmental protection. Certain water level guarantees were made and Manitoba Hydro generally accepted responsibility for any negative consequences that might emanate from the flooding. In return, Hydro obtained the right to flood reserve lands as part of the Churchill Diversion Project. Disputes over any adverse effects were to be settled by arbitration (Emphasis mine, n.d.).



Examples of provisions contained in the NFA (as cited in Chodkiewicz and Brown, 1999 at pages 43-44) are summarized below:

<b>Provisions contained in <i>Northern Flood Agreement</i> (as described by Minister Newman)</b>	<b>Applicable provisions in <i>NFA</i><sup>3</sup></b>
Land would be exchanged “at a rate of four acres for every acre of reserve [land] affected” (p.43);	See ARTICLE 3: “Land Exchange”
Each NFA Band would receive a “continuous supply of drinking water, meeting federal health and safety standards” (p. 43);	See ARTICLE 6: “Quality of Water”
Individual and community level (First Nations) remedial measures (p.43-44). Examples cited include “docks, shoreline protection, sewer and water works” (p.44);	See ARTICLES: 1 (1.14) and 22 (“Remedial Works”) respectively
Measures related to “Environmental impacts, traplines, fishing and land use” (p.44);	ARTICLES: 4 (“Land Use”), 5 (“Navigation”), 10 (“Minimization of Damage”), 12 (“Community Infrastructure”), 13 (“Additional Clearing”), 15 (“Wildlife Resources Policy”) , 19 (“Registered Trapline and Program and Fishing Program”) and Schedule “D” respectively
“Wildlife resources policy and community development planning” (p.44);	ARTICLES: 15 (“Wildlife Resources Policy”) and 21 (“Employment Task Force”); and Schedule “E” (“Community Planning& Community Development Plan”) respectively
“Detailed provisions covering navigation on affected rivers and lakes” (p. 44);	ARTICLE 5 (“Navigation”)
Task force to address employment of [NFA] band members in “project-related activities” (p.44);	ARTICLE 21 (“Employment Task Force”)
An “arbitration process” which would allow individuals to file personal claims “respecting adverse [project related] effects relating to them” (p.44).	ARTICLE 24 (“Arbitration”)

**Table 4.1: Illustration of the types of provisions contained in the the NFA (as cited in Chodkiewicz and Brown, 1999 at pages 43-44 and Appendix 1 *The Northern Flood Agreement*, 1977 at pp. 154-208).**

<sup>3</sup> The provisions contained here reflect a cursory review of the sections contained in the NFA and should not read to be an exhaustive list of the benefits/terms contained in the document. They are included to provide an example of certain types of provisions contained in the Agreement.

In addition to the provisions noted above, the *Northern Flood Agreement* also included commitments aimed at addressing socio-economic impacts caused by Hydro's activities in Hydro-affected communities covered by the NFA. Such commitments are evidenced in parts of the Agreement like "Schedule 'E'" which contained a pledge to "eradicate mass poverty" (see Chodkiewicz and Brown, 1999, Appendix 1, p. 202). While the NFA attempted to provide compensation and some benefits for the NFA Bands, the Agreement was not without its shortcomings. One weakness of the NFA was arguably the arbitration mechanism(s) contained in the Agreement. In order to settle claims arising from the impacts and effects of the projects, the compensation mechanism would regularly need to be triggered by a claim. As might be expected, the process could be lengthy.

While the *NFA* had its shortcomings, that the Cree formed and adopted a unified stance which effectively aimed to protect their lands, livelihoods and rights to the best extent possible at that time represents a significant victory. That the Cree struggled for, and eventually arrived at the NFA, indicates that there was clearly dissent on the part of the Cree and a contemporary reading of the processes related to creation of the Northern Flood Committee, and the NFA itself as process and product, could be characterized as a practical example of Coulthard's "grounded normativity" (2014) in action.

Recall that grounded normativity encompassed those land based practices and principles, rooted in place, that helped guide the interactions of indigenous peoples with the world around them. In later writings, Coulthard, along with Leanne Simpson (2016) elaborates that grounded normativity:

Houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, *based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place.* [It] teaches us how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive

manner [and it] teaches us how to be in respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial responsibilities or common political or economic interests. *Our relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices, and knowledges that inform our political systems* (Emphasis added, p. 254).

While it has not been discussed at length thus far, it is important to note that *Ithinewuk* were opposed to, and vocalized their opposition to, Hydro's scheme to divert and dam the lakes, rivers and other tributaries in northern Manitoba. Their concerns arguably formed the basis of the unified opposition to Hydro's plans and these concerns were noted in the 1975 Interchurch Task Force on Northern Flooding report, and to a lesser degree, to a degree in the Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board report in that same year.

The Interchurch Task Force on Northern Flooding (1975) report notes that the Cree were concerned about the impacts on their treaty rights writing that "the Indians rightly regard reserve lands as belonging to them. They complain vigorously that the Agreement of 1966 between Canada and Manitoba for the Nelson-Churchill development was made without consultation with them and that though the development did not call actual appropriation of Indian lands, it did and still does involve extensive flooding of such lands... and such flooding is equivalent to expropriation" (p. 20). The report goes on to mention that because of the extensive flooding that would be caused at Nelson House Indian Reserve, the people of Nelson House took the lead in forming the Northern Flood Committee (p.11-12). The Report also notes that Hydro was "negotiating with individual trappers instead of the Northern Flood Committee which naturally disturbed the Indians" (p.21).

The Taskforce report iterated Cree concerns relating to hunting and trapping stating that "a number of Indians who testified at the [Interchurch Task Force] Hearings, stated that what they feared the most was that this huge power project on the Nelson River coupled with the

diversion of most of the Churchill River...would destroy their whole way of life” (1975, p. 21-22). Here I write, more than forty years later, and the fears articulated in the 1975 reports have come to pass and much of a way of life has been devastated.

Less than two decades after arriving at the *Northern Flood Agreement*, each of the Cree signatories, with the exception of *Pimicikamak*, would enter of talks and negotiations as they moved toward what are known as “Comprehensive,” “NFA” or “Master” Implementation Agreements (these agreements will simply be referred to as Implementation Agreements). The Implementation Agreements on the one hand have been characterized as representing attempts to implement or realize the commitments made in the *NFA* (see for example a governmental perspective on the implementation agreements in Chodkiewicz & Brown, 1999 at p. 41-53). Alternate views hold that these agreements are simply “buy-outs.”

Four of the five *Northern Flood Agreement* Cree Bands would go on to sign Implementation Agreements beginning with *Tataskweyak* in 1992. These latter agreements were purportedly aimed at providing tangible compensation to the *NFA* First Nations without having to engage prolonged arbitration processes (Chodkiewicz & Brown, 1999). *Ithinewuk* living in the Cree community historically known as Cross Lake, but now known as *Pimicikamak*, remains the lone signatory to the *Northern Flood Agreement*. As will be highlighted below, at least one of the Implementation Agreements would contain a clause, “Article 8,” which could be read as the impetus that would facilitate the framework and process for the newest agreements (Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, n.d.a).

The latest and most recent wave of activities in north related to dam building and agreement making, signals a significant departure from the positions which solidified the collective stance and opposition of the Cree as represented in the formation of the Northern

Flood Committee and to the signing of the NFA. The Cree, with the exception of *Pimicikamak*, have effectively turned towards “development” on developers’ terms.

### **Comprehensive Implementation Agreements**

In the years following the endorsement of the *Northern Flood Agreement*, and slow paced resolutions of NFA claims, governments and industry actively sought ways to address and realize the commitments made in the NFA (see Newman in Chodkiewicz & Brown, 1999). The process ultimately culminated in agreements that have become known as “Comprehensive” or “Master Implementation Agreements.” It should be noted that the Northern Flood Committee, which unified the communities and allowed them the strength to negotiate the NFA, no longer existed by the 1990s and hence the Implementation Agreements were negotiated on a community by community basis. Provisions of these agreements are discussed below and critical perspectives regarding these successor agreements are varied and perhaps most exemplified in the comments made by a former bureaucrat who was involved in the negotiation of the *NFA*:

Four master implementation agreements [were made]. But in fact *they are not really implementation agreements when you read them; they really rescind and terminate benefits that were provided under the 1977 Northern Flood Agreement*. They do provide for certain benefits, but they're of a different nature. A real implementation agreement would build on the Northern Flood Agreement and would set out means for implementation rather than terminating benefits that were in the original agreement (Emphasis added, Allmand, 1999, at para 1120).

The excerpt above is taken directly from testimony given by the former Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs who, in 1977, supervised the negotiation of the *Northern Flood Agreement*.

Allmand’s statement is indicative of the polarizing perspectives regarding Hydro and of the Implementation Agreements specifically, which were made with four of the five Northern Flood Committee Bands.

Because this study will include lesser known and perhaps lesser heard perspectives relating Hydro's presence on Cree lands, and will consider these perspectives in light of the "new" directions developers haven taken regarding the contemporary phase of dam building in the north, it is important to note there are varied opinions concerning dam building and agreement making in our respective territories. The Implementation Agreements and the so-called "partnership" era have contributed to polarizing and divisive views at micro (individual) and macro (community) levels.

The initial positions and view of the Hydro-affected *Northern Flood Agreement* (NFA) Cree in northern Manitoba assumed in its dealing with developers and governments, as represented and expressed in the ratification of the *NFA*, seems to have been lost in the newest round of agreement making and "partnership" planning. Until the early 1990's, the NFC Bands had continued to push government and industry signatories to the terms of the *NFA*; however, beginning in the 1990's, strategy changed and *NFA* implementation would change.

If the *Northern Flood Agreement* represents the first of three formalized agreements in the Hydro saga that continues to unfold in northern Manitoba, then the second round of agreement making can be said to be embodied in the Implementation Agreements. This second wave of agreements were made with four of the five NFC Bands beginning with the Split Lake Cree who are now known as *Tataskweyak* Cree Nation. The table below summarizes key features of the newer agreements:

Comprehensive/Master Implementation Agreements			
Band	Date of Agreement	Settlement Proceeds	Land Component
Split Lake	June, 1992	\$47.4 million	34,100 acres to reserve, 2,800 acres fee simple
York Factory	December, 1995	\$25.2 million	19,000 acres to reserve, fee simple land in Churchill
Nelson House	January 1996	\$ 64.9 million	60,000 acres to reserve, 5 acres fee simple
Norway House	December 1997	\$ 78.9 million	55, 000 acres to reserve, 2,000 acres to fee simple

**Table 4.2: Summary of information related to Implementation Agreements. Information obtained from “Part IV: Master Implementation Agreements” (Manitoba Aboriginal Rights Coalition, 2001).**

Then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs for Manitoba, David Newman, affirmed in 1999 that the Implementation Agreements represented government and industry’s attempts to fulfill the commitments made in the *NFA* (see Chapter 2 in Chodkiewicz and Brown). Alternative views hold that the Implementation Agreements negated some of the rights and terms of the *NFA*; this position is perhaps most notably exemplified in the testimony of former Minister of Indian Affairs, Warren Allmand (1999), who appeared before the Standing Committee On Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and asserted:

There were four master implementation agreements... one for each of the involved [*NFA*] nations... but in fact they are not really implementation agreements when you read them; they really rescind and terminate benefits that were provided under the 1977 Northern Flood Agreement. They do provide for certain benefits, but they're of a different nature. A real implementation agreement would build on the Northern Flood Agreement and would set out means for implementation rather than terminating benefits that were in the original agreement (at para 1120).

A similar perspective relating to the effect of these agreements holds that the “so-called Implementation Agreements modified, eliminated or liquidated the majority of rights and benefits of the Aboriginal parties that were contained in the *NFA*” (Orkin, 1999, p. 120).

## **Other Settlement Agreements**

It should be noted that not all hydro affected Cree were party to the 1977 Northern Agreement. Developers, and governments—where applicable, undertook to address respective issues and matters at the community level, as evidenced in the series of settlement agreements documented below. The majority of the agreements noted below, like the *NFA*, affect other Cree and/or other Aboriginal peoples, as they are constituted within the respective settlement agreements noted below. The agreement making era noted below commenced in 1990 and occurred until 2010.

The table captures settlement agreements and are distinct from the Comprehensive Implementation Agreements noted above. A key difference or feature in the agreements illustrated below is that they do not include a signatory from the Federal government as was/is the case with the *Northern Flood Agreement* and the Comprehensive/Master Implementation Agreements documented noted above. Nor were the indigenous communities included in the agreements party to the 1977 NFA. According to Manitoba Hydro, the agreements are “community wide” (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.p.). Note that the agreements documented below will not be discussed in this study as the study focuses on the impacts and outcomes of the Cree who were parties to the *Northern Flood Agreement*. Table 4.3 has been included for informational purposes only.



<b>Hydro Settlement Agreements</b>		
<b>Community/Communities</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Parties</b>
Chemawawin/Easterville	1990	Chemawawin First Nation, Easterville Community Council, The Queen in Right of the Province of Manitoba as Represented by the Minister of Northern Affairs, Manitoba Hydro Electric Board
Moose Lake	1990	Moose Lake Band Of Indians, Moose Lake Community Council, Manitoba Hydro Electric Board
Cormorant	1991	Cormorant Community Association Inc., The Queen in Right of the Province of Manitoba as Represented by the Minister of Northern Affairs, Manitoba Hydro Electric Board
Grand Rapids	1991	Grand Rapids First Nation, Manitoba Hydro Electric Board
The Pas	1991	The Pas Indian Band, Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board
Sagkeeng Nation	1997	Sagkeeng [First] Nation, Manitoba Hydro
Sagkeeng Nation	1998	Sagkeeng [First] Nation, Manitoba Hydro
Easterville Community	2004	Easterville Community Council, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of Manitoba as Represented By the Minister of Conservation, the Manitoba Hydro Electric Board
Fox Lake	2004	Fox Lake First Nation, Her Majesty the Queen In Right of the Province of Manitoba as Represented by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Manitoba Hydro- Electric Board
Fox Lake Schedules	2004	Fox Lake First Nation, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of Manitoba as Represented by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Manitoba Hydro- Electric Board
Moose Lake Community Council	2005	Moose Lake Community Council, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of Manitoba as Represented By the Minister of Conservation, the Manitoba Hydro Electric Board
War Lake First Nation	2005	War Lake First Nation, Her Majesty the Queen In Right of the Province of Manitoba as Represented by the Minister of Aboriginal And Northern Affairs, Manitoba Hydro Electric Board
Nelson House Community Council	2006	The Incorporated Community of Nelson House, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of The Province of Manitoba as Represented by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board
Pickrel Narrows Community Association	2006	Pickrel Narrows Community Association Inc., Manitoba Hydro Electric Board
Cross Lake Community	2010	The Incorporated Community of Cross Lake, Her Majesty The Queen In Right of the Province of Manitoba as Represented by the Minister of Northern Affairs, The Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board

**Table 4.3: Settlement Agreements with other Aboriginal Communities in Northern Manitoba**  
**Source: Manitoba Hydro, n.d.p.**

## **From the NFA to Implementation Agreements to “Partnerships”**

Since the 1970’s the landscapes in northern Manitoba seem to have evolved into a battleground of sorts between Hydro proponents and anyone else who questions their pathways. Since the signing of the Implementation Agreements, criticism and hostilities have turned inward affecting the micro and macro politics within First Nations, and at times, between *Northern Flood Agreement* (NFA) communities. As will be discussed below, and in subsequent chapters, a number of *NFA* Bands began engaging in “new” approaches following the close of the Implementation Agreement era and efforts turned to “partnerships” and dam building.

Following years of negotiations, several of the same communities who were devastated by hydroelectric “development” in the 1970’s and 1980’s would become proponents and champions of new partnership models and would actively endorse and participate in processes aimed at acquiring regulatory approvals for proposed generating stations. The proposals, model and stakes in the newest wave of “development” were unlike any of the Crown corporation’s previous endeavors. In this newest round, impoverished Cree communities were effectively presented with opportunities to invest (and re-invest) in the proposed expansion of the hydroelectric system in exchange for a share of the profits. This new approach on the surface appears to be a generous offer and has been touted as an “opportunity” for all NFA Bands; however, a closer look at the process and outcomes reveal a much more complex and ambiguous pathway.

The Wuskwatim Power Limited Partnership (WPLP), or “Wuskwatim,” was the first agreement in the latest series of agreements and proposals slated for northern Manitoba tributaries. The model used in the WPLP, and later in the making of the agreement and partnership concerning the Keeyask project, signaled perhaps the most dramatic change in

direction, positions and strategies from the Cree point of view as they contemplated a new hydro reality in their respective territories.

Under the newest hydroelectric “development” proposals, *Ithinewuk* from various First Nations in northern Manitoba were presented with “opportunities” to partner with Hydro as it contemplated plans to increase generating capacity along the Churchill-Rat-Burntwood-Nelson River corridors. In the newest round of activities, a number of the *NFA* Bands were not opponents to Hydro’s vision as had been the case in the initial round of the “development” activities in the 1970’s. Instead, many of the same Cree communities would go on to sign what have become known as “partnership agreements” which effectively required the Cree to not only invest capital into the proposed projects, the newest proposals would see the Cree support and lobby for the projects.

The Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) was the first to enter into new partnership agreement. The basic premise of the agreement was that in order for NCN to participate in the agreement, NCN would be required to invest an unknown sum of money, which at the time was forecasted based on projections and market fluctuations, for an opportunity to acquire up to thirty-three percent of the project. A summary document provided to NCN members in 2003 summarized the financial arrangement governing the agreement in this way:

Just before construction is finished (maybe 2010), NCN will have to come up with about \$62 million. NCN and Hydro both anticipate that NCN will not have this much money. Therefore, *Hydro is prepared to lend NCN about \$41 million, so that NCN can be a 33 percent partner.* NCN would pay this back to Hydro from its share of future profits. *NCN Can Own Up To 33% of the Generating Station As part of the \$62 million NCN would have to come up with about \$21 million of its own. Every year, NCN gets about \$4 million to spend from the 1996 Trust. NCN can decide, through the Community Approval Process (CAP), to set aside some money every year until 2010, to use as part of this \$21 million.* NCN may approach governments or others for additional money (Emphasis added, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, 2003, p.2).

In short, through the WPLP, NCN was offered an opportunity to own up to thirty-three percent of the partnership. The proposal was initially governed by a thirteen hundred page document which would later undergo two separate amendments.

The Wuskwatim generating station has a potential to generate up to 200 megawatts of hydroelectric energy. The overall project consist[s] of “[a] Main Dam, Intake/ Powerhouse/ Service Bay Complex, Non-overflow Gravity Dam, Spillway and Transition Structures” (Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, 2001, p. 18) and is located at Tuskingap Falls adjacent to Wuskwatim Lake.

Following the construction of the Wuskwatim generating station, developers turned their attention to Keeyask which is to be constructed along the CRD route. The *Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA)*, referred to as *Keeyask* from this point on, would become the next proposal pursued by hydroelectric developers (and governments) in Manitoba. An entity known as the “Cree Nation Partners” emerged in 2001 and was a partnership between the Cree at Tataskewiyak and War Lake. According to literature produced by the Cree Nation Partners, this entity worked with the Cree at Fox Lake as well as the York Factory First Nation as it endeavored to and ultimately reached a partnership agreement with Manitoba Hydro which would “create a business partnership that will jointly own the Keeyask Generating Station (Cree Nation Partners, n.d.). In short, a fundamental feature of the JKDA is that the Cree communities of Tataskewiyak, War Lake, Fox Lake and York Landing could collectively own up to twenty-five percent share in the Keeyask project.

The Keeyask generating station has an estimated in-service capacity of 695 megawatts (Public Utilities Board, 2014, p.47). It consists of several and interconnected components including: the Powerhouse complex including the “control building, service bay, and seven

turbines each with generator; intake with trash rack, bulkhead, and service gates; scroll case, and draft tube;” the spillway, intake and discharge channels; a manmade reservoir; a transmission line system [which does not form part of the JKDA]; coffer dam; access roads; temporary camps and other supporting infrastructure (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2014, p. 8-9).

### **Agreements Specific to Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation**

Because the remaining chapters focus on reflections, observations and perspectives related to Hydro experiences stemming from and including NCN, coupled with the fact that I am from this particular community and share insights specific to NCN, it is worthwhile charting the series and types of agreements related specifically to NCN. The following chart depicts milestones and/or timelines of various agreements endorsed by leadership at NCN. It also captures parties to the agreements as well as the objectives of the respective agreements/processes. Above all, it captures the frequency of Hydro related agreements over the last four decades.

<b>Agreement</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Signatories</b>	<b>Year</b>
<b>Northern Flood Agreement (NFA)</b>	Compensation agreement for activities and impacts related to the CRD.	Government of Manitoba, Government of Canada, Manitoba Hydro Electric Board, Northern Flood Committee	1977
<b>NFA Implementation Agreement [also known as “Comprehensive Implementation Agreement”]</b>	Agreement was meant to “more clearly” define the “compensation and other issues related to the original Northern Flood Agreement”; also contained [Article 8] provision “that ensured no other hydro electric project in [the] traditional territory could be undertaken, or begun without our agreement or without full and proper consultation;” also gave “NCN rights over any future development in [its] Resource Management Area” (Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, n.d.).	NCN, Manitoba Hydro	1996
<b>Agreement in Principal (AIP)</b>	A “Non-binding” agreement; The purpose of the AIP is to guide a collaborative planning process established by the Parties to conclude a PDA, a PPA, the Development Arrangement and other arrangements in relation to the Wuskwatim/Notigi Projects. The AIP is also to guide discussions and arrangements concerning the Wuskwatim/Notigi Transmission Facilities” (Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, 2001, p.15)	Manitoba Hydro, NCN	2001
<b>Summary of Understanding (SOU)</b>	“Non-binding document between NCN and Manitoba Hydro about the Wuskwatim project. It sets the stage and provides a framework for negotiation of a binding Project Development Agreement” (Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, 2004, p.1)	Manitoba Hydro, NCN	2003
<b>Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement (PDA)</b>	1300 page agreement outlining the structure and scope of the Wuskwatim Limited Partnership.	Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, The Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board, Taskinigahp Power Corporation, 5022649 Manitoba Ltd., Wuskwatim Power Limited Partnership	2006
<b>PDA 1</b>	Agreement/amendment to the terms of 2006 PDA	(see PDA)	2010
<b>PDA 2</b>	Agreement/amendment to the terms of 2006 PDA	(see PDA)	2015

**Table 4.4: NCN Specific Agreements.**

**Source: Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, n.d.; Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, 2004; Chodkiewicz and Brown, 1999; Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, 2001; Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, 2015.**

## **Energy Production in Manitoba and Beyond**

The waters in Manitoba generate an approximate 5000 megawatts of hydroelectricity (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.a) while the waters in Quebec produce more 30,000 megawatts of energy (Hydro Quebec, n.d.). These generating stations, along with all related and necessary supporting structures, lie within the territories of the *Ithinewuk* (“Cree”) in Manitoba and the *Eeyouch* in Quebec respectively.

According to each utility’s website, energy is exported to markets outside their respective provincial boundaries and into the U.S. According to the Manitoba Hydro’s online information, exports amounted to approximately \$400 million in 2014-2015 (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.b). Hydro Quebec on the other hand posts that “Hydro-Québec Production generates electricity to supply the domestic market and sells its excess output on wholesale markets” and that they sell to “wholesale markets in northeastern North America” (Hydro Quebec, n.d.a). Clearly, markets outside the territories of the Cree in Manitoba and Quebec are impacting activities within the territories.

Globalization, writes political science professor Gabrielle Slowley (2008), ‘in recent years has become a common term used in both corporate and political circles to describe contemporary economic, political and even social phenomena...it best describes the process in which markets are opened up for unfettered trade and the accompanying internationalization of production’ (p.40). The fact that external economic forces are impacting “Canada’s internal development” (p. 42) is an important consideration when discussing the politics of energy development in northerly regions of Canada. The ways in which the State (or actors acting on behalf of the Crown) become implicated in the development of energy resources on “Indian”

lands is important because, as will be discussed below, this presence has real implications in the lives of indigenous peoples who are affected by federal policy.

Slowley posits that “the State has moved from assisting capitalism by providing social needs to ushering in a new set of policies designed to promote unfettered markets” (p. 43). In Canada, these “new set of policies” have the ability to impact “negotiations” and can result in questionable or substandard agreements. The impacts of globalization and the “new” strategies and proposals where the State is present have real consequences. And the impacts of these external pressures are clearly evident in northern regions of Canada where “resources are abundant and pressure to develop them is strong” (McCullum, 1975, p.46).

Slowley reflects on historic relations, relationships and agreement making that occurred in Manitoba and Quebec respectively, and this treatise indicates the external factors and “pressures” that prompted the production of hydroelectric energy in these regions. Slowley affirms the presence of external economic drivers to produce hydroelectric energy in Canada, for markets both inside and outside its borders, is useful.

*This Land is Not for Sale* (1975) by Hugh and Karmel McCullum offers important and additional insight into the ways global energy politics impacted the energy development schemes of the 1970’s in northern Canada. The McCullums observed in 1975 that “these regions [became] the promised land of fuel, mineral deposits, and hydroelectric potential” (p.26) and wrote that “as our voracious consumption of energy—and that of the United States—continues to grow, the development of Northern resources will fall increasingly into the hands of multinational corporations and other profit-oriented developers, for the most part [who are] not accountable to the Canadian public” (*Ibid.*). “Profit-oriented developers” did indeed materialize in northern indigenous territories except, in the case of hydroelectric developers— they were not



the “multi-national” corporations as discussed by McCullum (though there are such resource companies operating and extracting valuable resources from our territories). Hydro electric developers, as it turned out, would be provincial crown corporations who would be forced to settle with the Cree in Manitoba and Quebec respectively (which be discussed in greater detail below) over their footprint in these regions.

The McCullum’s analysis illustrates the point made by Slowley and it provides practical evidence of the external political and economic factors influenced or had bearing on the movement (push) toward energy development in the Canada’s north. Their rendering of the “energy crisis” of the 1960’s and 70’s (which included strategic deployment of a politics of fear tactic) certainly seems to have had some impacts in the proposal to forge ahead with the McKenzie Valley Pipeline (p.35) and their analysis is useful here because it clearly demonstrates the historic, as well as a contemporary, presence of external political and economic influences in the effort to develop resources in the northern regions occupied by indigenous peoples, as highlighted by Slowley (2008).

As noted above, many factors are having considerable bearing on energy development in Canada including a strong economic drive, (one only has to look at the annual reports from the utilities discussed here to gauge the economic enticement attached to these project) which stems in part from energy demands in the U.S., and a strong political rhetoric portraying hydroelectric power as “clean” and “renewable” (as demonstrated in the excerpts at the beginning of this paper). While some of the strategies may have changed on the surface, the objectives of today’s development activities (particularly in Manitoba) are reminiscent of Manitoba’s Minister of Mines, Resources and Environment Management sentiments in 1975 (as cited in McCullum and McCullum):

While there are some who are bluntly opposed to the concept of so-called modern civilization and materialism, the Government of Manitoba feels it owes a responsibility to its citizens to proceed with intelligent development of our natural resources for the material benefit of our citizens. In our view the Nelson River Development is a program comparable to with the Tennessee Valley Development, the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Trans-Canada Highway, the utilization of our mining potential, the cultivation of the prairies, and other such activities...in our judgment the values to be obtained greatly overshadow the problems which will rise (p.109).

In the same way that Green speaks to the responsibility of government to develop its natural resources in a responsible and “intelligent” and profitable way, a similar kind of sentiment can certainly be pulled from industry’s rhetoric concerning this “clean” and “renewable” energy source. Reflecting on the the Mackenzie-Valley Pipeline Inquiry Justice Berger wrote in 1978, “we must try and face the questions that are posed in the North of today: should we open up the North as we opened up the West? Should the values that conditioned our attitudes toward the environment in the past prevail in the North today and tomorrow?” (p. 641). His query is as important today as it was at the time of his writing in 1978. Although the north throughout has been slowly opened up, the latter part of his statement is especially valuable.

The Cree in Manitoba and Quebec are “Aboriginal peoples” as defined in Canada’s constitution. This means that they have rights which are not only constitutionally affirmed, their (our) rights are protected. Our ancestors in northern Manitoba, like the Cree in Quebec, have occupied our respective territories for generations. Our stories are woven into our lands and landscapes (Kulchyski, 2005, Coulthard, 2014; Brightman, 2007). The lands and waters in Cree territories are integral to who were are as Cree and they contain and contained all that was needed to survive the harsh climates and environments. This interdependent relationship of Cree with the land has been recently articulated by Cree elder Doris Young (2017), who, in a presentation to The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, stated the following:

The connection of Aboriginal people to our land and territories is significant for all Aboriginal people. Non-Aboriginal people do not always understand what we mean when we talk about our connection to the land. Let me explain. For us, it is not about ownership and money. The concept of *uski* to the Cree is much broader than the Eurocentric concept of the land and the environment. *Uski*, to the Cree, includes all living things, such as the animals, the plants, the trees, the fish, the rivers, the lakes, and including the rocks. *Uski* also includes our concept of the sky world. We understand that human beings are only a small part of our environment and that humans are totally dependent on *uski* for their survival. As a Cree person, I cannot separate myself from my land and my sacred obligations to preserve it for seven generations and beyond. This means we have been given the responsibility to protect the land and everything on it. Cree people respectfully acknowledge all living creatures as relatives. The Cree word is *ni wakomakun nin anuk*, ‘our relations.’ It is the world view that makes us unique in Western culture.

Land is culture, what it means. The land connects us to our language and our spirituality, our values, our traditions and our laws of *mino bimatasiwin*, which is the good life. In short, the land personifies who we are. It is the heart of our identity. It is our very lives, our souls, which are connected to the land of our ancestors.

Land and language are basic to Cree life. Without our language and our land, as a people we are disconnected from who we are. When we are disconnected, we become weak in spirit, we become sick in body, and we will die. But as long as we are able to reconnect to our land, our languages and our ceremonies, our culture will live on. We will remain strong as a people and as a nation.

As a Cree person, I have a connection to my birthplace, the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in northern Manitoba. That land nourishes my spirit and connects me to my language, to the Creator and to my ancestors. I know who I am when I am out there. I feel alive; I feel happy. Many of my non-Aboriginal friends do not clearly grasp this statement.

Many years ago, the Province of Manitoba granted permission to build hydro dams in the North. In that process, they removed entire communities of Aboriginal people in order to flood their lands. Aboriginals were given other lands, often less valuable land. When they protested, the government's response was: ‘What difference does it make? They still have land.’ But it was different. They lost connection with their trees, their rivers, their animals and the land of their ancestors [*sic*] (March, 2017).

Globalization and global energy politics have had tremendous impacts on pathways to hydro electric energy production in Manitoba and Quebec respectively.

While Quebec's system is considerably more expansive than the enterprise in Manitoba, the systems share common features. The most notable and obvious is perhaps that *access to* Cree lands and waterways was/is critical to each of these undertakings. Additionally, in each of the regions, it appears as though governments, along with the utilities, underestimated or simply did not anticipate the quick and dramatic responses of the Cree to their presence in these respective regions.

Waldram (1988); Niezen (1998); Allmand (1999); and Hoffman and Martin (2008) have clearly documented and articulated moments and acts of resistance undertaken in these regions and as a result of legal maneuvering and legal strategies invoked by the Cree in the respective regions, governments and developers were forced to enter into "modern" treaty like agreements with the Cree in Manitoba (*Aboriginal Justice Inquiry*, n.d.) and Quebec. While there are some similarities it should be noted that the Cree in Quebec possessed unsundered Aboriginal title as they entered into negotiations related to their initial agreement while the Cree in Manitoba did not.

Effectively, the Cree in Quebec forced developers and governments to a deal with several regarding issues related to Hydro Quebec's presence and proposed activities on their lands. In 1975, the James Bay Cree (along with the Inuit) successfully negotiated the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA)*; this agreement has been characterized as "first" modern land claim or treaty (Kulchyski, 2007; Grand Council of the Crees, n.d.). Through the *JBNQA* (together with the *Northeastern Quebec Agreement* which would follow), the Aboriginal peoples of the James Bay region entered into a modern day land claim agreement. The agreement contained "self-government components and lay the foundations for a new relationship between

the Cree, the Inuit and the Naskapi and the Government of Canada” (Minister of Public Works and Government Service Canada, 2009).

Through the *JBNQA* the Cree in Quebec acquired responsibilities and would oversee and manage health and social programs “for residents of Category I lands” (Hoffman and Martin, 2008, p. 67.) As such, it could be argued that Aboriginal peoples in the James Bay region secured a degree of self-government. The *JBNQA* also provided for the designation of land in the James Bay region; three categories were created with Aboriginal peoples having exclusive use to “Category I lands” in addition to Aboriginal co-management mechanisms (see Hoffman and Martin, 2008, p. 67 for detailed explanation of the categories). The agreement also included some monetary settlements. In short, the governments and the Aboriginal peoples of the region agreed to a process whereby land use mechanisms would be put in place and formalized as part of the agreements signed by The James Bay Cree. This type of arrangement was never reached in Manitoba, instead the Cree in Manitoba settled for zoning simply titled “resource management areas” which would be heavily controlled and managed by governments and developers.

## **Chapter 5:** **On Stories and Sources**

The widespread and far reaching realities associated with hydroelectric energy production in northern Manitoba have been illustrated and briefly described in preceding chapters. This overview was, in part, aimed at providing spatial context relating to the breadth of the hydroelectric network in northern Manitoba, and thus, chapter three endeavored to geographically locate components and pathways within Hydro's system. Chapter four sought to chart the chronology of deal making necessarily tied to dam building. Together, this brief overview forms an important historical backdrop for understanding Cree perspectives about industry activities contained in the following chapter.

This chapter will consider two important primary resources which are invaluable to this study, namely the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) hearing transcripts and the Public Utility Board (PUB) hearing transcripts respectively. These respective public processes provide insight into the new proposals and not so new approaches and processes aimed at growing Hydro's northern power system and articulate proponents' plans and rationale. In addition to documenting official and supporting positions, the CEC and PUB transcripts contain detailed expert reports and opinions. The transcripts also become an archive in that dissenting perspectives and critical insights and enquiry into proponents' activities and impacts are recorded on the public record which, in the case of this study, relates directly to the publically owned hydroelectric utility.

As iterated throughout this study, critical enquiry concerning hydroelectric energy production has been lacking on a number of fronts thus far. Critical perspectives shared in proceeding chapters, as located in both the public record, articulated through stories, formal and

informal interviews and observations, form an important component of this study. Because the remainder of this study draws upon perspectives and narratives as understood, articulated and experienced by *Ithinewuk* who effectively and forcibly found themselves on the shorelines of hydroelectric energy production in northern Manitoba, an important discussion concerning stories is warranted.

### **“Stories”**

Stories as described, discussed and used in the remaining chapters can contain and become sites or conduits of cultural insights, teachings, histories, folklore, and in some cases, can reflect deep meanings and carry important cultural values and principles of *Ithinewuk*. The work of Coulthard (2014) and Simpson (2011), among others, demonstrate that deep and rich indigenous values and principles contained in the multifaceted relationships between indigenous peoples, the land, the environment and the beings within it, can be reflected, captured and articulated in a variety of ways and perhaps in giving way to exercises of resurgence.

Although Coulthard does not expressly discuss the act of storytelling or necessarily articulate the importance of storytelling practices in knowledge transfer that is necessarily tied to creating meaning from or through “place-based ethics” of which he writes (and it should be noted here that this was not part of his overall methodological approach), that he is able to point to the importance and impacts of “grounded normativity” as methodology and outcome is important. That is, in discussing “place-based ethics” and expressions or manifestations of these principles, one can deduce that participants involved in the exchanging of knowledge must be engaged or engaging in various and deep communication and it seems reasonable that engaging in the act of deep communication, at a level which would allow these meanings to unfold and

become recognizable, through stories or other culturally meaningful forms, and as such becomes a necessary component in the culturally relevant transfer of knowledge. “Grounded normativity” and/or expressions or exercises of “place based ethics” is necessarily and intimately tied to our stories and our storytelling practices.

Indigenous and non-indigenous scholars have recognized and placed important value on “stories” as vehicles and vessels of knowledge transfer. For Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) indigenous knowledge is fluid and embodies a process of personal growth. She also recognizes that individuals bear some responsibility “for learning” (p. 4). Elders and other knowledge holders teach audiences to exercise their independent thought process: morals are not deduced or drawn by the storyteller, instead audiences and individuals create meaning that is relevant to them (Monture-Angus, 1995, p.11).

For Leanne Simpson (2011), indigenous knowledge is anchored in stories, and in particular creation stories (p. 32). In affirming the importance of stories to the learning process, Simpson echoes what many other indigenous scholars have iterated: stories teach us “intellectual” independence. That is, meaning is created in a manner that is meaningful, specific and relevant to oneself.

Kovach (2000) and LaRocque (2010) not only discuss the ways stories are used within indigenous communities, their respective works serve as pragmatic examples of the way stories, as methodology, can be conceptualized, theorized and used in academic forms. Additionally, Cree speaking scholars like LaRocque (2010) are able to provide insight into the way language is used in storytelling practices to convey nuances, meaning and/or to discuss structures and forms within Cree storytelling practices writing; for example, LaRocque writes that “Cree clearly differentiate *achimoowin* (‘fact’)’ from *atowkehwin* (‘fiction’)” (p. 29). The same distinction



concerning two types of stories discussed by LaRocque is also noted by Brightman (2007), an anthropologist who has devoted research to storytelling practices and narratives of Cree in northern Manitoba, and particularly within the study region, and provides additional and useful insights into the distinct types of stories, or oral narratives/practices described by LaRocque.

In his study concerning oral “traditions” of *Ithinewuk* in northern Manitoba, and particularly in the region(s) along the Churchill River, Brightman provides detailed descriptions of two “classes” of stories, *acaḏoohkiwina*, pronounced *a-cha-th-oo-ki-wi-na* and *ácimówina*, pronounced *a-chim-wi-na*, as described by LaRocque. Brightman (2007) writes:

Rock Cree class oral narratives either as *acaḏoohkiwin[a]* or *ácimówina*. Events in *acaḏoohkiwin[a]* are understood as temporally antecedent to those in *ácimówina* and [typically] comprise most of what is conventionally labelled ‘myth:’ the trickster-transformer [*Wisahkicahk*] stories, stories in which animals possess hominid characteristics, stories of powerful heroes, and accounts of marriage of human or proto-humans with animal or non-human entities. Crees stress certain cosmological or experiential contrast with the contemporary world in these stories, encompassing that animals and other non-humans agencies spoke and behaved like humans and that the landscape and fauna had not yet acquired their customary characteristics. The stories are strongly identified with the trickster-transformer such that *acaḏoohkiwin[a]* and ‘*wisahkicahk stor[ies]*’ are almost interlingual synonyms; many stories, however, are classed as *acaḏoohkiwin[a]* but lack *Wisahkicahk*. The characters [of these types of stories] are not persons of whom the narrators possess any direct knowledge or experience outside the esoteric contexts such as dreams or [ceremonies]” (p. 6).

Contrasting *acaḏoohkiwina* with the type of “story” known as “*acimowin[a]*,” Brightman states:

Stories in the *acimowin[a]* class focus upon human characters but this is not their defining feature since humans figure also in *acaḏoohkiwin[a]*. They are temporally situated in a kind of ‘historical’ time possessing continuity with the situation of narration. The narrator knows the characters or has direct or indirect knowledge of them human intermediaries. Examples are stories relating to the exploits of celebrated ancestors. *Acimowin[a]* [are] clearly the the unmarked category, encompassing old and contemporary narratives, gossip, humorous stories and jokes, and serious tales of bush experiences and enigmatic encounters with non-Indians. Like *acaḏoohkiwin[a]*, the *acimowin[a]* may contain events and characters which are supernatural or non-factual from a non-[indigenous] perspective. [It should be noted that] not all *acimowin[a]* are regarded as true;

[some can be regarded] as humorous fabrications [depending on the context, setting and story-teller] (p. 6-7).

A “sub-category” of *acimowin*, known as *kayas-acimowina*, is described by Brightman as “the nineteenth-century exploits of famous ancestors [but can also include more recent stories of happenings that occurred to someone]” (p. 6-7). NCN member Eva Linklater (1994) provides another explanation of the timeline associated with “*kiyas*” or “a long time ago” from an indigenous, and specifically Cree understanding, asserting that,

The Cree concept of *Kiyahs*, a long time ago, [is an era] without calendrical years; it [was] a single time beyond living memory...a mythic time in which the creation story and subsequent history were acted on the landscape of north central Manitoba...In *Kiyahs*, everything was in human form. Today's natural entities - the landscape, animals, plants, human beings - were configured through transformation. (p.32-33).

LaRocque and Brightman, together with the insights offered by Linklater, outline two distinct types of narratives found and used within Cree culture and are insights directly relevant to story-telling practices. Both of these “classes” of narratives will appear here, and thus demarcating these distinct types of stories is important.

### ***Acaḏoohkiwin: Wesahkecak's Footprints***

Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation has an *acaḏoohkiwin* about a set of footprints. These are not any ordinary footprints. These footprints have deep spiritual and rich cultural meaning for my community and these footprints are ancient and necessarily tied to the cultural and spiritual fabric of our community. The footprints belong to *We-sah-ke-cak* and are located within the territory of Nisichawayasihk. They resemble human footprints, and more specifically, these impressions resemble a set of moccasined feet. The footprints are imprinted in a rock face at

Otetiskewin (Footprint) Lake, not far from the Reserve. An archeological pre-flood description of this site is reproduced in the work of NCN member Eva Linklater (1994) who writes:

The site is located on a vertical granitic rock face which rises straight from the water. Two horizontal red lines have been painted throughout two depressions which resemble human footprints, or moccasin prints, in general outline. Each of the painted lines intersects the centre of a footprint. Two small, faint patches of pigment occur between the footprints.

The site is unusual in that the structure of the bedrock is integral to the painting. Also, a local legend is associated with the site. The depressions "are said by local Native people, to be the footprints of Wisakichak, the traditional Cree and Ojibwa culture-hero [*sic*] (Koker cited in Linklater, p. 77).

I have heard a variety of versions relating to stories about the footprints. In one version *We-sah-ke-cak* was on the east side of the river. He spotted a moose carcass and noticed that flies were feasting on its flesh. He approached and asked "little brothers, I am hungry, can I join you?" The tiny moose meat eaters reply "it is up to you." *We-sah-ke-cak* began eating and stuck his head inside the skull. Realizing that his head was stuck, *We-sah-ke-cak* quickly stood up. With his body shaking and swaying side to side, in an attempt to shake off the cleaned skull, *We-sah-ke-cak* fell into the water. A little disoriented, he swam and swam until he hit the rock on the other side of the river. The moose skull broke apart. *We-sah-ke-cak* regained his bearings and walked up the rocks (Hart, 2016).

In another version of the story, *We-sah-ke-cak* was hunting in our territory and in another other telling still, he was simply passing by and in another still, he was attempting to court a woman. In one telling, *We-sah-ke-cak* left his footprint behind as a promise to the people that he would return when they needed him and in other, the footprints were left to remind the people of his time with them. In each version *We-sah-ke-cak* had walked among the people *and* the footprints had been *deliberately* left behind (emphasis added). Relaying information about the

footprints in this manner is somewhat and crudely akin to the well developed and rendered storytelling methodology used by renowned literary talent Thomas King (2003).

In 2003 King carried out a series of lectures known as the Massey Lectures at venues throughout the country. At the onset of each of his lectures, King recited a “creation” story and the story he shared remained the same throughout his cross country tour. The methodology King uses in the telling of the story he shares at the beginning of each lecture has some applicability and relevance to the telling of the story (or components of the stories) related to *We-sah-ke-cak*'s footprints. Regarding the creation story King tells at the beginning of each of his lectures, he shared:

There is a story I know. It's about the earth and how it floats in space on the back of a turtle. I've heard this story many times, and each time someone tells the story, it changes. Sometimes the change is simply in the voice of the storyteller. Sometimes the change is in the details. Sometimes in the order of events. Other times it's the dialogue or the response of the audience. But *in all the tellings of all the tellers, the world never leaves the turtle's back. And the turtle never swims away* (Emphasis added, 2003, p. 1).

King's insights concerning the “creation” story he recites at the start of each of his lectures not only recognizes and affirms that stories and tellers of stories can vary from teller to telling. The applicability to the story of *We-sah-ke-cak* is that, as indicated above, *We-sah-ke-cak*'s purpose for being in our territory changes from teller to teller, version to version, and the meaning ascribed to the respective narratives can also vary; what does not vary, however, and in a similar vein to the turtle in King's narrative, is that *We-sah-ke-cak* came to be in the territory of my ancestors and *We-sah-ke-cak* left a culturally meaningful symbol of his journey through the territory. This could be characterized in Western terms as a “mnemonic” device (Linklater, 1994).

In other words, the story, the oral customs, attached to the tellings about the footprints

near NCN carries the minor variants described by King above, but fundamental features do not change: *We-sah-ke-cak*, the iconic Cree protagonist and cultural figure, had walked the land at a time when the animals spoke, had been among the people, and had passed through the territory of my ancestors. As such, this story carries cultural and spiritual significance, which will not be discussed here as it requires a treatise in its own right. *We-sah-ke-cak*'s journey has been marked and etched into a rock face in our territory. *We-sah-ke-cak*'s footprints, along with the narratives that accompany them, are vital to the cultural and social fabric of NCN. Eva Linklater (1994), a member of the NCN Band, asserts the importance of "oral traditions" [like those of attached to the footprints near NCN]:

As Cree [peoples], our history is defined through oral traditions which are passed on from elders to younger generations. Cree oral traditions include numerous stories about *Kiyahs*, the ancient past. *Oral traditions provide an explanation for the creation of the land, its transformation to present form, and Cree relationship to land and landscape. To the Nelson House Cree, it is a history every bit as important, or more so, than the one written by historians of the fur trade or archaeologists* (Emphasis added, p. 30).

In his lecture series, King also draws attention to the ways indigenous knowledge(s) and perspectives have been [grossly] misunderstood and/or dismissed outside our communities. As noted by Linklater above, for NCN Cree our "oral traditions" telling creates cultural meaning. For the people of NCN, stories like those of the footprints, connect and anchor our relations and relationships with each another and our relationships and connections with the land within our territory.

The story of *We-sah-ke-cak*'s footprints are but one story of many in NCN which carry rich and deep cultural, social and spiritual meaning. There are other sites within our territory that are similarly important. Like the footprints, these site have been flooded and somewhat silenced and Hydro is implicated in this erasure of our heritage. The images below depict the footprints.



**Figure 5.1:** A view from the water; “footprints” located near Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. The footprints were flooded by the Churchill River Diversion project in the 1970’s; the footprints were removed from their original location but subsequently returned at the current site; this site is not the original location of the footprints.



**Figure 5.2:**  
Close up  
view of “the  
footprints”  
Source:  
Personal  
Photo  
(2016).

A closing thought on the importance of our languages, landscapes, cultures and the interconnectedness of the spaces created through stories and storytelling practices is similar to the story told by Kulchyski (2005) in his telling of a similar kind of *acaḏoohkiwin* from the land of the Dene in the western Arctic. The story he shares is set deep in the Dene lands in what is now known as the North West Territories; it involves a wolverine and rock. Of the story he was heard, Kulchyski writes:

We were coming around the river, [t]here's a long straight stretch, cliffs on the one side, you've seen it, one place there's a figure of an animal sitting way out on a rocky ledge, way out by itself. That's supposed to be a wolverine that turned into rock, and it is used for teaching, for like here the wolverine jumped out to the rock where someone had stored, had a cache and he's trying to steal it, turned into a rock, you know. That's spiritual voice I guess, teaching about stealing, about taking what's not yours, that kind of stuff; legends of, ideas of, good and bad, right and wrong, That kind of stuff is all in our language but in order to understand it, it's got to be, like to sense in our own language, It loses a lot of meaning when translate it (p.165).

One obvious meaning attached to the narrative Kulchyski tells: avoid stealing; however, another implication of the rendering of the story becomes obvious when considered in broad cultural terms. That is, Kulchyski, underscores a deeper process at play when considering ways cultural meaning has been and becomes embedded, or “inscribed,” in the land and landscapes for Dene [and Cree and other indigenous peoples]. On this matter he asserts “teaching stories, stories inscribed in lands marks and landscape: ‘how the land was governed’[, ] stories that reach far into the distance...reach deep into the social, ‘about stealing...ideas of good and bad, right and wrong” (p.165). In making these broad and deep connections between stories, landscapes, languages and peoples, Kulchyski draws attention to ways indigenous communities and peoples create(ed) meaning and foster(ed) cultural, spiritual, ethical relevance on the land. This process is akin to the one described by Linklater (1994) above relating to the footprints near Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation.

## **Elders**

*Elders can teach with stories and with gestures; they can speak the language of their landscape; they have an astute understanding of contemporary social issues at the global level or they can be largely unconcerned about how their local knowledge relates to broader developments. Different elders have different interests, different kinds of knowledge (Kulchyski, 2005, p.19).*

*Ke-te-at-is-uk*, “elders” in Cree, occupy important roles and places within indigenous communities; these roles have been affirmed and described to varying degrees in the work scholars already noted throughout this study. Kulchyski (2005); LaRocque (2010); Kovach (2009) Simpson (2011), Smith (1999), among others including indigenous and non-indigenous scholars alike, provide important insight into the diverse roles elders occupy within indigenous communities and the challenges they can face. Simpson (2011) actively acknowledges the information acquired during research processes and learning processes but goes beyond this approach, providing insights and integrates narratives related to the relationships formed with elders in her community throughout her research processes.

As denoted in the excerpt above, elders are recognized as having diverse breadths of knowledge. Similarly, elders have specialized knowledge and knowledge that is specific to particular contexts such as ceremony, medicines, hunting, the environment, and land/landscapes/territories. Kulchyski (2005) points out that “like the concept of tradition, the notion of elders is highly politically charged. Elders have an extraordinary value in contemporary popular culture and hence are made to bear the weight of an enormous desire for ‘authenticity’” (p.19).

It should be noted that while elders possess and carry valuable knowledge and information, as noted above, this study did not actively seek out knowledge of elders in more



scholarly or academic format partly due to the strains being placed on elders but also because valuable information could be obtained from sources and generations outside this sub-group. Sources that have been drawn upon as part of this study contain primary information about the changes and impacts that have or are occurring the local level. As discussed below, the perspectives that can be taken from sources like public hearing processes allows researchers to access new perspectives and perhaps knowledge that may be overlooked in a push for more “authentic” perspectives that might be obtained or garnered from working exclusively with elders.

The remainder of this study will draw upon perspectives, observations, research experiences which have occurred largely in English and with individuals who may or may not be constituted or characterized as “elders,” which is an issue and discussion that falls beyond the scope of this study. Elders, where they appear, are acknowledged throughout this study as such.

### **The Clean Environment Commission and Public Utility Board**

Indigenous peoples have made their perspectives relating to hydroelectric energy production known since the earliest encounters with governments and developers in northern Manitoba, or at least since the intentions of developers became known to the Cree. Some of these earliest dissenting perspectives were captured in the work and efforts of the Interfaith Task Force on Northern Hydro Development whose work was invaluable. Two contemporary regulatory processes containing indigenous perspectives and viewpoints which question or problematize activities associated with hydroelectric energy development in Manitoba are the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) processes and the Public Utilities Board (PUB) processes

respectively. These records serve an important source of information in this study for many reasons will be explained below.

I became aware of the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) and its hearing process in 2004 during the Wuskwatim hearings. During that time, I made 2 informal presentations which will be reproduced in part in the following chapter. The CEC describes itself as,

an arms-length agency of the government of Manitoba. The Commission's principal purpose is to encourage and facilitate public involvement in the province's environmental management process [and] may initiate formal proceedings only at the request of the Minister of Conservation. [Among other things,] the Minister may ask the Commission to review potential environmental impacts of proposed projects and/or developments and to provide advice to the minister on whether an environmental license should be issued and/or what are some of the specific topics or issues that should be addressed by the license; [or] to conduct an investigation or an in-depth study of a specific environmental matter and to provide him/her with advice. The Commission may or may not use public input as part of their information gathering (*sic*, Clean Environment Commission, n.d.).

As a component of the broad processes attached to the functions of the Clean Environment Commission (CEC), formal hearings are held throughout the province which allow for public participation and input on various activities undertaken by proponents, which in the purview of this study are entities like Manitoba Hydro. Presentations and/or submissions are collected and captured as part of this process and form a public record or public archive of the process.

Another regulatory process that also allows for a degree of public participation and input are hearings processes related to the province's Public Utilities Board (PUB). Rather than provide opportunities for public interaction and feedback relating to the "environmental management process" noted above, the PUB's primary concern relates to organizational sustainability as noted below:

has a specific mandate based on its enabling legislation [and] act as a rate setting tribunal for various public utilities. [Among its other functions] the

PUB establishes just and reasonable rates for the provision of electricity by Manitoba Hydro, for natural gas supplied by Centra Gas, for propane supplied by Stittco Utilities Ltd, rate bases and premiums charged for compulsory driver and Basic vehicle insurance provided by Manitoba Public Insurance and rates charged by water and wastewater utilities outside the City of Winnipeg. [It] fulfills its mandate through public hearings, paper reviews and when required direct intervention [and] involve enquiry, research, consultation, careful deliberation, and public dissemination of decisions and notices of upcoming Board activities including rate applications. When considering a rate application, the Board reviews the financial requirements of the utility as well as the impact on the consumer. *While the Board is sensitive to customer reaction to increases, it must consider the sustainability of the utility* (Emphasis added, Public Utilities Board, n.d.).

The public record that is created as a result of hearings involving the Clean Environment Commission and the Public Utilities Board, respectively, contain a variety of perspectives, official reports, as well as critical and sometimes counter views on a number of matters related to dam building. As such, the hearing transcripts themselves are an invaluable resource precisely because they provide important albeit at times superficial glimpses of community life and community life as it has been affected by the hydro industry.

Several of the critical perspectives shared in following chapter derive, in part, from the two types of hearing transcripts noted above; for example, perspectives captured in the 2014 Public Utility Board (PUB) hearings, which are known as the “Manitoba Hydro Needs For And Alternatives To Review Of Manitoba Hydro's Preferred Development Plan,” or “NFAAT”, appear and where noted, additional information or insight obtained through personal observations and/or interviews has been included with the aim of supplementing or elaborating on particular issues contained in transcript testimony.

As noted at the onset of this chapter, charting Hydro’s footprints becomes essential to understanding the perspectives of *Ithinewuk* as captured in the following chapter. Charting the geographical pathways, together with highlighting the bureaucratic mechanisms which facilitated

the establishment and growth of Hydro's network, provides important context for understanding the critical or dissenting perspectives at regional, local and/or micro levels included in this study. This historical, spatial and temporal context gives meaning to ways *Ithinewuk* articulate disruptions caused on the ground, in the water and along the shorelines. In other words, charting the system and including a concise historical timeline for the respective deal making and dam building eras affecting the study region, provides context to the Cree counter views of Hydro's presence in the north and a counter narrative becomes easier to understanding because as LaRocque (2010) points out, ““mainstream Canadians will not comprehend our decolonizing discourse unless they can identify the colonial ground from and against which we talk back” (p. 11). Hydro's reach has been both deep and widespread.

Including critical or dissenting perspectives concerning the production of hydroelectricity is critical to this scholarly endeavor not only because these voices align with objectives of this work but because these perspectives continue to be largely unknown and unheard. These counter perspectives are important in fostering an understanding of the broader and complex contexts of the Hydro saga playing out in Cree territories in northerly reaches of province. Additionally, acknowledging and amplifying the voices and perspectives contained in the next chapter necessarily underscores the presence and perseverance of the of grassroots perspectives and values, and “grounded normativity,” enacted by the Northern Flood Committee grandfathers who staunchly and rigorously defended their lands and livelihoods throughout the 1970's.

### **“Dissidents?”**

In 2015 I received research support which allowed me to return to Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) to undertake interviews with local people and community members regarding

their perspectives on the impacts of energy production at the community level. Obtaining these local insights into the process and product of “development” was and is instrumental to the scholarly enquiry I had embarked on years ago concerning hydroelectric energy production in our territories.

In short, it became critical to return to the community to obtain first hand perspectives about how people viewed the processes and product of the Wuskwatim “partnership.” My sample set was small and a “snowball” approach was the methodological approach of choice. Preliminary findings of my research were shared at a small conference. A colleague and good friend presented at the same conference. My colleague and friend is humble and non-indigenous, and he, like myself, was problematizing aspects of Hydro undertakings in northern Manitoba. My colleague was (is) also male. This was an opportunity to present our research in a structured academic forum.

Like the other presenters at the conference, my colleague and I engaged in critical enquiry concerning Hydro’s activities and outcomes in our respective study regions(s). Each of us drew preliminary conclusions about the direction and scope of our respective research questions and findings, including the effects of Hydro’s presence in the north, and each of us drew out criticisms relating to the pathways of “progress” in the north and each of us had made important contributions, though perhaps from different vantage points: I was an “insider” researcher and he was not.

During a break we were approached by a senior academic, who was also, as it turned out, formally affiliated the Hydro bureaucracy. My colleague and I exchanged puzzled glances as the learned scholar shared his industry affiliation with us. Our unexpected guest patted my colleague on the knee and made comments regarding my friend’s presentation (which, of course, is to be

expected at an academic conference). Clearly he was dissatisfied with my colleague's presentation. I sat with my peer, witnessing this awkward exchange.

This senior scholar relayed to us that decision makers could not negotiate with "dissidents" [and that surely we could not expect otherwise]; they needed to negotiate and engage with *elected leaders* (Emphasis mine). By this point, but still being cordial, our uninvited caller became more comfortable with pushing my colleague [and us perhaps] on the way issues were presented. This awkward exchange underscored and affirmed an important issue where the Hydro is concerned: critical enquiry has its limitations, even in an academic forum.

It also highlighted the fissures created by government policy where indigenous governance and decision making is concerned. While the issues surrounding political interference and the imposition of colonial governance mechanisms and regimes is not considered as part of this study, perhaps one day the matter will receive consideration because as demonstrated in the preceding chapters, a number of the Cree communities affected by the initial wave of "development" in 1970's, with the exception of *Pimicikamak*, have dramatically shifted positions.

If critical enquiry into the history, impacts and politics associated with the production of hydroelectricity in northern Manitoba is viewed in negatively, as conveyed in the undertones and sentiments my learned friend and I experienced, then in the spirit of that exchange, together with the spirit of the *Northern Flood Agreement* grandfathers, let these writings be known as "dissident" writings!

**Chapter Six:**  
**“Where the Otters play,” “Horseshoe Bay,” “Footprint” and Beyond:**  
**Perspectives and Stories from the Shorelines**

*“History cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so that ‘we’ might inscribe our own future there and impose our own forms of life for these lesser people to follow” (Said, 1979, p. xviii).*

In early 2004 I had become vaguely aware of a proposed Hydro project. It was called at that time, “Wuskwatim,” and admittedly, my knowledge and interest in the matter was quite nominal and mostly roused by curiosity. I attended a few Clean Environment Commission (CEC) hearings, but found them formal, technical legalistic and, above all, intimidating.

The processes attached to the Wuskwatim process, including the formal hearings, seemed beyond my reach and the knowledge contained and shared therein seemed far removed from my reality as a young student. Nonetheless, I would go on to make two presentations during the Wuskwatim focused Clean Environment Commission (CEC) hearings, excerpts of which are shared below. These statements would mark the beginning of my critical enquiry and journey into exploring Hydro’s presence in our territories.

**Towards a Hydro Consciousness**

A combination of factors led me to the CEC hearings in Thompson on a bitterly cold winter day in March 2004. My skepticism about Hydro’s new “partnership” with my community, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), was slowly getting stoked and while I cannot recall the moment I formed critical opinions and insights into the process and the proposal itself, I do recall the exact moment when I realized that I could stay silent no more.

After becoming somewhat aware of Hydro and its presence in the north and in NCN, that is, the Wuskwatim project proposal and NCN’s potential role within it, I became immediately

concerned. Once my Hydro consciousness developed, it did not long take long to begin to forming critical opinions about the proposal. Soon after I became somewhat aware of the Wuskwatim proposal I began dreaming about my mother's father. My grandfather Solomon had passed away ten years before and I had a single dream about him initially and did not give it much thought.

I had become aware that the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) would be conducting hearings in Thompson and not long after that, my grandfather reappeared in my dreams. Like many other people of his generation, my grandfather was humble, kind, generous, principled and valued hard work. He raised his children on the land, including the fish camp at Wuskwatim Lake. The values and philosophies he taught to his children stemmed from ancient land use epistemologies and practices rooted in Cree customs.

Hydro's newest proposal, the Wuskwatim project, was the key to the expansion and growth of the network that was established throughout the 1970's. Some may take issue with my rendering of the partnership because Wuskwatim was and is marketed as a "new" way forward representing "the first time Manitoba Hydro has entered into a partnership with a First Nations community on a generating station project" and has been described as "groundbreaking" (Manitoba Hydro, n.d.i.). Characterizing the project in this manner might not appeal to some.

As stated early in this study, my mother and her family, like others in Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), made long and arduous forays during summer months to camps like the "fish camp" at Wuskwatim Lake. "Wuskwatim" was the fishing camp my mom, her siblings and her parents would travel to. My grandparents raised my mother and her siblings on the land and while life was difficult and challenging, my aunts speak of it as an important and meaningful time in their lives.



In fact, as recently as the fall of 2016, my aunts articulated that the way of life they lived and knew as children, and articulated that although difficult at times, the time spent on the land and at Wuskwatim, shaped many of their views and practices and ascribe the values and principles they carry as adults to the values and ways of life tied the land based life they lived as children and youth.

In early 2004, I knew little to nothing about the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) or its formal hearings, its processes, or the Wuskwatim project itself really. Despite the lack of awareness regarding the CEC process and the Wuskwatim proposal, I had begun contemplating whether or not I should make a presentation (largely due to my mounting skepticism about the project). One morning when I had awoken from yet another dream of my grandfather, I sprung up and said “ok! I’ll do it. I’ll go!” A subconscious nudge from my grandfather perhaps?

Not long after I began dreaming of my grandfather, I made the eight hour trek to Thompson and made the following statements to the Clean Environment Commission. The venue was a small church hall packed with mostly Hydro sympathizers. Omitting excerpts of the broader presentation does not adequately capture or convey the messages and concerns I was trying to raise, hence, much of my presentation to the Clean Environment Commission has been reproduced below. On that day in March I stated:

I am here today to voice my opinion about this project and to have my voice, my concerns[,] publicly recorded for my children and their children [,] so they can look back and see that I was opposed to this.

I want to begin by stating that I am opposed to this project in its current form. I am opposed to it because I do not trust Manitoba Hydro [a]nd my confidence in their claims for prosperity for my community is non-existent. Many of the dealings Manitoba Hydro has had with the Indigenous peoples of this province has yielded results that are nothing more than empty promises, deception, destruction...How can I trust Hydro when they have left a trail of unfulfilled promises and devastation. How can we be expected to trust Hydro when the shiny beads they offer to entice us could end up destroying us again? Various

entities are claiming that the community supports this endeavor and the consultation process has been cited as a part of it.

I know for a fact that there are many who are wary of this deal, myself included. For whatever reasons, some have chosen to remain silent and that is their right. ...It is my right to voice the concerns that I have regarding this project as it has a potential to alter life in my community again as we know it. It is not only my right to voice my concern, it is my responsibility...to my children and their children as well as to those who came before us. I have a responsibility [to] my late grandfather whose sweat and blood is on that land literally. The area where this proposed project is going to be built is adjacent to my late grandfather's trapline. My mother grew up in that area. She has memories and it is attached to that land even though she is no longer able to return there. I have a responsibility to her as well as to my grandfathers before us to voice my opposition to this project.

I want...others to know that I am not opposed to economic development and economic growth and I hope that I am not labelled as opposing economic development in my community. I think that it would be great if we, as a community, could improve our economic and social situation. I am not opposed to new and innovative ideas that will enhance our standard of living. I am, however, concerned with the current processes and mechanisms associated with the Wuskwatim project. I respect what the leadership is trying to do for the community but I am not entirely convinced that this is what is best for us as NCN people. I am wary of the beads that are being offered to us. There are contradictions of sorts associated with Wuskwatim and these contradictions are what made me suspect about this project.

I would like to urge the Commission to make a recommendation to the Minister. I would like you to convey to him or her that the consultation process is severely lacking and the people have not been consulted. We are being told what is going on. We need to be asked, not told. I for one am sick of non-Aboriginal entities coming in and telling us what is good for us or that this kind of development will be a benefit to us. Progress does not necessarily mean prosperity.

If this project means destroying the land that my grandfather worked on, lived on and loved, if this project means creating further divisiveness within my own community and divisiveness between my community and other Aboriginal communities, if this project undermines our rights as Aboriginal people, then I want no part of it. I see this project as another colonial apparatus which will only serve to and contribute to the existing tensions in my community and other communities. It is a colonial apparatus that will destroy our autonomy creating further dependence and despair. Again, I am voicing my concerns about this project because I want my children and their children to know that I did my part to save the land that my grandfather loved. I do not believe that this project

is in the best interests of my community, myself or my children (Clean Environment Commission, 2004a, p. 3248, 3252 and 3259).

The excerpt above has been taken from the official record of the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) hearings relating to the Wuskwatim Project. While I did not know the full breath and depth of impacts related to Hydro's projects and activities in northern Manitoba at that time, my earliest reactions and opinions concerning Hydro's newest proposals were strong.

In the days and weeks leading up to the presentation cited above, I struggled with the act of vocalizing my "dissent" because I was young and still in the process of being educated. I also knew that in articulating my critical and dissenting perspectives, which were in completely counter to the official narrative and position of leadership in Nisichawayasihk, I would effectively place myself in a juxtaposition on a matter that was officially and publicly supported by the leadership of Nisichawayasihk. The issue was polarizing then and remains so today. It has been more than a decade since the community officially voted in favor of the Wuskwatim Partnership Development Agreement (PDA) and I remain steadfastly opposed to the deal, perhaps more so today due, in part, to the supplementary deals that were struck following the original agreement.

Throughout my journey in the last decade or so I have been to "where the otters play" at Grand Rapids; I have journeyed to the lands, waters and waterways of my paternal family along the upper Nelson River and have been to "Horseshoe Bay," a land mark across the river and near the proposed Conawapa site. I have also been to the hydro affected communities of Norway House, *Pimicikamak*, *Tataskewyak*, Fox Lake, South Indian Lake and witnessed the impacts to lands and livelihoods, and have made brief forays into War Lake and York Landing.

The experiences and observations I have amassed outside Nisichawayasihk, coupled with experiences and observations related to my own community and listening to stories and family histories of and around Footprint Lake, have facilitated an understanding of Hydro's cumulative and regional impacts in northern Manitoba. As such, the experiences, along with personal observations, from the last decade or so have also, in their own right, contributed to my development of a Hydro consciousness. As noted below, during the earliest stint of my "research" and field experiences where Hydro was concerned, opportunities materialized which allowed me to gain important and lasting insights into the various cumulative and regional effects of Hydro in places outside Nisichawayasihk. One such experience took me to the territory of *Pimicikamak*.

In 2004, I had been invited along on a "tour" of Sipiwisk, a lake and/or site, which by many accounts, held and holds significant historic and cultural meaning for the people of *Pimicikamak*. The tour was organized by *Pimicikamak* and the tour invited visitors, including those from an environmental organization known as the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) and based in Washington D.C., to witness and experience the effects of Hydro first hand.

Elders from the community, including Mr. Charlie Osborne and Mr. Gideon McKay, traveled through Sipiwisk Lake to White Mud falls with Robert Kennedy Jr. and his visiting delegation. The elders and other community people along on the boat tour passionately described the impacts and effects of Hydro's activities on the community. This was perhaps among my first lessons in critical analysis and learning about broader and cumulative impacts and effects of Hydro outside my own community. Around this time, I also began learning about various Hydro impacts on the peoples and communities at Grand Rapids.

The following year, in 2005, I would travel with a colleague to an encampment on the old river bed near Grand Rapids, Manitoba. My field notes document that, the chief of Misipawistik Cree Nation at the time, Ovide Mercredi, erected the camp in response to actions taken by developers and bureaucrats who unilaterally decided to open the “spillway” gates at the nearby generating station.

As I recall, the lifting of the gates at the spillway was done without proper consultation with the First Nation and at the encampment we learned the significance of opening the gates: lifting of the gates released waters that had been artificially contained behind the dam or generating station. Opening the gates allowed the water to seep into the dried out riverbed, eventually emptying into Lake Winnipeg. One significant impact associated with the opening of the spillway gates was that brush and other debris was being carried by/in the water into the lake thereby destroying commercial fishing nets. In order to prevent any further damage and unilateral decision making, the chief along with the community members who joined him, erected a camp on the old river bed. Not long after the camp was erected, the premier visited Grand Rapids.

When my colleague and I arrived at the riverbed camp the mood was jovial. Not long after we arrived, William and Jackson Osborne appeared from the bush. They had arrived at the riverbed with their father, Charlie, and another elder, Gideon McKay. The latter two gentlemen were two highly respected elders from *Pimicikamak* and were outspoken critics of Hydro and its regime and, according to my field notes, had come to lend support.

Sitting amongst the group gathered at the camp on the riverbed, elder Charlie Osborne began to recite a story in Cree. He talked about wolves; specifically, he described attributes and characteristics of wolves in the wild and discussed the ways wolves communicate with each

another. He told us that wolves howl to let other wolves know their location, and one by one, the howls get louder and more powerful until their presence is unmistakable. He also talked about the symbolism and cultural relevance of wolves to the Cree in our territories and told the chief, he had “heard the call” and came. This particular experience provided valuable cultural insights into cumulative, regional and community level and impacts of Hydro, it also taught me about “becoming” Cree again.

Not long after the camp was erected, the premier, along with Hydro officials, arrived in Grand Rapids. A meeting was held at a hall on the Grand Rapids First Nation. Presentations were made, speeches recited. I had provided nominal technical assistance, having helped organize a presentation, and the presentation itself was undertaken by a local community member. During this event, and in a very small way, I was able to offer assistance and observe the interactions and events that occurred between government officials and a community of Hydro-affected Cree.

The following is based on notes that I had taken during that time:

*The chief had made a moving speech. Among issues he raised, the chief discussed the nature of the Hydro settlement that had been reached by the First Nation and stated that the community needed a “lasting agreement” rather than a “final agreement” as was currently the case. He also talked about culture, the loss of culture and the loss of a self-sufficient way of life and stated that a bonding process began and that [the people] had “become Cree again.”*

At that time, I took this to mean that because the Cree gathered on the riverbed had assumed a position where they refused to sit complacently within the margins of poverty and exploitation, those Cree had found [regained] honor and courage; that “to be” Cree was to have honor, strength and courage. The chief reminded the premier that the Cree at Grand Rapids never surrendered the [rights to the] water and that Hydro [was] making money from the Cree watershed. Moreover, Mercredi reminded the visiting delegation short and long term goals needed to be established.

During the premier's visit on September 15, 2005 we learned that a sitting premier had not visited Grand Rapids since the ribbon cutting of the Grand Rapids Generating Station in the mid 1960's. I also learned about Cree diplomacy, as demonstrated in the poised yet powerful speeches made on that September day. Clearly this was a moment I witnessed Cree who "became Cree again" and clearly, grounded normativity, those "place based ethics," continue to thrive in our communities.

### **Dissident Writings from the Shorelines**

As all ready noted, the production of electricity in northern Manitoba generates more than electricity, it generates polarizing and strong and sometimes contradictory perspectives and responses to developers and their legislators. At a macro level, the effects and impacts associated with Hydro are perhaps most evident in the wholesale displacement of entire communities such as those documented by Waldram (1988) who recounts the Hydro history as it relates to the Cree at Easterville and South Indian Lake respectively. As documented in chapter four, early Hydro intrusions were directly met by Cree determination and resolve. In this early era the Cree, as represented by the Northern Flood Committee, were unified. The situation in more contemporary times, however, has relationships have transformed in ones where developers are once again in control.

The polarizing and disparate views and approaches to Hydro's contemporary proposals is perhaps most apparent in the 2007 film *Green, Green, Water*. This documentary highlights the social, cultural, economic and environmental toll hydroelectric energy production has taken on regions and peoples affected by developers in northern Manitoba. Interviews occur at South Indian Lake, Nisichawayasihk, and *Pimicikamak* and reveals the disparate approaches

contemporary Cree have taken with regard to Hydro. The fissures within Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), and between entire Cree First Nations where Hydro “development” is concerned, becomes quickly apparent in the film. Additionally, the film illustrates the complex histories where the production of hydroelectricity is concerned and highlights the contemporary realities in northern Manitoba, along with the very disparate visions of development in the north. At one end of the spectrum, Cree, with the backing of developers and government, champion “new” models, “new” opportunities and approaches to Hydro proposals while others, simply request that governments and developers fulfill the terms of the *Northern Flood Agreement*: no Hydro deals, no Hydro buy-outs (Chodkiewicz and Brown, 1999; Mikkelsen & Lee, 2007). From the outside looking in, it would seem that *Ithinewuk* have used the occasion as a means to express their self-determination.

At the level of individual First Nations, various efforts and actions undertaken by the Cree where Hydro is concerned, not only illustrates that the Cree have disparate visions and pathways, actions undertaken by respective communities demonstrate that communities can and do mobilize. Whether erecting camps on emptied riverbeds, to blocking highways, as was the case when residents from *Tataskewiyak* restricted vehicle traffic on provincial highway 280 in the fall of 2014 (Gibson, n.d.), to “evicting” Hydro, as was the case when *Pimicikamak* evicted Hydro from the Jenpeg Generating Station in 2014 (CBC News, 2014), *Ithinewuk*, through their actions, have reasserted their ability to forge their own pathways, rather than having it made for them by outsiders.

Whether in support of the newest “partnership” proposals, evidenced for example in the endorsement of the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement (PDA) or the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA) respectively, or contesting unilateral decision making or



neglect of developers and/or governments, *Ithinewuk* have clearly responded to the Hydro presence in northern Manitoba. At the level of individuals, perspectives and criticisms are also present, though the latter may, at times, be more difficult to locate. As noted in chapter five, the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) and the Public Utility Board (PUB) hearings capture voices and critical perspectives of *Ithinewuk* at the shorelines of “development.” One example relates to the Wuskwatim project.

A few months after I had made my presentation to the CEC at hearings in Thompson, cited above, I had gone to similar hearings which were taking place at a Winnipeg venue. The venue seemed grand compared to the hearings held at the St. Lawrence Hall in Thompson earlier that year. This was no little hall; instead, it was a polished venue with fresh coffee, a catered meal and consultants buzzing about.

I had made my way to the Winnipeg venue to learn more about the Wuskwatim project and was not surprised to hear the dialectic that had been mounting and, which by that point, was becoming more nuanced. I had also gone to meet a friend at the hearing who in turn introduced me to a young woman from Sagkeeng First Nation. Sagkeeng, as I learned that day, was also impacted by Manitoba Hydro. My friend, her friend and I agreed to meet over lunch for proper introductions. At some point, I became aware that young people from NCN would be speaking that day and was curious to hear what they had to say. I anxiously awaited their presentation; this is the what their spokesperson had to say:

I am here today speaking on behalf of myself and eight other NCN youth members who wanted the Commission to hear our perspectives on the Wuskwatim project.

I am 23 years old, studying Civil Engineering at the University of Manitoba. When I graduate, I hope to return to Nelson House and work on Wuskwatim and other projects.

As you have heard over the past weeks, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation is under pressure to meet the needs of a rapidly growing young population. There is already a critical shortage of jobs, housing, infrastructure and funds to support higher education opportunities. These challenges are felt directly by the youth of NCN and we will inherit the responsibility for meeting these challenges. Already, over 60 per cent of our population is under 30 years old and our numbers are growing rapidly.

We must have a way to address poverty, unemployment and other concerns by developing opportunities. To us, one of the best opportunities is the Wuskwatim project, which we strongly support despite our First Nation's negative history with past hydroelectric projects.

Over the past few weeks, you have heard representations by some of our Elders of our First Nation who are opposed to the Wuskwatim project because of their experiences and memories of the Churchill River Diversion. They are our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. Ever since we were young, we have heard their stories of the untouched lands and waters that were able to provide for their spiritual and physical needs, and how they lived in harmony with Mother Earth as part of their traditional ways.

While we haven't experienced their hardships, we feel their pain. We hear the anger and despair in their voices when they talk about Wuskwatim. We deeply respect the concerns of our Elders and we are thankful we did not have to experience the changes and disruptions they did. Still, our Elders need to appreciate that our generation no longer survives on traditional economy of hunting and fishing.

As our Chief Jerry Primrose has said in previous statements to the Commission, we live in the 21st century and that means we are more dependent on an economy that takes advantage of non-traditional knowledge, technology and industry. Because of the changes in our traditional economy and culture, Wuskwatim will not affect our lives in the same way our Elders' lives were affected many years ago by the CRD. We also know the CRD is not responsible for all the social and economic challenges facing our community. Many other northern communities face the same challenges and they did not experience any flooding.

Like so many other communities, the majority of people in Nelson House are on welfare due to the shortage of employment. We need training and jobs today as well as investment to develop future employment opportunities. We believe Wuskwatim offers us both short- and long-term opportunities to meet the immediate challenges and to address future concerns. We support our Chief and Council and the Future Development Team as they work with Manitoba Hydro to develop a partnership that will have long-lasting benefits for our people. Like our elders, we are concerned about our environment but feel the

consultation and the Environmental Impact Statements have been meaningful and broad in defining the risks. We are confident that the impact will be minimal. We...accept there are risks but they are outweighed by the benefits.

Ultimately, the decision to support Wuskwatim is up to the voting members of NCN who will have a chance to vote in the referendum on the project development agreement later this year. We believe your recommendations to the Provincial Government will influence our community's decision to accept this project because many of our people will not just accept the word of Manitoba Hydro or our Chief and Council. They will look to you for an objective assessment of the project and its impact on our society and environment [*sic*] (Clean Environment Commission, 2004b, p. 07038-07042).

The presentation cited above was made by a group of young people from Nisichawayasihk, as captured in official hearing transcripts, and it was brief. I sat speechless and utterly flabbergasted after hearing the Nisichawayasihk youth present. How could youth speak in such a manner about their elders, their history and our future? It did not make sense.

Following the youth presentation, I approached the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) officials to request time to speak and learned that I was unable to give another presentation, and hence, was unable to respond or so I thought. As had been arranged before the start of the day's hearings, I met with my friend and her friend, and over our noon hour introduction, I learned that my new acquaintance, Anissa Bunn, would be making a presentation to the CEC immediately following the lunch break. I was clearly upset and my new acquaintance offered to allow me to co-present with her, it was an invitation at which I jumped. I jotted a few notes and prepared a rebuttal to the presentation that had been made before the lunch hour break.

My response read:

I did not intend on speaking today, but I felt compelled to respond to what I heard earlier. I commend my peers on their presentation. It takes courage and strength to appear in this forum. It is very intimidating.

I would like to say, I would like to begin by stating shame on you Hydro. You have just appropriated and exploited the voices of our youth. As a youth, I would like to make some of my concerns known. Unlike my peers, I feel the

CRD is directly responsible for the economic and social disintegration that is, unfortunately, a reality in my community. Via past Hydro projects, there has been an intrusion by dominant society into our territories bringing with them values and customs that are often in conflict with our indigenous ways. With a highway into my community, we have experienced social disintegration and unceasing attack on our culture.

I do not feel that Wuskwatim is our best opportunity. In fact, I feel that this project could be [to] the detriment of my community and my children and their children. The rhetoric of youth or children as our future has been exploited. I would like to say that the future is now. If we want to do what is best for our children, my children and their children, let's educate them and teach them the importance of their culture, our culture, but also to prepare them and give them the skills that the west feels are necessary. Let's build schools and give them the opportunity for a decent education. Menial jobs and short-term employment will not benefit us in the long run despite what we have been hearing.

I feel that one element to the betterment of my community and the Cree Nation and other nations is education, but another important element is the valuation of our customs and culture. I have some concerns I didn't talk about the last time. You know, talking about this thing as an Aboriginal person and as this...affecting my Aboriginal right is one thing, but I think I would like to address [this matter] also as a human being, as a citizen and as a person of this planet, I think that hydro projects in general, and industries like this, the planet can't sustain us. [It] can't sustain our consumption, our constant want for energy and power. I think it is time to respect and utilize what we have now. I also would like to say that the traditional ways have somehow been made to be a negative thing in this process. When I think of traditional ways and the ways that we once lived, I don't think [about] going to live in the bush or go[ing to] live off the land...I would like to think about more [contemporary] times as us getting at the values, underlying the way that our ancestors had once lived. I think...those [are the] values that made us survive to what we are and who we are today.

I have stated previously that I am suspicious about the processes involved with this project, and I am disappointed that the voices of our youth have been exploited. I would like to end by cautioning that certain mechanisms have been employed to create division within our nations and some of those have been employed here. I ask the Commission to make a recommendation, if this thing has to go through...I would like to have a third body come in and do the vote. I would also like to ask you to [“]protect my environment,[”] protect my Aboriginal rights and protect the rights of my children and their children (Clean Environment Commission, 2004*b*, p. 7054-7057).

My views, outlined above, were not the only critical and “dissenting” views expressed

throughout the Clean Environment Commission hearings or other regulatory hearings.

The critical perspectives captured in the official record not only provide valuable counter views regarding the widespread and cumulative impacts of Hydro, they also point to a widespread distrust. One such perspective, captured in the official record, relates to testimony given by a resident of Granville Lake who spoke to the Clean Environment Commission in 2004. He described the effects of Hydro in his community asserting, “Hydro development continues to adversely impact our traditions and practice such as hunting. That's moose, goose and ducks, medicinal plant gathering, recreation, travel, trapping, fishing and being at one with our land” (Clean Environment Commission, 2004a, p. 3226). Mr. Anderson, of Granville Lake, went on to state:

We as Cree people live with a great respect and understanding and are connected to our land, to the land of our ancestors. We belong to and are part of the land. When the land is damaged, we are damaged. When the land natural cycles are disrupted by development, our natural cycles for being at one with the land are also disrupted.

There is a cycle of knowledge and understanding that we as Cree people go through in life which solidifies our identity for us. This cycle is fostered by the land our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, as this knowledge, understanding has been passed on to us for generations. All this brings an understanding to us as Cree people that we are part of and connected to the land in a very strong way. This cycle of knowledge has been going on for as long as Cree have been Cree. It is one of the reasons why extended families work so well within their Cree society. As no matter who a child is raised with, they know the land they come from and they are part of that land. They know their identi[t]y is Cree and with the land. It is safe to say from us as Cree, a part of our being is lost. For when our land is damaged, we are damaged. When our land is hurt, we are hurt.

When we are separated or detached from our land, a piece of us will always be missing. Who are we when we are not part of our land? In essence, this is a slow genocide of our identify as Cree. This break and detachment from the land must be recognized and addressed. Manitoba Hydro has free reign for the last 30 years and it must stop. We have never signed on to CRD or the augmented flow program. The free reign and to do damage to our environment without agreements has to stop [sic] (Clean Environment Commission, 2004a,

p. 3227-3228 and 3230-3231).

Critical perspectives captured on the “official” record also highlighted missed research opportunities, as indicated in the presentation by the Community Association of South Indian Lake (CASIL) who presented to at the Wuskwatim CEC hearings in May 2004. Additionally, and in the same manner described above, the local perspectives of a representative of CASIL documented concerns as they related to the Wuskwatim Project proposal. Excerpts from the Community Association of South Indian Lake assert:

[The] Community of South Indian Lake has experienced negative impacts of Manitoba Hydro's development for the past three decades and we believe that the Wuskwatim project may continue to degrade our environment and quality of life. Manitoba Hydro chose not to include Southern Indian Lake which includes the environment of my community and the environmental assessment of Wuskwatim Generation Project. Our environment was not studied and our people were not adequately or meaningfully consulted or considered. We will also argue that Hydro also has a requirement morally, legally and scientifically to talk to South Indian Lake through best practices for cumulative effects assessment. Hydro did involve Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation in its environmental impact assessment and as a co-proponent which has led to the existing Agreement in Principle for Wuskwatim. But they missed out a large component of the actual nation in the negotiations and consultations (Clean Environment Commission, 2004c, p. 6121-6122).

CASIL would go on to state:

The people of South Indian Lake believe that the Wuskwatim Generation Project will result in adverse cumulative effects.

Manitoba Hydro and NCN say that there has been an adequate public consultation of the EIS. But 90 per cent of South Lake residents are NCN members. Eighty-four per cent of our interview participants are NCN members. And clearly, these South Indian Lake people were not included in the Environmental Impact Assessment process...It is clear that the people of South Indian Lake have profound discomfort with and the mistrust of this project. They don't understand it and they fear it.

Regardless of the science and engineering that you have...there are Manitobans who believe that their environment will be worse off because of this project. Manitoba Hydro has a duty to ensure that this discomfort and fear is mitigated

and minimized and they have breached this duty by not properly explaining this project. Manitoba Hydro made a mistake in believing NCN speaks for South Indian Lake.

The Churchill River Diversion is more than just the resulting baseline environment in the Wuskwatim project area. It caused adverse environmental effects that in turn resulted in adverse social, cultural, spiritual and economic adverse effects. These effects were excluded from the cumulative effects assessment. There is the potential for missing cumulative effects of the Wuskwatim project when the CRD is excluded (Clean Environment Commission, 2004c p. 6158-6160).

Official hearings' transcripts, together with the reflections shared from above from the various forays into Hydro-affected communities, affirms the presence of a critical consciousness and outlook as they relate to the history and presence of Hydro in northern Manitoba. The impacts extend to the environmental, social, cultural, spiritual, economic, political and legal realities of lives and livelihoods of the Cree.

### **Cross Dimensional Realities of Hydroelectric Energy Production in Northern Manitoba**

Recall that in the mid 1970's the Cree formed a united and formidable response to developers and their legislators. The overall process would eventually result in the formation of the Northern Flood Committee, the political entity that would eventually endorse the *Northern Flood Agreement* on behalf of five hydro-affected Cree Bands. This original agreement, or Hydro treaty, was intended to address broad social, economic and cultural impacts caused by Hydro's presence and activities in Cree homelands. The realization of this agreement was perhaps the first recognizable instance of macro level responses to governments and developers. At a regional, and perhaps even at the level of the First Nation, official posturing was marked by the unified and collective approaches lead by the Northern Flood Committee. Following the endorsement of the Northern Flood Implementation Agreements, in the more contemporary era,

that is in throughout the 1990's, a shift occurred. The timeline and chronology of agreements documented in chapter four provides insight into the shift of contemporary Cree visions for the future.

The chronologies and histories captured in this study underscores that the broader processes, including both direct and indirect consequences, have resulted from the contemporary Hydro encounter and posturing of Cree who have become involved in that encounter, namely the “new” “partnership” agreements. That is, the pathways of so called “development” noted in chapter four highlight to a certain extent, the bureaucratic and political fallout of hydroelectric developers in our territories. The endorsement of new deals has altered the political landscape of some Hydro-affected First Nation communities and in tangible ways. The removal of Band members from band lists only to create new ones, as was the case with Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and OPCN at South Indian Lake, is only one example. Endorsing new deals takes us farther from the priorities of the *Northern Flood Agreement* grandfathers where our land becomes viewed solely in capitalist terms.

A cursory examination of the Wuskwatim project, as a case study, highlights the contemporary Hydro politic affecting Cree in northern Manitoba. It also underscores the range of responses to Hydro's proposals which have resulted in disparate outcomes. That is, the contemporary partnership proposals involving some of the Hydro-affected *NFA* Cree have allowed *Ithinewuk* to shape and express their own community based visions of self-government processes. These visions have been amply articulated by official and colonially recognized decision makers for the last several decades.

The excerpt below illustrates the drastic shift in vision noted above, which was arguably ushered in with the endorsing of the Implementation Agreements, and the perspective below was



shared by an elected official from Nisichawayasihk a decade *after* the ratification of the Wuskwatim PDA (emphasis added). It is taken from the PUB hearings transcripts:

Colonization has affected our people in many, many ways: lateral violence, social impacts, the way we feel and think about ourselves and First Nations people... Do we not want to uplift our nation and have it prosper and grow? Not only ours, as Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, the mere fact that this process is occurring...tells you a lot...Crown corporations are changing how they conduct business with us.

It is our destiny to change the way we feel, the way we act, create momentum that focusses on change for the future. I believe Nisichawayasihk has done that. Can we honestly say that this is the best deal possible? Of course there's going to be opponents to it. Everybody's got an opinion. But at the end of the day, time will tell how far our nation will prosper and prevail... Nisichawayasihk has taken the approach. We want to employ our people. We want to provide additional housing for our people...We can never go backwards in terms of rebuilding the land and the destruction that it has. I'm very angered by the destruction to our land, but how do we move forward as a nation? Do we not accept nothing or go into partnership and try to get something out of our devastation? Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation has taken that role in wanting to make change for its people...

...You continue to be oppressed by systems not created by Manitoba Hydro but by the governments of Canada... We are small communities negotiating against super powers, and times are changing. The mere fact that we're here in this room says that times are changing. People are going to listen to us. We're starting to matter. Let's continue that momentum forward and continue to prosper as a nation, and not hold each other back... *Our nation took the approach of entering into a partnership with Manitoba Hydro that we felt was beneficial to the people*, not only past leaders, our present leaders [*sic*] (2014a, p. 10962-10966, emphasis added).

Alternatively, and exemplifying Cree counter positions contesting Hydro's presence and actions are evident in the contemporary movement of *Pimicikamak*, who in 2014, evicted Hydro from the Jenpeg station (CBC News). While the matters or issues relating to the broader Hydro politic, or the politics of "development," falls beyond the scope of this study, it is worth reiterating that contemporary Hydro proposals and pathways have yielded disparate visions and expressions of self-determination and self-government in northern Manitoba.

If it has not already become obvious, information and perspectives presented thus far point to a number of broader issues obscured within the thematic and/or chronological details presented in the preceding chapters. The outcomes of cotemporary encounters have affected communities and peoples on various levels including environmentally, socially, culturally, spiritually, economically, politically and legally; for example, when considering the economic development models used or employed throughout the study region where the push for new generating stations have been proposed, the political and governing structures within those communities become affected; the politics of “development” can also have a bearing on issues and impacts concerning Aboriginal rights. The social and cultural fabric of communities is also affected, as discussed by Linklater (1994).

Though not discussed in preceding chapters, many Cree in northern Manitoba are experiencing health and mental health impacts, fallouts and effects. While these impacts and effects are not exclusively the result of the hydro presence, it would be negligent to deny developers’ culpability in the health impacts kinds of issues. It should be noted that issues surrounding health and well-being are captured in the documentary film by Mikkelsen & Lee (2007) noted earlier in this chapter.

At a micro level, at the level of grassroots individuals, powerful, passionate and moving perspectives have been shared and recorded on the public record; for example, Robert Spence of *Tataskweyak*, a local hunter, land user, and now Councilor, shared perspectives on the realities of “living in the shadow of a dam.” He also articulated perspectives on the prospects of the Keeyask proposal:

I was born under...the shadow of the Kelsey dam. Now it looks like I'm going to die underneath the shadow of another. So are the rest of my people— our people. Keeyask. What I meant by this was, whatever...Manitoba Hydro

touches, they kill. They're like a cancer on the land, on the river, and the environment. That's what I meant by this.

Your clean, renewable energy posters don't fly with our people, with the grassroots people. That's advertising. Window dressing. That's what that is. We see what is really going on. We're part of it. We're the water. We're the land. We're the air. We're everything that the environment is.

You can't lie to us. You can't paint pretty pictures on posters and plaster them all over Manitoba and the United States, and tell us what you're doing is clean, renewable energy. You can't do that to us. You can't make us believe what you're doing is good for the environment. We're not going to believe this, the blatant lies that you're telling to the whole world.

What you see there, that looks like... the end of an era for a free people. You're killing us every day... Everything that Manitoba Hydro touches dies. Everything. They're killing me today. They're killing us. We're dying. (CREE LANGUAGE SPOKEN). We can't do nothing about what is going on, but at least we can certainly try by helping each other here today. We're our support... we don't do this for your benefit. We're not here for your benefit to make you look good, Manitoba Hydro, no. This is your legacy right here. That is not ours. I am not your partner. I will never be your partner until you clean up your act... [sic] (Manitoba Public Utilities Board, 2014a, p. 8271-8272; p. 8278).

Similar perspectives stated by Robert Spence during the Public Utility Board (PUB) hearings have been articulated on a number of occasions and mostly recently during the “Hydro tours” we have taken through the lands at *Tataskewiyak*. The same tour that took us to Grand Rapids and other Hydro-affected communities, took us to local landscapes and waterways that have been eroded, flooded and utterly devastated but in the midst of the destruction. Southerners, including academics and activists, along with myself, have been exposed to the same Cree resolve that resulted in the Northern Flood Committee and the *Northern Flood Agreement*.

Indeed, as Simpson (2011) has written, “when resistance is defined solely in political mobilization, we miss much of what has our languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive. We have those things because our ancestors often acted within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they could to their children, to occupy and use our lands as we always

had” (p.16). Our cultures, languages, knowledges, histories, ceremonies and customs have survived despite the waves and the successive onslaught of government policies, political, economic and social encroachment, and because there are *Ithinewuk* out on the land and in the water exercising their rights, customs and practices, which have had been handed down for generations, there is a future beyond Hydro.

### **Towards Decolonization, the Emergence of the *Wa Ni Ska Tan* Alliance and Becoming Cree Again**

Long before cellphones, androids, tablets, paved streets, running water and even indoor plumbing, I vaguely recall playing along the dusty roads in Nelson House and being hurried indoors as thunder and threatening clouds approached. Once inside, I observed adults covering mirrors and windows with sheets and thin blankets. As I was hurried indoors I would be told “*pe-ya-tuk Pith-e-see-suk we ki-tu-uk.*” A crude and simplistic interpretation is: “watch! the thunderbirds are coming. The sky is going to rumble.” I had been told that the thunderbirds were giant dark colored birds and that the roar or sound of thunder was the sound thunderbirds made when their wings flapped: the clap was the thunder. I wholeheartedly believed in the thunderbirds. I also believed in their power. I tried and tried in vain, and with every ounce and effort I had, tried to steal a glimpse of them as I was being rushed indoors and after being told that one was on the horizon. I scanned the skies, straining and wishing to catch a glimpse of colossal yet mystical birds.

As an adult I often think about those moments and recall the reverence elders and other community members bestowed on the natural elements, cycles and processes in the natural or physical world (some might call it “nature”). Anyone who has traveled Highway Six north knows that the landscape is littered and dotted with twisted towers of steel and hydro lines.

Power is generated in the mighty waters of northern Manitoba and the energy is carried, via Hydro's bi-poles, to markets and consumers (mostly) in the south. The structures are difficult to ignore at times simply because of their sheer size and symmetry along the roadside.

I think about those times as a child when I was rushed indoors by grandmother or great-grandmother as I drive alongside these overbearing structures of steel. At times, it feels like they stole our thunder. Since the mid-1990's many *Ithinewuk* seem to have cowered to the new thunderbirds that litter the landscapes and horizons of Northern Manitoba. Carrying a new kind of energy and power, the Hydro towers seem to command attention, much like the thunderbirds of my childhood, as they dominate the horizons and tower above the road, intimidating drivers at the roadside.

Over the last decade or so, and in addition to witnessing the widespread and cumulative impacts of Hydro in our territories, I have witnessed incredible acts of courage, individual and collective acts of "resurgence." Thankfully, many Hydro-affected peoples and communities in northern Manitoba have not and are not cowering to the new steel thunderbirds that have invaded our horizons. Since the 1970's, when the plans and visions of developers became known to our grandfathers, *Ithinewuk* responded swiftly and collectively to protect the rights and livelihoods of our communities. Despite the settler-colonialism that we have been and continue to experience, and particularly where Hydro is concerned, *Ithinewuk* are drawing upon their teachings, languages, stories and values and confronting the settler-colonialism that has been imported into our communities. The steel towers may bring energy that makes us somewhat comfortable, but the cost is high and the consequences far-reaching.

The preceding study aimed to capture and highlight a sampling of critical perspectives of some of the many Cree who found themselves on the lands and waters so crucial to Hydro's

vision. Critical perspectives like the ones included in this chapter have been far overshadowed by the well funded public-relations campaigns of developers (some of which is also also included above). While public hearings and “the public record” capture a degree of the criticisms surrounding polarizing realities and opinions attached to the Hydro saga and history in northern Manitoba, these perspectives can be difficult to access outside the public record though captured in occasion and in a small way in technical industry reports.

In 2014, following on one of “Hydro tours” a gathering of grassroots Cree from Hydro-affected communities, together with academics and activists from the south, was organized in Thompson, Manitoba. One of the objectives of the gathering was to gauge whether the Cree were interested in pursuing avenues to address the myriad of issues they faced with regard to Hydro. Participants agreed that actions needed to be taken and that support was required. This gathering was the inaugural gathering of the *Wa Ni Ska Tan* Alliance, or as it properly known, “*Wa Ni Ska Tan: An Alliance of Hydro Affected Communities.*”

This “alliance of hydro-affected communities” is a relatively new entity and research conglomerate but the ideas and principles guiding it are not. Much like the Interfaith Task Force on Northern Hydro Development of the 1970’s, this diverse group aims to make issues affecting Hydro-affected Cree known. In addition to calling attention to the social, cultural, economic and environmental consequences of hydroelectric energy production, the group also seeks to support community initiatives. Funded by a Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Grant, *Wa Ni Ska Tan* is embarking on exciting research opportunities and more specifically,

The overall goal of *Wa Ni Ska Tan* (Cree word for ‘Wake Up’ or ‘Rise Up’) is to explore both the positive and negative implications of hydropower for nearby environments and Indigenous communities in Manitoba and other affected regions across Canada, and to further explore how and to what degree

this research alliance might enable healing as well as meaningful and desirable social and environmental change (*Wa Ni Ska Tan*, n.d).

### **Next Steps and Looking Ahead**

Hydroelectric energy production has recently been touted as a green and responsible energy source by industry, industry advocates and governments alike. Indeed, while the mechanical and technological skill required to generate electricity is impressive, my hope is that this study has demonstrated, in a northern Manitoban context, hydroelectricity production is not without controversy. Nor is it “green.” The issue is complex and polarizing.

This study intended to achieve several objectives, and in addition to situating and locating Hydro’s network in northern Manitoba, it aimed to capture the bureaucratic mechanisms used to build dams. Forty years’ worth of agreements have affected entire generations of Cree with each successive agreement ostensibly promising more than the last. Another key component of this study sought to inscribe a critical perspectives concerning the production of hydroelectricity in northern Manitoba. Neither of these objectives should not be read or taken as a completed in or by this scholarly endeavor. Rather, it is my hope that in beginning to articulate some of the problems and issues inherent in the production of hydroelectricity, this introductory study will give rise to other thematic and perhaps more comprehensive studies on the number of issues raised here including: economic development models in indigenous communities; politics, the politics of “development” including issues and impacts relating to indigenous governance and governance structures; legal implications, considerations and impacts involving Aboriginal rights (where the production of hydroelectricity is concerned); social and cultural implications; and longitudinal health and mental health impacts and effects.

Theoretical considerations used in this study were introduced in chapter one and provided a useful framework for understanding the encounters between the indigenous communities, industry and governments in northern Manitoba over the last four decades. The frameworks offered here also helped problematize concepts and practices related to “development” proposals and pathways. A related aim of chapter one was to help make sense of the critical perspectives shared by elders and community members who experience(d) contemporary forms of settler colonialism at their shorelines, on their traplines and in their respective communities which were captured in chapter six.

Critical theories and methodologies emanating largely from the field of Native Studies have heavily influenced and informed in this study. Such work includes Smith (1999), Kulchyski (2005), Simpson (2011), Coulthard (2014) who draw out perspectives, methodologies and pathways to research and scholarship involving or relating to indigenous peoples. The nominal use of research and perspectives originating from the field of anthropology was useful for framing and describing local and community based understandings and contexts; for example, Brightman’s (2007) description and treatise concerning the narratives and “stories” used within Cree story telling practices was important for locating the pragmatic yet philosophical variants in the narrative forms used within Cree culture, and particularly with the “Rocky Cree” in northern Manitoba. Linklater (1994), who was an indigenous student of archeology and member of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation at the time her thesis was published, offered invaluable indigenous Cree insights into community life, perspectives and understandings as they relate to cultural artifacts and customs.

Coulthard’s theory of “grounded normativity,” discussed in chapter one, is relevant and applicable to analyzing the land based, “place based” practices and ethics that gave rise to Cree



opposition in northern Manitoba in the early 1970's. By framing "grounded normativity" in a way that underscores the interconnectedness and historic balance between indigenous peoples and their surroundings, this framework gives rise to locating those expressions of resistance and resurgence emanating in the stories and teachings connecting us to the land. Coulthard provides important theoretical insights which properly encapsulates the primacy and centrality of *aski* ("the land") in the formation of indigenous criticisms of capitalist projects and proposals like Hydro in northern Manitoba. A discussion ensued in the preceding chapters about indigenous perspectives and skepticism concerning Hydro's projects and plans and this dialogue was by no means comprehensive or complete as there is much work left to be undertaken concerning Cree understandings and experiences of resource "development" at a variety of levels.

Chapters three and four aimed to capture the degree and breadth of deal making and dam building in northern Manitoba while chapter five sought to situate the importance of our storytelling practices and customs. The Clean Environment Commission and Public Utility Board regulatory processes and hearings were discussed in chapter five so that these resources could be properly located as important sources of primary data. Chapter six aimed to document Cree perspectives on the pathways, histories and proposals concerning the production of hydroelectricity in northern Manitoba. This chapter also captured the dichotomous realities and perspectives associated concerning Hydro, the production of hydroelectricity, and particularly, the newest proposals involving Hydro and a number of the *Northern Flood Agreement* Bands.

The maps, charts and chronologies included in this study are important for obvious reasons: mapping or geographically locating or situating components of the extensive hydroelectric network in the north provides important data regarding the breadth and reach of the system and charting the bureaucratic tools and mechanisms used to establish the Hydro network

provides insight into the decades of agreement making which facilitated two distinct rounds of dam building in northern Manitoba.

It should be noted that there are some limitations to relying on quantitative data used by developers and governments to sell and construct dams. Data that are focused solely on objective scientific data can obscure the numerous ways the production of hydroelectricity has affected those most directly impacted with the study region: The Cree. These data cannot, for example, speak to the ways the Cree have experienced the inundation of their lands, grave yards, spiritual and “sacred” sites. Nor do industry data necessarily or accurately convey the degree to which political mechanisms and processes imported from outside our communities *affect* the social structures *within* Cree communities and between Cree communities. This study aimed, in part, to begin considering a number of broad impacts and telling stories from our vantage points.

Hydroelectric energy can be a sensible energy source if used responsibly, produced ethically and generated in a manner that is accountable; and, ‘if the cost of doing business’ is acknowledged, that is, communities who have sacrificed so much are given their share of ongoing profits. As already noted, this study should not be read as a definitive or complete study on the matters and issues raised in these pages. Instead, it should be read as a call to action and a call to research as there is much to be learned about how to move forward together.

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### **Tables, Figures and other Images:**

Government of Manitoba (n.d.c). Map: Churchill River Diversion (Citation information not provided or included relating to map developer). Retrieved from: [http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/licensing/pdf/crd\\_map\\_web.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/licensing/pdf/crd_map_web.pdf)

Grima, V. (2017a). Map: 2016 WaNiSkaTan “Hydro Tour” Routes

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## Appendix 1:



Department of Native Studies  
204 Isbister Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone XXX XXX XXXX  
Fax XXX XXX XXXX

### **Information and Interview Consent Form**

**Project Title:** *Community Perspectives on Hydroelectric Development: A Case Study*

**Principal Investigator:** Ramona Neckoway, PhD Candidate- Native Studies,  
XXXXX

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Kulchyski, Department of Native Studies, University of Manitoba  
XXXXX

#### **Purpose of Research:**

The researcher, a PhD Candidate and member of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), is undertaking research which will be used towards the completion of a PhD. She will be conducting formal interviews with a variety of community members from NCN and this information aims to document community perspectives on hydroelectric development in the region. More specifically, it aims to document local and/or community based understandings and experiences as they relate to (hydroelectric) resource development activities that have occurred within the territories of NCN and may includes information related to the Churchill River Diversion (CRD), Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) and the newest generating projects respectively. An important part of the research draws upon the experiences and perspectives of the people, as told in their own words, to describe impacts on the political, social, economic and cultural facets of community life and wellbeing in NCN.

While the community-based key informant interviews will inform part of the overall research, incorporating important archival/historical information documenting the development of the hydro system(s) will also inform the broader critical inquiry related to this research. The research undertaken as part of this study will be used toward the completion of a dissertation and may be used/cited in a scholarly article.

**Procedures involving participant and recording devices to be used:**

Participants will be asked to participate in a face to face interview which will be audio and/or may be video recorded. The interviews are being recorded to ensure accuracy of information provided and to supplement notes. The interview is expected to take 30 minutes to 1 hour. A follow-up interview may be requested (by either the researcher or participant); any subsequent interviews will not require a new consent form and will adhere to the guidelines set out here. The audio recordings will only be shared with the researcher's advisory committee, if necessary. The interview, or parts of the interviews, may be transcribed and used (paraphrased or verbatim) as a part of an article or may appear in the researcher's dissertation; the use of the information will adhere to the permissions provided by the participant noted below.

### **Risks & Benefits:**

There are no anticipated risks to participants. Information shared during the interview is not expected to cause any harm to the participant. While there is the potential to have sensitive information shared, it is not expected to cause harm to the participant beyond what they would experience day-to-day.

Participants might benefit from the research in that they have the opportunity to share their perspectives on development. This information may be useful to other community members, policy makers, students, historians or others who take an interest in the subject.

### **Anonymity/Confidentiality:**

If participants choose to remain anonymous (i.e. they do not want any personal identifiers attributed to the information they share), participants will have the opportunity to check this option at the end of this form.

Interview transcripts will be stored on a password protected laptop. The files will be coded so that the individual's name will not appear on the file and it will be stored in a password protected file on the laptop. The researcher will take appropriate measures to protect anonymity/confidentiality of the participant but can not guarantee full anonymity as the community is small and local members may be capable of discerning information or may know community histories and a result may be able to attribute information to the participant.

### **Other Information:**

In lieu of providing tobacco and cloth (as per indigenous protocols of giving of tobacco and cloth), the participant will receive a \$25.00 gift card as acknowledgement and recognition of their contribution(s) and time and is a one-time gift.

There is no deception involved in the research and there are no anticipated risks to participants. Information regarding broad impacts and effects of hydro development in hydro-affected

communities has been captured on the public record and perspectives of those participants who waive confidentiality is generally known in the community.

For those participants who wish to remain anonymous, the steps noted above reflects measures taken to ensure participants remain anonymous. As noted above, the researcher cannot guarantee full anonymity due to community dynamics but will code the information in the ensuing publications so that it is not contained in the document(s).

If participants are interested in the publication, the researcher can provide links for the publication(s).

**Participation in this research is voluntary.**

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject.**

**You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence by contacting the principal researcher at: XXXXXXXX. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

**The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at XXX-XXX-XXXX. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

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

***The Principal researcher (or delegate) will review the following releases with you and you will determine which releases apply to you.***

- 
1. I agree to participate in this project having my response/s and full name published in the resulting publication of the project/research and/or dissertation tentatively titled *Community Perspectives on Hydroelectric Development: A Case Study.*

*I understand that I will be given full acknowledgement, which includes my full name, for the information I share during the interview and that this information may appear in the*

*researcher's dissertation and/or in a scholarly article and that it may be available on the internet where it can be publicly viewed.*

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. I agree to participate in this project having my response/s published in the project/research tentatively titled *Community Perspectives on Hydroelectric Development: A Case Study* using only my first name.

*I understand that I will be given acknowledgement, which includes my first name only, for the information I share during the interview and that this information may appear in the researcher's dissertation and/or in a scholarly article and that it may be available on the internet where it can be publicly viewed.*

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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3. I agree to participate in this project having my response/s published in the project/research and/or dissertation tentatively titled *Community Perspectives on Hydroelectric Development: A Case Study*, but my full name is to remain anonymous.

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_



Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. I give permission to the researcher to use my image (if photos are taken) as part of this research. I acknowledge and understand that the image could be made public in the subsequent dissertation/scholarly article:

YES

NO

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Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Human Ethics Coordinator  
Room 208-194 Dafoe Road (CTC Building)