
Encountering Settler Colonialism in Hydroelectric Development at
Southern Indian Lake

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the history and proceedings of the high-level diversion scheme at Southern Indian Lake. Though the scheme did not become a reality because the Progressive Conservative majority government who championed it dissolved before development began, its proceedings signified South Indian Lake's first colonial encounter with regards to the Churchill River Diversion. Through the high-level diversion discourse, I argue that Manitoba's Churchill River Diversion reproduces a social policy which creates Indigenous peoples as an Other and asserts settler dominance. It reproduces settler ideologies and fantasies of personhood, entitlement, and (dis)possession which are constitutive of colonial powers. Moreover, it reproduces hydropower as a nexus for colonial practices and ideologies which undermine Indigenous peoples and their land. Chapter One argues that the low-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake created profound negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts. It aims to place in sharp relief the arguments posited for the high-level scheme by its proponents. Chapter Two argues that Manitoba Hydro agents produced a government-supported narrative of urgency for the high-level diversion which circumvented social and environmental responsibilities towards Indigenous lands and Indigenous peoples. And Chapter Three argues that the Progressive Conservative majority government, of the time, embraced and reproduced technocratic and colonial ideologies to press for the high-level diversion. The Churchill River Diversion is a complex of colonial ideologies, government agents, engineers, and resisting Indigenous communities into a cemented structure which continues to alter hydrologies and humanities.

Key words: Churchill River Diversion, South Indian Lake, hydropower, hydrostructures, environmental impacts, social impacts, politics of difference.

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Introduction - The Flow of Exclusionary Politics

My research investigates the politics of early hydropower power developments. Hydroelectricity has played a key role in energy histories and political economies (Evenden & Peyton, 2016, p. 252). In Manitoba, the reengineering of northern rivers ensured uninterrupted and predictable energy flows to a rising number of consumers (Manitoba Hydro, 1985) while expansionary planning produced one of the cheapest and most reliable electricity systems in North America (Manitoba Hydro, 2013). It accounts for upwards of 97 percent of the province's energy and nearly 60 percent of the country's (National Energy Board [NEB], 2021). Attesting to hydroelectricity's imperfect and regional market tendency in Canada, Manitoba Hydro materialized as a monopoly in 1961 (Evenden & Peyton, 2016; Manitoba Energy Authority, 1985; Manitoba Hydro, 1998). More specifically, as a natural monopoly – these grow in industries with high initial infrastructural costs.

As Manitoba's Crown Corporation, it used this advantage to develop "efficient coordination of generating and transmission facilities" (Manitoba Energy Authority, 1985, p. 6). Directed by the provincial and federal governments, Hydro became "responsible for energy policy, planning, and development" (Hoffman, 2008, p. 109). The distribution of costs and benefits of Hydro's projects has "remained remarkably consistent," with northern Indigenous peoples suffering at the expense of southern residents and cheap electricity (Hoffman & Bradley, 2008, p. 146). This is a condition enabled by the Crown parties entering "into negotiations 'against' [Indigenous communities], trying to limit or to negotiate downward their claim in the name of the interests of the collective" (Martin, 2008, p. 30).

Hydropower developments are nature-society hybrids; developments that, "whether formed of concrete or earth and rock, or more likely some combination, reside at the intersection of complex intersection of complex networks of altered hydrologies, technical expertise, financial circuits, political desires, displaced communities, and hegemonic ideologies" (Sneddon, 2015, p. 2). In his study of Spain's hydrological resources, Erik Swyngedouw (2015) termed these development hydrostructures. The term hydrostructure accounts for both the variety of large-scale hydrologic projects (i.e., dams, generating stations, and river basin manipulations) and the underlying socio-political networks required to develop such physical structures.

Deborah Cowen (2017) argues that infrastructures exist across temporal and spatial scales, enduring and binding pasts, presents, and futures. Hydrostructures embody this argument. Using

Spain's political history, Erik Swyngedouw (2015) argues that particular socio-political circumstances are closely linked to hydrological imaginations and material developments. He claims that the development of Spain's hydrological resources was intrinsically tied to nationalist ideas about developing Spain and demonstrates that assemblages can construct new socio-natures which bind the human and nonhuman and rely on socio-political constructions and the material qualities of water. In a similar vein, within a case study on the US Bureau of Reclamation, Christopher Sneddon (2015), argues that hydrostructures are to be understood as technopolitical objects instead of instruments of an impartial science. The Bureau became a tool for geopolitical power – by offering technical and water resource management expertise to less developed regions it could forge alliances against a burgeoning communist influence. Meanwhile in Quebec, Caroline Desbiens (2013) argues that drawing hydroelectric power from the north involves a different assertion of power, the cultural erasure of Indigenous landscapes in favour of a national identity. She explains that in the eyes of policy makers and Quebecers, those who built dams were pioneers in a previously uncultivated landscape now inscribed with culture and spectacle.

Across nations, hydrostructures have been used to promote agendas embedded in politics, this is true for Manitoba as well. Thibault Martin and Steven M. Hoffman (2008) delve into the comparative experience of Quebec's and Manitoba's Indigenous peoples in dealing with the late twentieth century wave of hydroelectric development. The authors place hydro development in the contexts of broken treaty obligations and Indigenous rights, concluding that despite some progress, Indigenous peoples in Canada experience no consistent policy justice or fairness when it comes to these developments. In a detailed account of early hydro developments in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, James Waldram (1988) demonstrates that hydro negotiations were in the style of nineteenth century treaty land grabs. Waldram (1988) argues that little has changed in the treatment of Indigenous peoples when their resources are appropriated by the government. More recently, a series of graduate theses have shed light on the implications of hydropower development in Manitoba. Joseph Dipple (2015) argues that recent partnerships agreements between Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba and northern Indigenous communities do not provide social license because the latter does not provide free, prior, and informed consent. Erin Yaremko (2018) argues that Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba used colonial strategies in forcing the communities of Chemawawin Nation and South Indian Lake off their original lands for the purpose of hydroelectric development. And Ramona Neckoway (2018) charts hydroelectric

developments in Manitoba, investigates the “impacts and effects experienced by a number of Hydro-affected Cree in northern Manitoba,” and inscribes a critical decolonial perspective (p. 26).

Chronology of Manitoba’s Hydropower Developments

To investigate any part of Manitoba’s hydropower development history, it is important to understand the origin of Manitoba Hydro and the evolution of hydropower’s network in the province. Manitoba’s hydropower story starts with the 1900 Minnedosa River Generating Station (GS), the plant served the City of Brandon until it was decommissioned in 1924 (Manitoba Hydro, 1998). The 1906 Pinawa GS, the first of many dams on the Winnipeg River, followed and, according to Manitoba Hydro (1998), signified a “bold move into uncharted waters” as it required “imagination and courage” because the river’s potential was unknown at the time of the plant’s three million dollar construction (p. 11). The plant became inefficient and small by 1951 and was dismantled, but in its lifetime, it did decrease electricity rates by nearly eighty-four percent, setting an enduring precedent which reinforced cost savings as a goal of dam building in the province (Wera & Martin, 2008). The Winnipeg River hydroelectric system was augmented with the 1926 Pointe-du-Bois GS, the 1928 Great Falls GS, the 1948 Slave Falls GS, the 1952 Pine Falls GS, the 1952 Seven Sisters GS, and the 1955 McArthur GS, Seven Sisters being the largest. Amid these developments, in 1936, the first export of power was sent to the United States, to North Dakota and Minnesota (Manitoba Hydro, 1998). In response to the post-war surge in demand, the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Act was passed in 1945, which led to the 1949 establishment of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board (MHEB), a “new dynasty” which secured a coordinated policy on the production and supply of energy (Manitoba Hydro, 1992; 1998, p. 24). Consolidation was extended through the 1961 Manitoba Hydro Act, which created Manitoba Hydro, uniting the MHEB and the Manitoba Power Commission (MPC) provincial utilities (Manitoba Hydro, 1998). Manitoba Hydro’s electricity stronghold was finalized with the acquisition of Winnipeg Hydro, formerly known as City of Winnipeg Hydro Electrical System (City Hydro), in 2002 (Lane, 2002).

Manitoba Hydro is managed by a Board of Directors, the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and the Board is accountable to the Minister responsible for the administration of the Manitoba Hydro Act who is also appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (Manitoba Government, 2023; Manitoba Hydro, 2022). And the

provincial Minister of Finance approves borrowing schedules for Manitoba Hydro and is responsible for the Crown corporation.

The establishment of Hydro, a provincial and commercial corporation, anchored an era of northern expansion. To address exponential energy demands, the 1960 Grand Rapids GS was built, “fully” developing the south’s potential (Manitoba Energy Authority, 1985, p. 6). The advent of innovative transmission technologies, funded by the federal government, made possible Hydro’s northward development path. By 1977, the waters of the Churchill River had been diverted, and Lake Winnipeg was regulated to magnify the Nelson River’s generating capacity, enabling its development. This massive undertaking set the conditions for the construction of the 1972 Kelsey GS, the 1974 Kettle GS, the 1979 Long Spruce GS, and the 1979 Jenpeg GS. The 1980s brought an economic recession that slowed capital investment, delaying the 1990 Limestone Generating Station. Once completed, it became the largest plant in the province. Soon after, the 2012 Wuskwatim GS, on Burntwood River, was constructed to enhance export capacity. In 2014, construction began on the Keeyask GS and it is estimated that it will be completed in 2024. Planning has been underway for the Conawapa GS; the project was shelved back in 1992 and in 2014 Manitoba Hydro presented it to the provincial government once again, at which point the latter proposed to halt any project activities until a stronger business case could be developed, though more than \$329 million has already been sunk on the project since 2003 (Winnipeg Free Press, 2015). Visions of an electrified province have not abated – according to Manitoba Hydropower (2023), a Manitoba Hydro public relations website, Hydro is envisioning at least ten more new generating stations following Keeyask, and this does not include the control structures and transmissions lines these would necessitate.

Using Politics of Difference to Analyse a Colonial Legacies

Settler societies have mobilized nature, relating to both the environmental and the fundamental state of being, in the production of differences – a practice with profound symbolic and material implications. As Nancy Leys Stepan (1998) writes, “by being embodied as qualitatively different in their substantial natures—by creating group identities in difference—communities of individuals were placed outside the liberal universe of freedom, equality and rights” (p. 29). Nature was produced as an ontological instrument that replaced a theory of politics and rights, equality was a matter of anatomy, not of ethics (Stepan, 1998). Race, nature, and difference, as ontology

and ideology, are constitutive features of colonial power and modernity (Moore et al., 2003). Present conflicts - such as Flint, Standing Rock, Idle No More, Site C protests in British Columbia, and Manitoba Hydro protests in Manitoba – showcase the historical salience of this structural violence and inequality.

Race and nature, as Moore et al. (2003) maintain, are instruments of power, they are not prehistoric or victim to human toil. That is, they are a means of enacting, expressing, and reproducing the power structured in social relations. Notions of nature work as discourse and ideology; race works in tandem by providing a means to biologize culture and racialize the biology of nonhuman species (Moore et al., 2003). For example, through an analysis of contested northern New Mexico's forests, Jake Kosek (2006) argues that placing cultural politics of difference in the same frame as politics of nature enables new understandings of social relations and political landscapes. He warns that "those of us concerned with the social reproduction of difference must also take seriously the politics of nature" (Kosek, 2006, p. 187). In this thesis, I am concerned with how settler colonial ideologies can tie both race and nature and produce hydro "terrains of power" and struggle (Moore et al., 2003, p. 1).

Eva Mackey (2016) argues that certainty, enacted through ideology and law, "has been, and continues to be, pivotal" in establishing and maintaining the fantasies of entitlement and possession of settler society (p. 67). The fantasies, here, refer to the assumptions that the settler society's sovereignty "is necessarily superior, stronger, and deeper than any claims of Indigenous people" (Mackey, 2016, p. 9). Importantly, "these fantasies are expectations of long-standing, settled expectation that have been legitimated through repeated experiences across lifetimes and generations of being 'centered and dominant'" (Mackey, 2016, p. 10). This is settler certainty, a product of what Andrea Smith (2012) terms the 'logics of settler colonialism'. These logics are the sedimented "social, ideological, and institutional processes through which the authority" of the settler society is enacted (Rifkin, 2011, p. 343). Indeed, settler colonial nation-building has entailed the sustained embedding and realizing of "settler assertions of certainty and entitlement, and the repeated denial of Indigenous personhood and sovereignty", all of which are entrenched "in the interpretation of early moments of colonial/settler assumptions of sovereignty over territory" (Mackey, 2016, p. 11). Kosek (2006) reminds us that "the formative aspects of power are not just conspicuous ones of domination or control. Instead, formation takes place through the cultivation and identification of individuals – by means of both their internal natures and their external

landscapes” (p. 286). The history of colonial ideologies and practice is predicated on self-evident Western enlightenment ideals and fantasies of personhood, entitlement, and property. Indeed, these ideals and fantasies have been reproduced in the production of energies, legacy fuels and renewables, throughout the world (see Batel & Devine-Wright, 2016; Batel & Kupers, 2022; Dunlap, 2017; Finley-Brook & Thomas, 2011; Macfarlane & Kitay, 2016).

Settler colonialism, as Audra Simpson (2011) argues, is “predicated on territorial possession by some and, thus, dispossession of others” (p. 211). This model of colonialism, then, requires the usurpation of the ‘native’ or ‘primitive’ (Mackey, 2016). Colonial ideologies become increasingly important as they can be used to “justify” actions. “Nature” was made “complicit in genocide by treating clearing and development... as human obligations written onto the world itself” by colonizers in their providential ideology (Purdy, 2015, p. 23). Indeed, “settlement and the need to make sense of settlement in a place already inhabited, incited the creation of a providential imagination [at first], and powered...brutal exclusions” (Purdy, 2015, p. 72). As Jedidiah Purdy (2015) has it, an ideology best takes hold when it mirrors a dominant reality of the time. In this section, I hope to have threaded through the idea of colonialism as not a single event, but a social, cultural, political, and environmental structure and process embedded within the fabric of society. Moreover, that colonial ideas and fantasies are contemporarily reproduced when mandates of personhood, entitlement, and property are engaged with.

Engaging in Politics of Difference: Colonialism and Hydrostructures

A persistent pattern of racial exclusion, differences mobilized through nature, can be traced through the emergence of colonial ideologies and their infrastructural incarnations. Infrastructures concretize colonial ideologies; infrastructures reproduce the past in the present (Cowen, 2017; Sneddon, 2015). Doreen Massey’s (1993) concept of “power-geometry” highlights the geographically uneven relations of power, arguing that spatiality and mobility are both shaped by and reproduce power differentials (p. 62). Infrastructure can “entrench injustice in systems that seem technical rather than political...and thus can serve to naturalize those relations” (Cowen, 2017). In this way, infrastructure, paired with technocratic discourse, may serve to anchor colonial ideologies which gained hegemony in the past.

Logistics produced a systems vulnerability model which became a dominant paradigm for the assurance, the certainty, of national security (Pasternak & Dafnos, 2018). Integral to this

paradigm is what Craig Calhoun (2004) calls an “emergency imaginary” that masks political agency (p. 375). In state governance, this translates to an assumed pervasive urgency of potential threats that “rationalizes interventions” undertaken in the interests of people, property, the economy, and government (Pasternak & Dafnos, 2018, p. 10). This is particularly the case in settler colonial contexts, wherein Indigenous self-determination is seen as a perpetual emergency to the state’s claim of absolute sovereignty (Dafnos et al., 2016). A threat that, at times, requires the deployment of police-military power to secure corridors of circulation. For example, during the construction (1960-1968) of the Grand Rapids Generating Station in Manitoba, security police blockaded the work area and monitored the ‘Indian’ and Metis settlement that was adjacent; even the construction camp had “all the characteristics of a military compound” (Hunter, 1962, p. 18). Similarly, today Manitoba Hydro construction camps are self-contained; the Keeyask construction camp has everything from dormitories to recreation centers and “comings and goings are very controlled,” “people aren’t going into town after-hours...Once you are at site, you are there for three weeks” (Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership, 2018, p. 13). Infrastructures, like colonial ideologies, were rendered anti-political by the state and its agencies to justify the development of places and naturalization of violence against their counterparts.

This can be seen in the development of hydrostructures. In colonial contexts, as Cowen (2017) contends, “infrastructure is often the means of dispossession...the material force that implants colonial economies and socialities.” That is, an anchor which can “engineer and entrench” new forms of inequalities (Cowen, 2017). Projects like the Churchill River Diversion in Manitoba show that hydro-structures are indivisible from networks of colonialism and violence against disenfranchised peoples (Hoffman, 2008; Sneddon, 2015). For example, from the viewpoint of dam builders and supporters, “relocation, the dismantling of a land-based economy, and the subordination of Aboriginal lifestyles were not unfortunate realities occasioned by the necessities of progress... [but were] understood as positive steps that would bring about the necessary transformation of a backward-looking and ultimately unsustainable way of life” (Hoffman, 2008, p. 127). Indigenous peoples were seen as “children who need to be brought in line with the rest of the country” (Loomba, 1998, p. 10). Steven M. Hoffman (2008, p. 127) argues that relocations are best understood as “on-going... functional step[s] in the continuing process of colonialism” that began centuries ago (see also Brice-Bennett, 2017; Petch, 1995; Rahman et al., 2017; Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1994, 1996b).

Hydro-structures may be rendered anti-political and developed in the name of a rational techno-scientific modernity, when in fact they are thick in politics (Sneddon, 2015). Christopher Sneddon (2015) highlights their historical contingency when he contends that they are “inseparable from the political dynamic among the social actors who mobilized and sustained these technologies and ideas in the first place” (p. 2). If infrastructures materialize colonial ideologies, then Manitoba hydrostructures can trace processes of colonization.

The Significance of the Churchill River Diversion at Southern Indian Lake

Technological advancements and a disregard for Indigenous peoples, cultures, lands, and rights produced a pathway for hydropower development (Netherton, 1993; Waldram, 1984). Manitoba’s hydroelectric system is an engineering marvel, but its development continues to be at expense of Indigenous peoples. Its relative sustainability founded a convincing local and national rhetoric for expansion that omitted negative impacts on Indigenous peoples and landscapes (Dobrovolny, 2008; Hoffman & Bradley, 2008; Wera & Martin, 2008). Although hydropower may be a cleaner form of energy than oil or coal, it does have severe environmental effects, such as environmental destruction, potential for methyl mercury exposure, and contamination of food webs (Rosenberg et al., 1997). And northern Indigenous communities, whose land-based existence was prosperous, “suddenly found their territory irreparably damaged: logs blocking access to shores; undrinkable water; water levels that fluctuated according to no locally known logic, making travel unsafe; interred bodies exposed; islands slowly washed away” (Kulchyski, 2004).

Postwar growth signaled a desire for the expansion of hydropower capacity, the transformation of “rivers into power generators” in the fulfillment of provincial continental modernization (Evenden & Peyton, 2016, p. 251; Netherton, 1993). Manitoba Hydro developments became “larger in scale and geographic scope” (Hoffman, 2008, p. 108). Provincial projects were a part of a larger national strategy. Under a “federal program of power control, interconnections were executed, reservoirs built, dams raised, and power conservation programs [were] introduced” to ensure export market potential (Evenden & Peyton, 2016, p. 259). Predictable steady power depended on reliable rivers, rivers that were “tamed” (Manitoba Hydro, 1985, p. 16). Developers saw rivers in terms of their volume, flow, and control – not Indigenous livelihoods (Evenden & Peyton, 2016). As Hydro engineers altered rivers from their natural forms, they simultaneously changed the autonomy that Indigenous peoples were able to engage with in

their lives and livelihoods. This convergence amounted to dispossession, creating severe and enduring social, cultural, and economic losses in many northern communities (Kulchyski, 2004; Wera & Martin, 2008). Indeed, however one qualifies Indigenous life, “there is little doubt that the foundation for even a remotely familiar land-based experience is rapidly slipping from the grasp” of Indigenous communities (Hoffman, 2008, p. 104). More importantly, this loss can “be traced directly to the massive engineering projects conceived and initiated by Manitoba Hydro” (Hoffman, 2008, p. 104).

One of these massive engineering projects was the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) which dislocated the northern Indigenous community of South Indian Lake (SIL). The project diverted the Churchill River’s waters through Southern Indian Lake and into the Nelson River to maximize the latter’s flows for power production. Southern Indian Lake was made into a storage reservoir and the lake’s water levels were increased by 10 metres. This project was earlier known as the low-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake because it was one of a multitude of alternatives early Hydro engineers and provincial officials had to contemplate. Indeed, if it was up to the latter, the high-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake scheme would have become the Churchill River Diversion, had the government of that time not dissolved following the resignation of Premier Walter Weir in May 1969. The proceedings of the high-level scheme signified South Indian Lake’s first colonial encounter with the Churchill River Diversion. The high-level plan is piece of the network of people and ideologies that gave rise to the low-level diversion at South Indian Lake.

Research Objectives and Methods

By looking at the proceedings of the high-level scheme, my research asks: what history does Manitoba’s Churchill River Diversion (re)produce? It responds to the need of making infrastructure visible to “see how our present landscape is the product of past projects, past struggles, past corruption”(Robbins, 2007, p. 32). My objective is to examine power-geometries – as coined by Doreen Massey (1993, 1999) – underlying northern hydropower developments. My intentions are to illustrate the networks of people and ideologies that instigated Manitoba’s northward hydropower developments and to contribute to scholarship that analyzes how infrastructures (re)produce political geographies and materialize historical injustices. To achieve these objectives enlists the conceptual frame of politics of difference and shows that race and nature, as discourse and ideology, are instruments of power. The construction of difference has

been constitutive to colonial powers by creating ideologies and fantasies of personhood, entitlement, and possession. My research explores how these ideologies and fantasies are being (re)produced in the production of hydropower, to argue that the infrastructure of Manitoba's Churchill River Diversion is a social and physical materialization of colonial processes.

My research primarily engages archival and historical research to argue that the infrastructure of Manitoba's Churchill River Diversion is a symbolic and actual materialization of a colonial processes. My preliminary research investigated the Manitoba Hydro archives at the Manitoba Archives, Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Hansards, and transcripts from the Public Utilities Committee and the Clean Environment Commission and found that story that had yet to be explored – the proceedings of the high-level scheme. The primary sources of this thesis are the aforementioned archives and secondary sources including academic articles and grey literature. I used the NVivo software to qualitatively analyze and organize Manitoba Hydro archival records as they included thousands of pages of poorly organized reports, project assessments, memorandums, letters, maps, and photographs. Information was validated through cross-referencing and triangulation of findings with other sources, historical and contemporary.

Chapter One's overarching aim is to place in sharp relief the arguments posited by the high-level scheme proponents by investigating the environment and people of South Indian Lake before and after the Churchill River Diversion. The chapter investigates the environmental and socio-cultural consequences of the CRD development and places them in sharp relief by introducing the people South Indian Lake prior to hydropower development.

Chapter Two begins to trace a fragment of the network of ideologies and people involved in the northward expansion of hydropower development. The chapter aims to convey that Manitoba Hydro agents used early studies, meetings, and public hearings to produce a narrative which argued that the high-level diversion scheme had to proceed, that the imperative of time superseded that of sufficient information, that the loss of Indigenous livelihoods was an inevitable sacrifice, and that it was not Hydro's responsibility to concern itself with human or environmental impacts.

Chapter Three traces the network of ideologies and people involved in the history of the Churchill River Diversion on the government platform. The chapter aims to demonstrate the ideologies espoused by the majority government of the time, which was a proponent of the high-level diversion scheme. In doing so, it also deconstructs a monolithic Manitoba Hydro along with the government it answered to. The majority government willfully neglected and ignored northern

Indigenous peoples and their livelihoods and espoused the belief that Indigeneity was something that needed to be changed and improved.

Although the high-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake never came to be, the tactics and ideologies demonstrated in the approval and promotion of the Hydro project were the beginning of what might be called a ‘relationship of othering’ between Hydro proponents and South Indian Lake. This precedent followed in future Hydro developments (see Martin & Hoffman, 2008; Waldram, 1988). Juxtaposing the impacts on Southern Indian Lake and its northern Indigenous community with the low-level diversion scheme, places the settler colonial narrative deployed by the majority government and Manitoba Hydro agents in sharp relief.

Chapter 1 - “A Nightmare We’re Living In”: Community, Lands, Waters, Hydropower at Southern Indian Lake

“You know, where's my children going to go? They are going to end up in the same dam [sic] place that I did. And they are not going to have a history. They are not going to have roots. Our roots were pulled out from the ground when Manitoba Hydro came here. It hurts me when I think about that. When I tell my grandchildren about the way I grew up and what I seen, they say, grandpa, did you grow up in a dream? This is a nightmare we're living in... The country should look at our community and our children and our lives, and the money that they made from us, from our suffering, from our devastation, from our loss, for our children” (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, pp. 47-49).

The history of South Indian Lake, and the impacts the community incurred from the impoundment of Southern Indian Lake, have been among the most studied of impacted regions in northern Manitoba by hydraulic development. Yet these studies are fragmented. They exist as pieces of a puzzle that have not been bound together to understand the big picture realities at South Indian Lake. The objective of this chapter is to set the stage for a discourse analysis investigating the ideologies and power geometries behind the planning and proceedings of the Churchill River Diversion, and with it the impoundment of Southern Indian Lake, a lived reality with profound effects for South Indian Lake. The CDR which occurred was a ‘low-level’ alternative which was considered by the government in the 1960’s, but a more damaging ‘high-level’ alternative was championed by the government at that time.

In this chapter, I assess the baseline state of South Indian Lake prior to hydropower development, the advent of hydropower in northern Manitoba and the hydraulic significance of

Southern Indian Lake, the environmental impacts of hydropower development on Southern Indian Lake, and the social consequences of hydropower development on South Indian Lake. Through my discussion I focus on injustices that South Indian Lake has and continues to experience – the hydro legacy. I argue that the low-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake created profound negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts and show that a high-level diversion would have increased the extent of those impacts.

Who is South Indian Lake? Why were their lands sacrificed and their lives uprooted to produce electricity for a consuming south? And what are the impacts of this sacrifice?

The Pre-Hydro History of South Indian Lake

“Before that dam, life was happy and we had enough fish and caribou to feed everyone. we would also have a surplus for sale so we could buy gear and other things to make our life more comfortable. I have lots of memories from my childhood and I remember how life was good at that time and how my parents were happy. All the family was together and there were not many quarrels among us. At that time, South Indian Lake was a wonderful place to be a child. I was a joyful kid and was not worried about the future or anything else; my only concern was to enjoy life. We were definitely a happy community, with few social and economic problems. And we didn’t have to rely on welfare assistance, like today. We were independent. We were proud and free.” – John Bonner, South Indian Lake (in Martin & Hoffman, 2008, pp. 15-16).

South Indian Lake (SIL), now O-Pipon-Na-Piwin (OPCN), is a Woods Cree (sakâwiyiniwak) community in northern Manitoba on the shores of Southern Indian Lake. Though it is now reserve land, SIL used to be located on provincial Crown land. The community is about 130 km northwest of Thompson and 1,200 km from Winnipeg. It can be accessed by air or by a provincial road then by ferry across South Bay. Southern Indian Lake, in north-central Manitoba, is an extension of the Churchill River, which naturally drains north-easterly into the Hudson Bay. The region is a historic boundary between the Cree and the Chipewyan, and the lake is likely named after southern Indigenous peoples or Cree, as opposed to Northern Indian Lake and the northern Indigenous peoples or Chipewyan (Waldram, 1988).

It is likely by that between the 1800s to 1900s, the region was inhabited by a relatively settled population of Indigenous peoples (Hrenchuk, 1991). With the new adherence to Treaty 5 in 1908, the peoples were urged to resettle at Nelson House, where a reserve was to be created. Many chose to do so, and many returned to Southern Indian Lake after finding that the social and economic

conditions of the reserve were not befitting (Waldram, 1988). In 1919, the Hudson's Bay Company opened an outpost at Southern Indian Lake and, in the 1930s, re-established a permanent post; from this point on, the community of South Indian lake became a relatively settled community (Hrenchuk, 1991; Waldram, 1988).

South Indian Lake was a prosperous and independent community that relied on fishing, trapping, and other pursuits sustained by their environment. SIL had a mixed economy, a blend of formal market and traditional informal or subsistence economy (Hrenchuk, 1991). SIL had a commercial fishery, primarily of whitefish, that was the largest in northern Manitoba with about 333,500 kg of fish yielded yearly with export quality catch that was sold in southern Manitoba and America (Bodaly, Johnson, et al., 1984; Department of Fisheries and Oceans [DFO], 1992). "The fishery was substantial from its inception in 1941," according to Bodaly, Johnson, et al. (1984, p. 692) The community had a higher per capita income when compared to similar communities; "the average family income of the treaty Indians in the community [was] between \$3,500 - \$4,000. In contrast, the average income of Indians in the North [was] approximately \$500" (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967, p. 2).

The Cree community was unified by enduring social bonds. Early Cree (Nehiyawak) tribes occupied territories from Alberta to Quebec, in largely woodland areas (Preston et al., 2021). As a woodlands culture, it was dependent upon hunting supplemented by fishing and this provided an occasion for the gathering of relatively dispersed kinship-based hunting groups (Hoffman & Martin, 2012). This pattern of dispersal centered on summer fishing camps and winter traplines complemented by community-wide gatherings. By some accounts, according to Hoffman and Martin (2012), "an insistence upon maintaining this way of life was... the reason why some members of the relatively near-by community of Nelson House broke away to establish the socially, if not legally, acknowledged community of South Indian Lake" (p. 39).

The condition of the SIL community would gravely change when the lake was flooded in the 1970s for the benefit of provincial energy production and consumption.

The Advent of Northern Hydropower and the Phase 1 Development

"The dam and the flooding had also lots of consequences on the land. Before, nature was pristine, intact, our environment was natural, and animals were healthy. Now, everywhere it is a spectacle of desolation. our living environment has dramatically changed; it was so sudden, so violent that we were not able to adapt and we are still

not able to cope with the changes... Old values have disappeared, elders are not as respected as they used to be, there is less closeness, respect, mutual aid in families, there is more quarrelling, more squabbling... There is no more unity in our community. When I was young, every-thing was family-oriented; now it is so different and it makes me sad. Before, when someone needed to build a house, everyone in the community would come and help him; now it is a company and paid workers who do the job. People don't depend on each other anymore; the welfare system does what families used to do before. The dam and the relocation made us a dependent people." – John Bonner, South Indian Lake (in Martin & Hoffman, 2008, pp. 16-17).

The reengineering of the Nelson River had been considered for decades, but it was not until the advent of new technologies that it became a feasible prospect. At the intersection of long-distance transmission innovation and hydroelectric northern expansion was the province and its utility, Manitoba Hydro (MBH). Presuming that "to meet its expansionary goals," it had to move northward, "Canada, Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro signed a series of agreements that set in motion the plans for a megaproject" (Wera & Martin, 2008, p. 59). This was the Northern Manitoba Hydro Project, consisting of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) and the Churchill River Diversion (CRD), that would increase generating capacity and reliability of the Nelson River. The regulation made Lake Winnipeg into a giant reservoir which manipulated seasonal discharges and the diversion reversed the directional flow of the Churchill to supplement the Nelson and made Southern Indian Lake into another reservoir. In its natural state, the seasonal flow of the Nelson River did not match electrical demand, or rather could not meet the "needs of [the] consumers located far away from the project site" (Wera & Martin, 2008, p. 60). Therefore, the rivers would have to be changed to accommodate the province's public interest, so the argument went. This altered the very nature of northern rivers and the life they supported.

The LWR/CRD were part of the Nelson River Programming Board's Phase 1 Development that was approved by Manitoba and Canada in 1966, prior to South Indian Lake being first informed and without their consent. Between 1955 and 1963, the Water Control and Conservation Branch of the provincial Department of Agriculture and Conservation conducted power investigations on the Nelson River and Lake Winnipeg, including water diversion alternatives from the Churchill River into the Burntwood and Rat River systems (Know History, 2016). In January 1963, Manitoba Hydro commissioned the engineering firm of G.E. Crippen and Associates to investigate the lower Nelson River's hydropower potential. One month later, Canada and Manitoba signed an agreement to share the cost of this study, creating the Nelson River Programming Board

(Know History, 2016). The Crippen report was released in March 1964, and according to Know History (2016):

“It stated that the Nelson River, if regulated by Lake Winnipeg, could handle at least six generating stations. It recommended that the first station be built at Kettle Rapids, followed by stations at Limestone and Long Spruce. It also noted that if the water from the Churchill River could be diverted at Southern Indian Lake into the Nelson River system, water supply to the six proposed stations could be increased by 30%. Further, if the Kettle Generating Station, the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR), and Churchill River Diversion (CRD) were built at the same time, the project could be finished in just under four years” (p. 15).

In May 1964, the federal-provincial cost-sharing agreement was renewed, and new studies followed. In August, the engineering firm of Gibb, Underwood & McLellan was commissioned to determine the feasibility and cost of diverting the Churchill River’s water. The firm’s report was released in October 1965 and “confirmed that the CRD would not only increase the output from power stations located along the lower Nelson River, but would also reduce the cost of power” (Know History, 2016, p. 16). In December 1965, the Nelson River Programming Board released an interim report, following up on the Crippen and Gibb, Underwood, and McLellan reports, which outlined a proposal for hydropower development, the Phase 1 Development. It included a generating station at Kettle Rapids, the diversion of the Churchill River into the Nelson, the regulation of Lake Winnipeg, and high-voltage transmission line down to Winnipeg (which would be financed by the federal government). Following meetings to discuss the Board’s proposal, Canada and Manitoba signed an agreement on February 1966 to cooperate on the development of the Nelson River as a power base for industrial and economic development in Manitoba (Canada and Manitoba, 1966). According to the 1966 Agreement, Manitoba was responsible for the expense, design, and construction of electricity generating facilities and Canada for the transmission facilities. As per the Agreement, the electricity generating facilities included:

“(i) the Station; (ii) a control dam on the Churchill River at the outlet of Southern Indian Lake, a diversion structure for releasing water into the Rat River, a tributary of the Burntwood River, which flows into the Nelson River, and certain other ancillary works for the purpose of making available considerable water storage on Southern Indian Lake and to increase the power production on the lower Nelson River, and to increase the potential capacity of the hydro-electric sites along the route of the Churchill River diversion; and (iii) a control dam, spillway, and flood control works to be located in the vicinity of the outlet of Lake Winnipeg, which works will be designed to permit the levels of the water of Lake Winnipeg and the outflow to the Nelson River to be regulated and controlled” (Canada and Manitoba, 1966, pp. 2-3).

The agreement also allowed Manitoba to acquire lands not owned by the Crown that were necessary for the development of transmission facilities:

“Manitoba shall acquire all lands not owned by Her Majesty the Queen in the right of Manitoba, which, together with lands in the Province already vested in the Crown, are in the opinion of Canada and Manitoba, necessary for or necessarily incidental to the construction and operation of the transmission facilities, and shall transfer to Canada the administration and control of all such lands or portions thereof as are acquired exclusively for the construction, operation, maintenance and use of the transmission facilities” (Canada and Manitoba, 1966, p. 6).

The LWR/CRD necessitated the construction of control structures, generating stations, and channels. These included the Kettle Generating Station, the Missi Falls Control Dam, the 2-Mile, 8-Mile, and Ominawin Bypass channels, and the Jenpeg Control Dam and Generating Station. Construction of the Kettle Generating Station, in 1970, at Kettle Rapids on the lower Nelson, along with Bipole I, in 1972, was initiated to address the surge in energy demand. The Control Dam at Missi Falls in 1976 regulated the flow of the Churchill River, diverting its water to South Indian Lake, increasing the latter’s water level by 3 metres and making it a water reservoir. The three diversion channels would redirect the water from South Indian Lake to increase the outflow capacity from Lake Winnipeg to the Nelson, bypassing “shallow and narrow passageways” through the Rat and Burntwood Rivers (Dobrovolny, 2008, p. 172). The impoundment of Southern Indian Lake allowed Manitoba Hydro to control the inflow of Churchill River waters into the Nelson River. The purpose of the Jenpeg structures, completed in 1979, was to control Lake Winnipeg’s water levels (Manitoba Hydro, 1998).

Hydropower’s Environmental Impacts at Southern Indian Lake

The CRD created environmental impacts in the Southern Indian Lake region. Though the impacts of the LWR/CRD were severe and wide-ranging, and continue to be, for the purposes of investigating localized consequences, this section will focus on the Southern Indian Lake region.

The CRD diverted 75% of the natural flow of the Churchill River south through a constructed channel between South Bay and the headwaters of the Rat River into the Nelson River basin; and made Southern Indian Lake into a reservoir (Newbury et al., 1984). The impoundment of Southern Indian Lake in 1976 raised its mean annual level by 3 metres, since then its level has remained at approximately 258 meters (Environment and Climate Change Canada [ECCC], 2020; Newbury et al., 1984). The Lake’s water, which used to flow out naturally to Missi Falls, now

flows south in the South Bay Diversion channel; from 1993 to 2018 the annual mean discharge into the South Bay channel went from 584 m³/s to 942 m³/s (Environment and Climate Change Canada [ECCC], 2018). The CRD increased the water surface area along the Churchill River from Leaf Rapids up to and including Southern Indian Lake from 2,180 km² to 2,330 km², flooding approximately 140 km² of land (Manitoba Hydro, 2015). However, it is notable here is that according to Newbury et al. (1984), the Lake's total area increased from 1,977 km² to 2,391 km², while Environment Canada (1992) stated that it increased from 2082 km² to 2377 km², flooding 187 km² of land. Ice cover on the Lake, which used to form in the fall and was used extensively for winter transportation, became poor or non-existent (Manitoba Hydro, 2015).

The impoundment of Southern Indian Lake has flooded land and caused shoreline and bank erosion. Based on the water surface area numbers from Manitoba Hydro (2015), Newbury et al. (1984), and Environment Canada (1992), the impoundment flooded approximately 140 to 246 km² of land, creating an equal amount of habitat fragmentation on the land. In a newly impounded lake, where water extends beyond the natural shoreline, erosion can occur rapidly as there is no barrier to counter new oncoming waves (Bodaly, Johnson, et al., 1984). Prior to the flooding, 76 percent of the shoreline was controlled bedrock, whereas after, it only composed 14% of the shoreline. This made the shorelines highly erodible during open water season (Rosenberg et al., 1997). According to Manitoba Hydro (2015) no erosion monitoring at Southern Indian Lake has occurred since 1992, but it is clear that erosion has persisted (see Appendix 1). In 1984, Bodaly, Johnson, et al. (1984) predicted that it would take at least 35 years to restore 90 percent of the shoreline. It has been 46 years since the impoundment and comparing Landsat and aerial imagery shows that a large amount of erosion has occurred, and that pre-CRD there was minimal to no erosion occurring (see Manitoba Hydro, 2015). If the length of time needed for the re-stabilization of the shoreline depends on where bedrock is encountered by the eroding surface, as Bodaly, Johnson, et al. (1984) suggested, then it is clear that Southern Indian Lake's shoreline has yet to be re-stabilized. As Angus Dysart, a South Indian Lake community member, has said, "all of the willow trees, poplar, birch, whatever trees stand on the shoreline, it all ends up back into the water" (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 101). Moreover, due to the permafrost in Southern Indian Lakes shoreline, erosion has resulted in permafrost melting and subsequent faulting of overhanging shoreline and slumping (Hecky & McCullough, 1984b; Newbury & McCullough, 1984).

The impoundment of Southern Indian Lake has impacted the aquatic ecosystem, which can be seen through the severe decline of the Lake's whitefish quality and quantity and the subsequent collapse of the whitefish fishery. Southern Indian Lake was a biologically productive system, one whose shallow depths and inflow of nutrients created an ecosystem that could readily support a fishing culture, but this has changed (Hrenchuk, 1993).

Prior to the CRD, and the impoundment of Southern Indian Lake, the flow of the Churchill River through the Lake had a marked positive effect on the productivity of the lake (Ayles, 1976); the Churchill River flowed through Southern Indian Lake and passed over rapids, the largest of which was Missi Falls (Barnes, 1990). Lower biomasses and low nutrient loading were observed in the areas not influenced by the Churchill River's through-flow (Hecky et al., 1974). Hamilton (1974) attributed the influence of the Churchill River on the Lake's relatively rich abundance of zoobenthos, adding that this phenomenon has been observed for other lakes on the Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan. Zoobenthos are a community of animals living around sediment and aquatic plants, and are a key source of food for lake-dwelling fish and are keystone species for nutrient cycles (Strayer, 2009). A shift in biomass of zoobenthos could have profound and cascading effects. Ayles (1976) stated that the higher productivity observed in Southern Indian Lake because of the Churchill River is reflected in the numbers of whitefish; three times as much whitefish were caught in through-flow areas of the Lake. Adding that the CPUE of whitefish was "greater from Southern Indian Lake than from other shield lakes in northern Canada" (Ayles, 1976, p. 24).

After the CRD, Southern Indian Lake's aquatic ecosystem changed. Studies have been done on the Lake to understand the magnitude and severity of impacts due to flooding – on the water quality, sedimentation and erosion, and fish – but these studies have produced a fragmented and partial story. For example, in 2015 the Manitoba Government and Manitoba Hydro produced its most comprehensive assessment on the impacts of hydroelectric developments in northern Manitoba –it was robustly criticized by Manitoba's northern communities and Clean Environment Commission (CEC). The *Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment for Hydroelectric Developments on the Churchill, Burntwood and Nelson River Systems* (RCEA) was developed at the behest of the CEC. The CEC (2018) determined that the RCEA "departed from best practice in some important ways" including: community engagement was not carried out at the outset and it selected spatial scoping for certain environmental components which tended to minimize

impacts (p. 2). O-Pipon-Na-Piwin submitted a review of the RCEA as well, OPCN concluded that the RCEA did not adequately assess cumulative effects in the Nation's region as it failed to establish pre-development, immediately post-development, current, and future development cases (Halket Environmental Consultants Inc. [HEC], 2017). Moreover, OPCN highlighted RCEA's failure to recognize the severity of shoreline and riparian impacts.

Similarly to the RCEA, the reports from the Manitoba Government and Manitoba Hydro Coordinated Aquatic Monitoring Program (CAMP) provide limited interpretations of data. CAMP arose in 2006 out of negotiations for the Wuskwatim Generating Station and it meant to be a long-term monitoring program to study and monitor the health of water bodies affected by Manitoba Hydro's generating system (Coordinated Aquatic Monitoring Program [CAMP], 2022). Monitoring began in 2008, with the first three years serving as a pilot program, and in 2019, CAMP released a Six Year Summary Report for the years 2008 to 2013. Limited interpretations of data which minimize development impacts can be exemplified by CAMP's conclusion on shoreline erosion. This was a factor that OPCN showcased the RCEA did not properly assess, a significant misgiving as shorelines have borne the brunt of impacts through flooding, erosion, and habitat loss (Halket Environmental Consultants Inc. [HEC], 2017). While CAMP (2019) acknowledges that Southern Indian Lake's shorelines are "still adjusting from the raised water levels," it concluded that "shoreline erosion can be extensive at times due to wind action and appears to be independent of water levels" (p. 56). If boreal lake shorelines are eroding due to wind action, that can only be indicative of a compromised riparian zone; one which for Southern Indian Lake was compromised by the impoundment in 1976, compounded by annual water level changes beyond the Lake's natural limits (see Appendix 2).

Lack of baseline data and limited reliable sources of contemporary data on Southern Indian Lake has hindered a proper assessment of the ecological condition of the region, but what is known with certainty is that the lake no longer supports "the best fish in the world" (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 42); the Lake whitefish (*Coregonus clupeaformis*) has been shown to serve as an indicator species for habitat quality (COSEWIC, 2005).

Shoreline erosion has contributed to increased sedimentation and turbidity in Southern Indian Lake as glacio-lacustrine clay continues to be washed away into the water, minimizing light penetration, affecting the Lake's ecology and the whitefish population (Bodaly, Rosenberg, et al., 1984; Hecky & McCullough, 1984a, 1984b; Newbury et al., 1984). Studies on the Lake's whitefish

population are scarce but deliver relevant findings. Fudge and Bodaly (1984) argued that increased sedimentation on whitefish spawning areas has led to decreased egg survival and that egg mortality is expected to increase. Bodaly, Johnson, et al. (1984) hypothesized that the dramatic decline in the quantity and quality of the whitefish catch was due to the emigration of whitefish out of Southern Indian Lake and the catch of more infested stocks which were not fished pre-impoundment. According to Bodaly, Johnson, et al. (1984), emigration is more likely to have led to the decline in catch per unit effort (CPUE) than reduced productivity and recruitment of whitefish because the decline in CPUE happened too quickly after the impoundment. Moreover, the movement of whitefish out of Southern Indian Lake was likely hastened by increased sedimentation and turbidity from erosion (Bodaly, Johnson, et al., 1984). Prior to the impoundment, the fishery was characterized by selective fishing of the Lake in regions that were reliably inhabited by export grade fish and avoidance of regions that produced dark-coloured fish, which tend to be slow growing, in poor condition, and with more cysts. Barnes (1990) added to Bodaly, Johnson, et al's (1984) study by determining that a significant number of Southern Indian Lake whitefish are trapped below the Missi Falls control structure. Barnes (1990) suggested that "after almost ten years since the impoundment of SIL, there are still significant numbers of lake whitefish attempting to complete the traditional migration" (p. 110). With this finding, a mitigation measure could involve transporting the fish upstream over the dam at Missi Falls in periods when the fish are attempting to move upstream, with a seining program or a fish ladder (Barnes, 1990).

Due to physical and biological changes to Southern Indian lake, the whitefish that remain in Southern Indian Lake are no longer the same. According to John-John Baker:

"Our fish used to be pristine, export white fish. They have these little pink noses and pink arms, and they're skinny and healthy and they're big. And now the fish that we catch are small, dull looking, full of sores, water sores, blisters. Some of them have one eye. Some of the fish that I gutted have no ribs and their spinal column is like mush." (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 50).

CAMP even acknowledged that Southern Indian Lake's whitefish are of poor condition and exhibit low growth rates (Coordinated Aquatic Monitoring Program [CAMP], 2019). As to the cause of the fishery's collapse, Steve Ducharme, a long-time commercial fisherman and president of the South Indian Lake Fisherman's Association, noted:

"The rug has been pulled out from under us with the collapse of our primary industry. We believe that flooding and severe water fluctuations caused by Hydro are the primary cause. Following the initial flooding in the '70s, our fishery

rebounded in the late '80s and into the '90s. But due to lack of oversight and extreme Hydro operations since the mid-'90s, the fishery has been decimated" (Ducharme, 2016).

The "extreme" operations that Ducharme is referring relate to Manitoba Hydro's Augmented Flow Program (AFP). The CRD operated with an interim license for 46 years and annual approvals for augmented flows since 1986. According to Shirley Ducharme, chief of OPCN, and Doreen Spence, chief of Tataskweyak Cree Nation (Split Lake), "the AFP augments harm, permitting higher flooding levels and increasing the allowable annual drawdown of Southern Indian Lake, from 0.6 metres in any 12-month period to 1.37 metres over an unspecified period. This has greatly increased ecological harm" (Ducharme & Spence, 2021). The AFP has been done with no regulatory oversight or community consultation or impact assessments (Ducharme, 2016). Operatively, the AFP increases the severity of the previously discussed impacts.

From the land to water, it is clear that the flooding of Southern Indian Lake has created a range of impacts on the environment, some negative, and others still unknown. As John-John Baker said, "our whole world, our birds, fish, animals, plants" are affected by the development, and that's going to be forever" (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 51).

Hydropower's Socio-Cultural Impacts on South Indian Lake

"South Indian Lake is ground zero of Manitoba Hydro's diversion of the second largest river in Manitoba. The project has turned our lives, community, culture, economy, environment and our beloved lake upside down. It has left an unspeakable wound in the heart of our community. We never wanted the project and we never consented to it... The diversion was built for the benefit of the rest of Manitoba, at an unfathomable, lasting and accumulating cost to us and future generations" – Leslie W. Dysart, Community Association of South Indian Lake Inc. (CASIL), South Indian Lake (Dysart, 2018, p. 1).

Southern Indian Lake's lands and waters were the foundation of SIL's livelihoods, keystones to cultural well-being. Environmental impacts are inextricably tied to social and cultural impacts, especially in the case of South Indian Lake, whose livelihoods are kindred to their environment. The community's socio-cultural structure has been marred by Manitoba Hydro's development, giving rise to welfare dependency and social pathologies. As Chris Baker, former Chief of OPCN, said "nobody wants to address it, or nobody wants to say, hey, we really hurt these people, and we destroyed their culture, their way of life, their independence, when they promised that we wouldn't be in a welfare state. But that's what exactly happens" (Clean Environment Commission [CEC],

2017, pp. 17-18). Inundated lands and dirtied waters caused hardships that SIL still endures. Stories from the community of SIL make clear that the flooding has resulted in a loss of traditional resources and subsequent shared practices that supported the community's cultural and social well-being.

The flooding and impoundment of Southern Indian Lake devastated a rich riparian habitat and an abundantly productive and safe environment, affecting traditional practices and economies. Economies and practices are differentiated because practices are not simply an addition to income, they are inherent and fundamental to social relations and their functioning (Hoffman & Martin, 2012; Hrenchuk, 1991).

Trapping, according to Elder Ross Moose, teaches focus, hard work, and respect for Elders (Kamal et al., 2015). Trapping was affected by flooded traplines and habitat fragmentation. For example, "over the pre-impoundment period 1948/49 to 1972/73, the mean number of muskrat sold by SIL trappers was 7,829/year. Over eight post-impoundment years for which data was available from 1977/78 to 1988/89 the mean number sold was 1,222/year" (Hrenchuk, 1991, p. 62). The community "attributed this trend principally to the effects of habitat loss through lake impoundment, and to winter drawdown in the operation of the lake as a reservoir" (Hrenchuk, 1991, p. 97). Hrenchuk (1991) found this causation highly probable, noting that "muskrat are sensitive to declines in water levels, and habitat has been slow to redevelop within the impounded Southern Indian Lake" (p. 98). Steve Ducharme has said that "trapping beaver and muskrat was a favorite past-time for us before the CRD. We used to catch hundreds of muskrats, now we can only catch a few if we are lucky" (in Kamal et al., 2015).

The very shorelines bearing the brunt of the impoundment also used to grow traditional medicines and berries that were harvested by the community (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017). Hrenchuk (1991) observed that the community found that aquatic medicinal plants were no longer available because of lake impoundment and water drawdown. Spending time with medicinal plants, according to Roger Moose, "is healing, and teaches generosity, peace, kindness and respect for the land" (in Kamal et al., 2015, p. 569). As for the berries, Hilda Dysart noted that "women used to go out for berry picking with their families and children, make tea and socialize all day long sharing their harvest" (in Kamal et al., 2015). But now, according to Wilbur Wood, "even picking berries is hard, because you can't go where you used to go, because you can't get off the shore. All the debris, all of the trees are in the water, and debris" (Clean Environment

Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 40). According to Linda Baker, “berry harvesting teaches sharing and caring for family” (in Kamal et al., 2015, p. 569).

Ice cover on Southern Indian Lake used to be extensively used for transportation, fishing, hunting, and recreational activities. Changes in the Lakes’ flow regime has affected the surface ice conditions, making any kind of endeavor unsafe. Former Chief Baker has shared that unstable ice spares no one, experienced residents that have lived on the lake their whole life have lost their lives (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017). For example, Nora Spence’s father, who grew up on the land and provided for his wife and children, “he went through the ice where he always travelled, and then one day he went by there, and gone” (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 115).

The waters of Southern Indian Lake once supported recreational activities, activities that bond one with nature, and a productive commercial fishery that supported the independence of SIL. The community is no longer able to engage with or trust the Lake’s water. As Nora Spence has shared:

“When you look at our lake today, like it's really saddening and it's very disheartening. When you look down to the lake where it was once so beautiful, like today when you look at our own children when they are down at the lake trying to enjoy the lake, they can't swim down there, but they do. The water is not clean. It's very dirty. It's unsafe for our children. Not only the water being so corroded, it's the safety with the high current that goes right through our community” (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 111).

And Chief Baker added:

“When our children go down -- like we protect our children, we tell them don't go down the bank. And what Nora expressed about our children swimming, they grow sores on their skin, that's not normal. They do swimming and then they grow rashes and sores that you have to go to get antibiotics to counter the infection” (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 127).

As for fishing, it was the cornerstone of the community for generations (Ducharme, 2013). The act of fishing taught the community the need to work hard, according to Wilbur Wood (Kamal et al., 2015, p. in). Wood shared how fishing used to be lucrative but that things have changed after the flood, for him and his family:

“It's a big change now. You know, like I got two boys, you know, they want to fish, but one is not interested anymore because, you know, there's nothing there for him. The other one is coming down anyway, but I don't know for how long he is going to -- because, you know, I tell them how I made a living, how it was. And they thought it would be great for them too, if they would do it. But now it's a different

story. We hardly have fish now” (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 38).

Reflecting on her life before the flood, Nora Spence shared how fishing was a bonding activity for her family and others’:

“Lots has changed in our, you know, that has changed in the way our lifestyles are compared to the way we were brought up, being brought up at fish camps, for example. I was brought up at a fish camp in the summer months. We were out on the lake, like I would say 75 per cent of the year with our families. And back then it was great, because you worked together as a family with your parents, with your siblings. And now our families can't even do that, they can't take their families out on the lake, they can't do that today. But back then it was -- you know, that's why families were so close” (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 113).

The lands and waters of Southern Indian Lake were and remain at the center of South Indian Lake livelihood and culture. Hrenchuk (1991) observed that “resource harvesting has been the definitive community economic and cultural activity (p. 21). His study of land occupancy and resource use at Southern Indian Lake portrayed a “land base which has been travelled extensively and which is known intensively” (Hrenchuk, 1991, p. 81).

SIL’s relationship with nature, and the damage the environment has incurred due to Manitoba Hydro’s hydroelectric development, provides a lens to understand its current hardships. When the land that supported activities which maintained social relations and well-being is harmed, so too is the community. South Indian Lake has experienced intergenerational trauma coinciding with experiences of poverty and violence. The impact of colonialism on SIL, separate from hydroelectric development, must not be lost here; but it would be imprudent to believe that the loss of lands due to development has not exacerbated colonialism’s impact. According to Steve Ducharme, “the Manitoba government and Manitoba Hydro have succeeded [in] what the church and the federal government have been unable to do for the last 500 years. And that is the total economic, cultural and social genocide of our people” (in Brake, 2018). Ducharme added: “That’s what happened. That’s literally what happened, because our culture’s gone. You can’t live off the land anymore because it’s been totally destroyed” (in Brake, 2018).

Without traditional practices to maintain subsistence and social relations, former Chief Chris Baker has observed that most of the community has “succumbed to alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic abuses, every kind of violence you can think of.” John-John Baker adds that many are “incarcerated too” (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 133). Hoffman and Martin (2012) traced these social pathologies to dependence fostered by the welfare system and the loss

of traditional pursuits and economic opportunities created by these activities. According to Hoffman and Martin (2012) and their analysis of social capital at South Indian Lake:

“The encroaching waters did much more than destroy a viable land-based economic system; flooding also destroyed a reservoir of social capital that was based largely on the small, nuclear family units engaged in the traditional pursuits noted by the elders, i.e., hunting, fishing and trapping. While the community as a whole gathered only periodically, the body of experiences common to each family provided the basis for a set of enduring social bonds. Thus, despite the episodic character of communal relations, individuals and their immediate families were generally sympathetic to the demands and needs of other families and individuals when circumstances merited assistance. Indeed, assistance was expected and was reciprocated. As noted by one elder, ‘people used to go trapping and whatever. When they had all that stuff, they would share. A lot of people used to give their stuff away’. Another noted that ‘[B]efore the flood, the families worked together. They use [*sic*] to help each others [*sic*], hunting, fishing and trapping’. As the next generation of SIL residents was to so brutally discover, however, the coming of the dams meant the end of this system of support and mutual assistance” (pp. 39-40).

After the flood, the disruption of communal bonds and supportive social networks characteristic of SIL and Cree culture created social and personal discord.

The current poverty and welfare dependency that SIL experiences sits in sharp relief from the fiscally autonomous community it was before the flood. The community’s average income of 3,500 to 4,000 in 1967, estimated by Van Ginkel Associates and Hedlin Menzies and Associates (1967), would amount to 25,133 to 28,723 in 2016, adjusted for inflation. In 2016, according to Statistics Canada (2017a), the community had a median income of 14,656 and an average income of 20,793, with 30.2 percent of the community’s income coming from government transfers. This means that half of the income-earning community was earning less than 14,656 at a time when the low income cut-off for an individual was 13,525 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Meanwhile Thompson’s median income was 44,866 and average was 55,463, with 7.6 percent government transfers, Winnipeg’s median income was 35,706 and average was 46,029, with 10.7 percent government transfers, while the province’s median income was 34,188 and average 43,767, with 12 percent government transfers (Statistics Canada, 2017b, 2017c). Residents of SIL operate with approximately half of the income of a Manitoban and incur higher costs of living, including higher electricity bills because of the harsher climate and reliance on electricity as a heating source (Public Utilities Board [PUB], 2014a). Former Chief Baker remarked that these bills can be 300 to 600 a month:

“Who else in this country, in this province that I'm aware of, they don't pay that much. You know, they say to us -- I fought them and I said to them, how in the hell can you justify a Hydro bill that there is a fridge, a stove, and baseboard heaters? There is no washer, there's no dryer, there's no hot water tank, but yet Hydro bills are three, \$400 a month, sometimes five, \$600 per month” (Clean Environment Commission [CEC], 2017, p. 64).

The electricity that the impoundment of Southern Indian Lake produces is not affordable to South Indian Lake. Southern Manitoba and export markets enjoy this electricity at low rates, meanwhile the community most impacted, where the electricity is generated in their backyard, at the cost of their environment and culture, cannot. And they cannot due, in part, to a poverty engineered by Manitoba Hydro's hydropower developments (see Hoffman, 2008).

Reflections and Conclusion

“Why don't we invest in our Aboriginal youth so they once again can contribute positive to the provincial economy? Invest into the South Indian Lake environment so once again it -- it can become sustainable as a contribution to the North and economy. Mandate Manitoba Hydro to operate responsibly for the benefit of all Manitobans as they claim to do currently. Are we not equal to other Manitobans and Canadians?” Leslie W. Dysart, Community Association of South Indian Lake Inc. (CASIL), South Indian Lake (Public Utilities Board [PUB], 2014b, p. 10941).

South Indian Lake's experience with northern hydropower development has been one of colonialism and environmental injustice. In this chapter, I hope to have set the stage for a story of hydropower and colonialism situated at Southern Indian Lake; one which investigates the discourse that was engaged with to produce the Churchill River Diversion at Southern Indian Lake as a viable option.

South Indian Lake, now recognized as OPCN, was a self-sustaining Cree community that enjoyed the ways of traditional life, a semi-nomadic hunting and fishing group, one with social networks that supported harmony within the community; the advent of hydropower in northern Manitoba changed this. Keen to develop its hydraulic resources, Manitoba, alongside its provincial utility, decided to alter the direction of the Churchill River to supplement the flow of the Nelson River, effectively making the latter a power site which could be continuously developed into the future. A key component of the Churchill River Diversion was the impoundment of Southern Indian Lake, it allowed Manitoba Hydro to control the outflow of the Churchill River into the Nelson. The impoundment of Southern Indian Lake, with no meaningful consultation or consideration for SIL, created profound environmental and social impacts. SIL went from being a

prosperous, independent community sustaining itself through its plentiful lands and waters, to a community situated on a badly degraded land base that experiences social and personal discord. SIL now depends on the welfare state, finding it difficult to access and afford the very electricity produced through its state-inflicted sacrifice.

Chapter 2 - Resisting Power Misapplied: Studies, Meetings, and the Public Hearings for the High-Level Diversion Scheme

“It is now obvious that the facts being revealed are not the same as the information given to us originally.

We were led to believe that there were no alternatives to flooding Southern Indian Lake and that if we did not agree to move, the rest of the Province would risk a shortage of power. We were led to believe that we would be standing in the way of progress.

Under these circumstances, we decided not to oppose progress and reluctantly agreed to move.

Now we discover that we were not told the truth.

First, there are alternatives to the diversion of the Churchill River, which do not involve the flooding of Southern Indian Lake and raising its level by 35 feet. We had been told there were no alternatives.

Second, the Minister of Finance has admitted in the House that there is no danger of "black-out," "brown-out," or even "dim-out" because power can be produced by other means.

Third, the government does not seem to have conducted the basic minimum studies on the likely losses and costs involved in flooding Southern Indian Lake.

Under these circumstances, we want to repeat that we are not going to move until the government proves conclusively and publicly that all aspects have been properly studied, all benefits and losses considered and that flooding Southern Indian Lake is in fact necessary and is the best plan for all of the people of Manitoba.

Until the government proves this, WE WILL NOT MOVE [*sic*]” – letter from South Indian Lake to Premier Weir (1969, in Waldram, 1988, p. 130).

In 1966, the plan for the Phase 1 Development was set in stone, a plan to use Manitoba’s north for hydropower made without any communication with the residents and stewards of those lands and waters. Focusing on the Southern Indian Lake region, the Churchill River Diversion was to include a control structure at Missi Falls, at the north end of the Lake, this would raise the Lake by more than 10 metres. Following this enclosure, “water would then be diverted to the headwaters of the Rat River, where a 25-metre control dam at the Notigi Rapids would regulate and redirect the flow from Southern Indian Lake down the Rat River, into the Burntwood River, and then into the Nelson River at Split Lake” (Know History, 2016). This was the “high-level” diversion scheme and it included a level of impoundment associated with damages to forestry, wildlife, fishing, and recreation, and the relocation of the South Indian Lake community and its 500 residents (Know History, 2016). The extent of the potential and unknown impacts of the high-level diversion plan became an issue that catalyzed critical public opinion.

While Chapter 1 discusses the consequences of the low-level diversion that was realized, Chapter 2 delves into the attitudes and ideologies carried through the high-level scheme that was initially championed. I argue that Manitoba Hydro agents produced a government-supported narrative of urgency for the high-level diversion which circumvented social and environmental responsibilities towards Indigenous lands and Indigenous peoples. Manitoba Hydro agents used early studies and meetings and public hearings to produce a narrative which contended that the high-level diversion had to proceed, that the imperative of time superseded that of sufficient information, that the loss of Indigenous livelihoods was an inevitable sacrifice, and that it was not Hydro's responsibility to concern itself with human or environmental impacts. Hydro agents denied responsibility for Indigenous communities, insisting that their duties were confined to matters of power production and supply.

Initial Studies and Anachronisms in a Technological Age

There were significant initial studies conducted on the potential impacts of the high-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake. One underscored the severity of potential impacts and argued that alternatives should be investigated; the study was criticized and concealed. The other evoked longstanding perceptions of inferiority in its consideration of the SIL community and it was welcomed. Hydro agents aligned themselves with discriminatory attitudes espoused by the second study and its authors in order to produce the desired developmental outcome.

In March 1966, Stuart Anderson, the Deputy Minister of Mines and Natural Resources, and D. M. Stephens, Chairman of Manitoba Hydro, commissioned an impact study from the University of Manitoba to "appraise the problem" (in Waldram, 1988, p. 120). The impact study was led by H. E. Duckworth, Academic Vice-President of the University of Manitoba. An incomplete draft of the Reconnaissance Study, also referred to as the Duckworth Report, was submitted in January 1967 to the Manitoba Development Authority (MDA) and Manitoba Hydro (Bowman, 1971). The report was critical of Manitoba Hydro's plans and recommended that the level of Southern Indian Lake not be raised and stated that the alternatives to the high-level diversion should be investigated. Waldram (1988) noted that the report "calculated that the community would experience a minimum economic loss of over \$11 million, and predicted that their lifestyle would be seriously disrupted" (p. 120). The figure was an estimate which was well above preliminary estimates made by Hydro (Bowman, 1971). As for the relocation of South

Indian Lake, they concluded that it “would be unjust to the present inhabitants and unworthy of the Province, although it might be in keeping with much past treatment of the Indians” (in Waldram, 1988, pp. 120-121). Manitoba Hydro claimed that the report was subjective, lacking in rigour, and not inter-disciplinary; even though the reports’ authorship was comprised of geologists, engineers, anthropologists, social workers and zoologists (Bowman, 1971; Know History, 2016). The copies of the report that were produced were recalled and the report was not made public.

In September 1966, another report was commissioned, this time by the MDA from Van Ginkel Associates in collaboration with Hedlin, Menzies and Associates, and it was better received. The report developed a program for the relocation and rehabilitation of South Indian Lake, in part based on engagements with SIL; “perhaps most helpful was the active and friendly interest of the people of South Indian Lake themselves” the contractors noted (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967, p. ii). *Transition to the North* concluded that a demonstration unit was needed, a facility at Southern Indian Lake that would keep SIL informed of plans and possibilities so that they could prepare for their future; a transition community was needed where training and education would be provided and adjustments to social and economic patterns can be made; and permanent communities in the north should be created which were correctly located in terms of resources and development. The authors emphasized that a program like this should also be applied to all Indigenous settlements in Manitoba and Canada.

The Van Ginkel Report acknowledged that the people of SIL were skilled and successful, and that they deserved a viable economic base, job opportunities, education, shelter, cultural continuity, and role in the development of northern Manitoba; however, the consultants made their racial bias clear, couched as it was in the language of paternalism and development. In the letter which presented the report to Baldur Kristjanson, the Deputy Minister of the MDA, the consultants wrote:

“The consultants wish to make very specific their unqualified conclusion that the communities of native people that exist throughout Manitoba – and this in equally true of all parts of Canada – have no future and that the interest of the native people of the total community will be gravely prejudiced if those resource of money and creative thought are not dedicated to solving the problem of the remote Indian settlement and the Indian reservation” (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967).

The consultants believed that reservations and remote settlements were “anachronisms in the present age of technology” (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967).

They added that this “improvement” was essential to the success of both northern Indigenous communities and the province as a whole, as the paternalistic slipped into overtly racist at times in the report:

“The loss to society of the wasted human beings on the reservations scarcely needed to be elaborated. The Indians of Northern Manitoba could make a substantial contribution to the growth of this province if their talents were developed and their ambition and aspirations awakened” (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967).

They further noted that the flooding of Southern Indian Lake would do nothing more than “move forward the breakup of this community and way of life.” SIL had been successful, but “they have existed outside the mainstream of Canadian life,” according to the Van Ginkel Associates and Hedlin Menzies and Associates (1967, p. iii) and their type of community represented a “dead-end way of life,” even if environmental resources remained sufficient (p. 6). Following a general liberal assimilative consensus at the time, the consultants emphasized that

“the ultimate solution for every Indian in North America will be to become a member of our technocratic society and whether this society is perfect or not is irrelevant. There is simply no choice but to take part in that society, if the individual is to achieve full status” (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967, p. 8).

These lines of thought asserted an othering which saw Indigenous communities as problems that needed to be solved and Indigenous livelihoods as foreboding.

Moreover, though the consultants stated that historical and cultural continuity must be guaranteed to the community, they expressed that “the need for adjustment must be recognized in the transition from a simplistic society to a complex society.” One could only identify Indigenous ways of life as simplistic, as compared to a southern society, if they are ignorant or neglectful of its intricacies. By calling Indigenous ways of life simple, the consultants also implied inferiority.

Amidst assertions of the inevitability of assimilation, Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates (1967) asserted both difference and value within in Indigenous ways of being, stating that “any teaching or training programmes should recognize: a) the different thought process of the Indian; b) valuable societal attitudes; c) significant historic and cultural values; d) the essential dignity of the individual,” indicating a constrained and idealized respect for Indigenous ways of life (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967, p. 22). However, the consultants claimed that the prime objective of the training and education programmes should be “the development of a new way of life for the Indian – “life” as a totality –

and not only the acquisition of skills and knowledge” (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967, p. 22). Adding that:

“The Indian, in order to survive and prosper, must enter into a twentieth century society. To achieve full status as a contributing member to that society, he must occupy a significant role in the development of his environment” (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967, p. 22).

This described a program of assimilation which neglected to understand the profound relationship and services to land that Indigenous people have historically provided through stewardship and subsistence. It stated that Indigenous life needed to change in totality and be replaced by the ‘twentieth century life’ the south has produced. In their research notes, Van Ginkel Associates (1966) stated that “this society will not change – thus the Indian and the Eskimo will have to change.” *Transition to the North* was not released to the public, but unlike the Reconnaissance Study, it was not recalled or criticized by Hydro.

The narrative displayed in *Transition in the North* is echoed through South Indian Lake’s experiences with agents of hydropower through Manitoba Hydro and hydro-supportive governments. The consultants, however, were accurate on one point which remained true in Hydro’s engagements with Northern communities: the community was not “adequately informed and frequently is misinformed,” by Hydro proponents (Van Ginkel Associates & Hedlin Menzies and Associates, 1967, p. 19).

Blind-Folded Communications and the First Public Hearing

The planning of the CRD at Southern Indian Lake was made without the consultation of the SIL community, and this neglect persisted when the plan entered the court of public opinion. From Hydro agents to provincial officials, SIL was faced with persistent misinformation, lack of information, and promises of future clarification and consultation.

It is not clear if the field research for *Transition to the North* was when South Indian Lake was first made aware of the possible flooding of Southern Indian Lake, but by early 1967, SIL was becoming “very disturbed because of the uncertainties” and some government departments “were complaining that little was known about the details of Hydro’s proposal for the diversion” (Bowman, 1971, p. 2). A letter from Oscar Blackburn, Regional Community Development Officer at the Department of Indian Affairs, sent to Hydro and provincial government departments prompted Stephens to “call a meeting of interested people on the 30th March 1967;” Oscar wrote

“Let us not have another Grand Rapids when ‘hide the memo’ and ‘keep the information secret’ was the theme of the day” (Bowman, 1969, p. 1; 1971, p. 2). At this meeting, Stephens explained to provincial and federal officials that Hydro intended to raise the level of Southern Indian Lake over 10 meters so that the CRD was more economical but emphasized that the government had not yet committed to the diversion. Blackburn attended this meeting and presumably relayed the information to SIL; this was a year after the Phase 1 Development was approved.

Shortly after, the Nelson Agency, a branch of the MDA, was appointed to coordinate on behalf of the government with South Indian Lake to communicate information and flag any problems if they came up. In July 1967, G. S. Bowman, Chief of the Nelson Agency, visited SIL to collect information on behalf of the MDA, and when the community realized that the Nelson Agency liaised with Manitoba Hydro, they started asking questions: what were Hydro’s plans? Bowman explained that Hydro intended to apply for a licence in 1968 and that, if granted, the lake would not be flooded before 1972 (Bowman, 1969). As the community demanded news at subsequent visits in August and October 1967 and January 1968, Bowman reiterated these points, adding that SIL would be notified of new developments and that they should consider what they would want to do if Hydro was granted the license (Bowman, 1969).

On 22 April 1968, a few days before Manitoba Hydro filed their license application, Hydro agents finally visited South Indian Lake. Bowman and Kris Kristjanson, the Assistant General of Manitoba Hydro, presented Hydro’s plans and intention to make the application for a license (Bowman, 1969). At the meeting Kristjanson stated that “the people of South Indian Lake would be making a sacrifice for the rest of the people of Manitoba” (in Waldram, 1988, p. 122). But Kristjanson could not offer any more clarity to the community as many questions went unanswered.

On 26 April 1968, Hydro filed their application for a licence for the diversion to the Water Control Branch. The application revealed that SIL would have to be relocated, as well as the community of Pickerel Narrows at Granville Lake. On 28 April 1968, Bowman and the Director of the Water Control Branch, Tom Weber, visited SIL. The community was reassured that the decision to flood Southern Indian Lake had not yet been made and that “the licence would not be granted without first considering the feelings of the local people and the effect flooding would have on all resources in the area” (Bowman, 1969, p. 3). At the meeting, the community voiced their concerns about the environmental impacts the flooding of Southern Indian Lake might bring,

their demand for compensation guarantees prior to the granting of the license, and skepticism as to the need to raise the lake at a high level. Reiterating from his previous meeting at SIL, Bowman stated that the government would like the community to have a legal representative to establish and present their rights in the process of the consideration of the license.

In response, in June 1968, South Indian Lake formed a committee of five to represent themselves, the Relocation Committee. Through approval from the government and funds from Manitoba Hydro, SIL hired legal representation of Harold Buchwald, along with his associate Yude Henteleff. According to Waldram (1988), “Henteleff himself spent over a month in the community, interviewed every family, and obtained the community view of the likely effect of the project” (p. 124) Henteleff even told Waldram (1988) “the information provided by the people was so detailed that, at the conclusion of the first hearing in South Indian Lake, ...Kris Kristjanson, questioned whether the information had even come from the people” (p. 231). SIL’s lawyers requested specific information, such as potential environmental impacts, from government representatives but the latter was uninformed to the extent that they could not provide any answers (Waldram, 1988). Without relevant information from Hydro, the community was holding their meetings “blind-folded,” according to Basil Colomb, SIL member (in Waldram, 1988, p. 124). Later in June, Buchwald and his associates filed a protest and objection to the application, on behalf of South Indian Lake.

On 4 October 1968, the Relocation Committee, along with their lawyers, met with members of the provincial Cabinet and the Minister of Mines and Natural Resources, Harry Enns. Buchwald underscored that the community did not wish to be relocated unless it could be proven that their relocation was necessary. Buchwald also met with Hydro to reiterate the community’s position and ask for information, some questions were answered, others were not out of a lack of knowledge, like previous times, and Buchwald was advised to ask them at the public hearings (Bowman, 1971).

In September 1968, according to Bowman (1971), “after trying to persuade Manitoba Hydro to finance a study of the natural resources which would be inundated...the Department of Mines and Natural Resources was authorized to undertake a crash programme to determine the extent of study necessary” (pp. 3-4). Over a period of two months, then, the Department produced a report, referred to as the Task Force Report, that made the first “serious attempt” to place values on the potential resource losses (Bowman, 1971, p. 4). Given the haste in which the report was

produced, “the report could only suggest the possible order of magnitude of damages and those were well in excess of any figures which had been mentioned previously” (Bowman, 1971, p. 4).

The issue entered the court of public opinion in January 1969, when Manitoba Hydro announced its application and the public hearings on the application (Waldram, 1988). The first hearing was held at South Indian Lake and the second in Winnipeg and they were held to, presumably, obtain the views and considerations of the public on the application. At the hearing at South Indian Lake, on 2 January 1969, Hydro agents continued to evade questions from Buchwald and claimed that it was the communities’ responsibility to determine the appropriate reparations for the Hydro project.

Buchwald explained that, as concerned citizens, the communities had the prerogative to express their rights and how they must be protected. While Buchwald welcomed the prospect of cooperative agreement, he placed the burden of proof squarely on the government:

“We look forward with eagerness to this hearing to ensure that Hydro in making this application and in turn the government of the Province of Manitoba in making its decision on that application show cause or make a case beyond any possible doubt that this project is economically sensible and that all other alternatives do not achieve the same result and that the consequences of this project to the people directly affected will have been adequately protected and provided for and will not destroy these societies in the process” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969b, p. 3).

Ed Overgaard, Manitoba Hydro’s Chief Engineer, opened with a brief explanation of hydropower production in the province, urging that the province “must have more power” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969b, p. 4). Adding that “it was very easy to think that we could put water from the Churchill River into the Nelson River” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969b, p. 4). Without robust impact studies, the reversal of one of the province’s largest rivers to manipulate water into the largest river of the province, was an easy conclusion to reach for Manitoba Hydro. Overgaard described six diversions options (the low-, medium-, and high-level being considered as three options) that were ostensibly considered, arguing that the high-level diversion was the most economically efficient and produced an attractive storage of water at Southern Indian Lake.

In Buchwald’s cross-examination of the five alternatives to the high-level diversion, it became clear that the alternatives were discounted without thorough examination; Overgaard could not produce any cost estimates for the alternatives even though it was on the basis of cost that the high-level diversion was favoured. “You can’t give us any specific comparative figures or the results of any specific studies,” Buchwald stated, “Perhaps this is a question which could be better

answered on January 27th” Overgaard responded, referring to the date of the public hearing in Winnipeg (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969b, p. 12). Buchwald suggested “that perhaps no decision ought to be made on this application until Hydro shows that it has done its homework and can produce the figures that allow for an enlightened decision” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969b, p. 12). Hydro, along with the government, had spent a decade developing the Phase 1 Development plan, yet they were not able or willing to provide relevant information at a hearing that was more readily accessible to the community members. Overgaard also admitted that Manitoba Hydro had not conducted any studies on the diversion’s impacts on wildlife, or on local economies built on trapping or fishing. However, Kristjanson did present a compensation structure at the hearing, in which Hydro would commit to move or replace any physical structures, provide docks, cover moving costs, move graves, provide electricity, provide training and education programs, and a floating fish plant and some equipment. This compensation scheme did not adequately reflect potential, and later profound, environment and social impacts and the communities rejected it.

It was revealed that Hydro also assumed it was the communities’ responsibility to establish appropriate reparations for the impacts of the diversion. Kristjanson said, “we cannot do very much about it until it is more clear what the people of this community want to do” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969b, p. 25) This logic placed the community in an impossible situation; without adequate information on environmental and social impacts, the communities would need to determine the extent and nature of the reparations they would need. Buchwald quickly disagreed with Hydro’s opinion:

“Our view is that the onus is on the Hydro [*sic*] and the government authorities. The direct responsibility is on them to come forward with a full in-depth proposal of all matters or the solution of all matters that will be caused by the problems which you are going to create based on all the expertise and resources of the provincial government and the Manitoba Hydro [*sic*], and it is not for the community to come forward and say that this is what it wants. It’s for the authorities to say that this is what we propose, and why we think it is a workable and a sensible long term solution to this immediate problem” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969b, pp. 25-26).

Henteleff explained that the SIL community was apprehensive of the potential impacts that flooding would have on fishing, trapping, and other resources in the area.

Buchwald closed out the hearing by restating that both Hydro and the government are liable to the communities:

“The communities take the view that Manitoba Hydro has a primary duty to compensate if the flooding is to take place, but other provincial government

agencies are obliged to play a vital role both on an immediate and a continuing long term basis in a number of different areas, town planning and community development, natural resources for fisheries and forest, agriculture and tourism, health, welfare, education and particularly skill training for the particular environment, community services and other areas such as preparation for the new environment by the old people of the community, the middle aged, the young residents – the trainable and the non-trainable, and in this of course is the direct responsibility of the Federal Department of Indian Affairs and we cannot re-emphasize too forcefully that a considered and enlightened plan or course of action that will embrace all of these matters [in] everything that has been brought up to date - is an essential prerequisite in our respectful view Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman as to (a) whether the application of the Manitoba Hydro should be permanently granted and (b) if it is to be granted whether it should not be delayed until such time as the required plan or course of action has been enunciated in considerable detail, analysed and commented upon on behalf of the South Indian and Granville Lake” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969b, pp. 29-30).

In spite of these urgent requests for basic recognition of rights and remuneration, the government pressed ahead with its plans. On 20 January 1969, seven days before the next hearings were set to begin in Winnipeg, Enns announced that he would issue an interim license to Hydro and that there would be no cross-examination at the next hearing (Bowman, 1971). At the press conference, Enns stated that the objective of the Winnipeg hearings was to address the needs and concerns of SIL, not to question the engineering or economics of Hydro’s plans, as they had already been done to the Department’s satisfaction; “Enns denied bulldozing the scheme through and that the public hearings were a formality” (Winnipeg Free Press, 1969, p. 4). According to the Winnipeg Free Press (1969):

“Enns also released a 19-page statement on the natural and human resources in the area and what effects the flooding might have on them. The statement, he said, is based on information his department has received from a number of studies made in the area. But he said that it is still his intention not to make any of the ‘so-called secret’ reports public... ‘I make no apologies for withholding these reports. Two of them were hastily done and so necessarily not in depth’” (p. 4).

According to Waldram (1988) the ‘secret reports’ mentioned included the Duckworth and Van Ginkel reports. After coming under public scrutiny for his perceived lack of transparency, and acting on legal advice, Enns announced that cross-examination would be permitted at the Winnipeg hearings and that Hydro would not get its licence prior to the hearings (Bowman, 1971).

Limited Engineering and the Abdication of Responsibility at Second Hearings

On 27 January 1969, the Winnipeg hearings began and continued over three days. A larger room was needed, as a larger than expected crowd was present. The hearings were chaired by Tom Weber, who was directed to submit a report of the hearings to the government, including recommendations on how best to proceed. The hearings demonstrated that the high-level diversion was not the only economically viable option, that Manitoba Hydro believed it bore no responsibility to address the potential social and environmental effects of the project, and that the imperatives of time were more important than the production of sufficient information.

Buchwald argued that Hydro must provide the economic and engineering merits of the projects, the merits of alternatives, and cost comparisons that include natural and human costs. Buchwald emphasized that a “very high onus that remains upon the applicant... [that] to date it has not been discharged” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 6). According to Buchwald, “much remains to be forthcoming if Hydro’s case is to approach the degree of merit requisite upon a favourable decision” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 6). To that point, Buchwald stated that “no assurance has as yet been forthcoming as to the likelihood of there being able to financially or psychologically survive the holocaust which will be visited upon them if this application is granted. On the contrary, everything points to disaster and despair” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 7).

Buchwald criticized the decision to provide the Department of Mines and Natural Resources’ Task Force Report to the press, but not to the Indigenous parties whose lands would be impacted. The concern over withheld reports was raised prior to Buchwald’s opening statement. It was suspected that there were six reports that were undisclosed by Hydro, including the Task Force Report. Weber was called to have these reports disclosed and to adjourn the hearing until they were disclosed. Weber believed that bringing these reports to court was not his responsibility. When asked by Gildas Molgat, Leader of the Liberal Party, Weber’s response was: “These reports if they are to come before the Hearing, must come through a representative at the Hearing” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 4). When asked by Buchwald, Weber reinforced his stance in greater detail:

“This Hearing has been called in order that we could obtain the views and considerations of the public in respect to the South Indian Lake application of Manitoba Hydro. I think this is the opportunity the public has to make this information available. The Director of Water Control in making his report to the

government will have to give consideration to the information contained in the report of the other departments of this government. I'll be asking for those reports and I am sure that I will receive those reports and expected dealing with the reports and the disposition of those reports. That is a decision of the government itself and I cannot make that decision in a Hearing of this nature" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 10).

The hearing proceeded with Weber's decision and the reports were not entered into the hearing. SIL lawyers and community members were again faced with the untenable situation of adequately presenting their position and concerns when the extent of impacts was unknown or actively withheld from the public record.

Kristjanson opened by stating that Hydro's responsibility was to provide an adequate supply of power at the lowest possible cost, adding that it was "natural that power programs can intrude on other values." According to Kristjanson, Hydro was hamstrung by a lack of relevant information, as it was "not in a position to evaluate and cope with [the 'other values'] in their entirety" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 14). The primary issue for Hydro was scale: Hydro could not, or should not, attempt to address all of the issues brought forward by SIL because "it would be presumptuous, if not improper, for Manitoba Hydro to attempt to resolve them alone" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 14). This meant that Hydro did not consider itself responsible for human values, at least not alone. Kristjanson claimed that the project cost estimates could not be revealed to the public since tenders had already been called. He also alleged that Hydro had "excellent affinity with the people and values of the north" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 16). Kristjanson ended his statement by saying that Hydro recognized its responsibilities towards SIL and Pickerel Narrows in the matter of the relocation.

Leonard Bateman, the new Hydro Chairman, focused his speech, dense in technical jargon, on the merits of hydropower development in the province, the need to use Manitoba's water resources, and the importance of the Churchill River Diversion and the high-level scheme. Bateman reiterated Kristjanson's statement that Hydro is responsible to supply power to the province. According to Bateman's logic, Hydro's energy dreams were simply following the legal requirements of the crown corporation as laid out in its statute:

"We want to make it clear that we are in the 'energy business', and as we understand our job as defined by the statutes of the Province of Manitoba, it is to provide this electrical energy in quantities needed by the people and the industries of this province in an efficient and economic manner" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 17).

Bateman also asserted that the Kettle Generating Station's efficiency hinged on the high-level diversion, implying that rejecting Hydro's plans jeopardized the province's industrial future:

"The additional energy from the Kettle Plant needed to meet the Manitoba load by 1973 makes it necessary to augment the Nelson River flow by the diversion of the Churchill River and the provision of related storage in southern Indian Lake by 1972, in order that sufficient water can be impounded to provide for releases to the Nelson River to meet possible adverse runoff conditions" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 26).

Bateman alleged that if the licence was not granted, it would be necessary to build a thermal generating station to supply adequate energy, pointing to the fact that Manitoba Hydro believed that alternatives to the high-level scheme bore no merit for further consideration. Bateman contended that the high-level scheme was much more efficient than the alternatives because it had more storage and flow to generate energy and was more cost efficient. Bateman concluded that the high-level diversion was the most beneficial based on a well-rehearsed logic:

"1. Hydro power is Manitoba's only substantial energy source. 2. In order to make that energy source competitive with imported energy (such as coal, oil or electrical energy), it is necessary to make the best possible use of our water resources. 3. The high level Churchill River Diversion has been counted on since 1965 as an important element for the economical development of the power potential of the lower Nelson River. 4. The cost and benefit comparisons have shown conclusively that any alternative to the high level diversion scheme would be much less effective in comparison to its costs because of the greatly reduced storage capacity available for regulation" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 31).

Bateman's comments showed that the high-level scheme was counted on prior to any communication with South Indian Lake or Pickerel Narrows and prior to any understanding of the impacts on human values. Moreover, the notion that the scheme would be more cost efficient was based on calculations that did not include any human social or ecological values.

Hydro's project, as it was envisioned, was opposed by most participants in the hearings on social or environmental grounds. For example, Mr. McNicholl, presenting for the Natural History Society of Manitoba, stated:

"One of the main objectives of the Natural Society of Manitoba is the conservation and wise use of our natural resources. The Society, therefore, wishes to record its concern over the application to allow Manitoba Hydro to raise the level of Southern Indian Lake and the lack of adequate study of the effects of such action on all natural resources of the area" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 141).

Mr. Murphy, presenting for the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, stated concerns with the project, which the Federation also submitted to the Manitoba Cabinet back in 1965:

“This brief is presented...to indicate our concern about the loss of wildlife habitat, the otherwise detrimental effect on wildlife and the loss of recreational facilities which we anticipate with the diversion of the Churchill River and the subsequent storage of water in South Indian Lake... We are very concerned because experience has taught us that, unless wildlife studies accompany project and engineering studies, wildlife losses can be disastrous” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, pp. 150-151).

And Thompson citizen, Mr. Gordon Beard, presenting on behalf of Churchill, stated:

“We feel that it is unfair for Manitoba Hydro to expect South Indian, Nelson House, Granville Lake and Churchill to buy a pig in a poke. Today the people are expected to allow Manitoba Hydro to move ahead with a crash program which will affect these people’s immediate future without the benefit of the results of the studies which have been undertaken by the Government. These studies are a part of the facts that our people require to arrive at a proper decision. These are the fact that should have been revealed years ago when they were privately considered. The people should have had a priority over the project” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 60).

These testimonies called attention to the lack of information available on the high-level scheme through nonexistent studies and undisclosed reports.

Winston Mair, the Deputy Minister of Mines and Natural Resources, presented on behalf of Enns who could not, or did not want to, attend the Winnipeg hearings. Mair had not planned to make an appearance but because of the criticism the Department had faced from the Enns press conference discussed above and the hidden Task Force Report ordeal, he now had to make a statement as the ranking member of the “Senior Executive Office of the Department” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 157). Before moving on with his speech, Mair stated that the Hydro project could not and would not be decided on democratically and that the responsibility for the outcomes of the Hydro program would ultimately fall on Enns:

“The hearing has demonstrated a significant contribution that can be made by society in our democratic system in helping to formulate judgements and opinions. However, collective decision is not with us yet and so we have the situation where you, Mr. Chairman, must make recommendations and the Minister of Mines and Natural Resources must make the decision. If the decision proves bad, then... only the Minister will be held accountable by history” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 157).

Mair contended that the Task Force Report was an in-service report, or working paper, and could not be released to the public or to the Nelson Agency. Mair alleged that Enns’ 19-page statement, which was released to the press, was a summary of the Task Force Report. Mair addressed the “suspicion [that Enns] was releasing only those facts that suited his purpose,” by

stating he would make himself available to review the report with concerned parties. Mair explained that the Task Force Report, like other working reports, the department only established a problem to be resolved and the parameters for study, but it made no attempt to direct staff on what they should find and report. If working reports were released to the public and the department's technical review took place in the public forum, staff would not write the reports with "complete freedom because their errors, and we all make them, would be public knowledge" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 158). Mair went on to read Enns' 19-page statement titled *Natural Resources and People of the Churchill River Diversion Area*, noting that "it contains...some of [Enns'] own thoughts and philosophies but the facts were obviously drawn from the report" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 159). Mair ended his speech by stating that the department also believed that more studies were needed.

Before getting to the difference between the Task Force Report and Enns' statement, Buchwald asked if the latter was "prepared to support the granting of the interim licence in spite of contrary suggestions in... [the] task force report and thereby to play down the content of the task force report?" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 179). Mair, who helped write the statement paper, answered that he was "not prepared to make any assumptions" (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 179). Buchwald brought to Mair's attention a *Winnipeg Free Press* article, "Two Views on the Consequences of Flooding" dated 25 January 1969, which compares excerpts of the Task Force Report to that of the background paper, relating to fishing, hunting and trapping, people, recreation, Churchill, Thompson, and Nelson House. Enns told reporters at his press conference that his paper was "based on all the information received from studies to date." Yet this statement, according to Culbert (1969), the writer of the article, "compared with the findings of his own task force report...does nothing to allay fears that the public isn't being told the full story of the possible consequences of flooding" (p. 4).

The Minister's paper said that fish could double once the water area doubled but that their location would likely change and that according to other reservoirs the "medium traditional effect" is for fish populations to decrease, then increase above previous levels, then "drop back to a balance" (in Culbert, 1969, p. 4). While the Task Force stated that viable commercial and sport fishing would not be operable, that lake whitefish and walleye "may be reduced to marginal existence" but there would be a possibility they would increase (in Culbert, 1969, p. 4). Mair tried to defend the differences, stating that the Task Force "indulged" in "editorializing" or expressing

their personal opinion because “biologists and resource people...have built-in bias with respect to hydro projects” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 182).

The Minister’s paper said that flooding will affect furbearing species to some degree but that only beaver and muskrat will be severely affected. While the Task Force reported that flooding will “obliterate the present furbearing resources” because habitat along the shore, prime production areas, will be unsuitable and “virtually wiped out” (in Culbert, 1969, p. 4). To this end, Mair believes that the Task Force used exaggerative language and that it cannot be categorically stated that furbearing animals will be eliminated.

As for the Indigenous communities, the Minister did not appropriately understand Indigenous ways of life and connections to land or deliberately dismissed their importance:

“The people, if they wish, can simply move back to higher land and stick it out, banking on continued fishing, hunting and some trapping. They could leave the area entirely in some area of greater economic opportunity. Some or all might wish to move to a lake or lakes not to be flooded, while retaining traditional fishing rights in the area. They may wish to move to economic opportunity elsewhere, but retain their rights in the old area – to harvest fish during the appropriate season or to move back to it if the outside is found not adequate to their needs” (in Culbert, 1969, p. 4).

While the Task Force stated:

“If the residents of South Indian Lake are re-established in the same area it seems [un]likely that there will be a satisfactory economic base for the people to maintain their traditional livelihood – the harvesting of natural resources. The South Indian Lake community is an established sociological complex basing its economy on natural resources. Can this community be replicated and be expected to continue as a self-sustaining entity? Many years were required for evolution. With a depreciative natural resource base and alien community site there appears little opportunity for the same state of affairs to develop it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the same state of affairs to develop” (in Culbert, 1969, p. 4).

The conclusion was that Minister Enns downplayed the potential impacts of the high-level project.

Buchwald’s cross-examination of Mair, Kristjanson, and Bateman exposed a rush to build on Hydro’s part which took precedence over knowledge, in the form of robust studies and adequate awareness to affected communities. After questioning, Mair revealed that the imperatives of time were more important than the considerations of multi-use planning, That was the case even though the latter is apparently a widely accepted principle across all agencies, much like “motherhood” and the “importance of motherhood,” according to Mair (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 196). Buchwald, focusing on the fact that studies should be done prior to a licence being granted,

asked: “Doesn’t the pursuit of multi-purpose interests dictate that you have...a [land-use planning] study completed?”. Mair responded that

“it is a desirable objective. You asked me earlier about this, whether this was an accepted principle and I said it is, I think I can say fairly truthfully it is an accepted principle. I think I can also say that because of the various pressures of time and so on, that it is still not in all instances completely followed” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 203).

Mair also disclosed more than 2 years would be required to perform field studies and create a more precise impact study. Buchwald had to insist to get this information instead of the “round and round mulberry” answers he was getting (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 194). Buchwald’s cross-examination of Kristjanson and Bateman determined that Hydro agents did not believe they were responsible for the human impacts their project might cause.

Though Kristjanson stated that all relevant information should be provided to people who are going to be affected, he believed that time was of the essence and that the project should move forward. When asked by Buchwald where Hydro stood on the principle of considering natural, human, and power resources before a power development is decided on, Kristjanson responded that “Manitoba Hydro’s position... is that to the greatest extent possible all factors should be considered and when I say to the greatest extent possible in any decisions of this kind there [are] always pressures of time to move on with a particular development” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 252). When asked if the project should proceed without adequate studies, Kristjanson asserted that from Hydro’s “point of view the application must go forward for power purposes and the question of whether or not it can go forward with respect to other matters is for someone else to decide” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 257). These larger scale questions were “pretty squarely” in the hands of Weber (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 257). For Kristjanson, questions of time and responsibility were invoked to absolve Hydro engineers of the high-level project’s consequences.

Emphasis on the social and economic necessity of hydropower consistently allowed Hydro and political figures to circumnavigate more complex questions of ethics and responsibility. When asked if studies should be completed prior to the licence being granted, studies that Kristjanson believed could be done between 1969 and 1972, a year before the flooding was set to occur, Kristjanson answered: “Well this is possible but from my point of view time has run out with respect to the power aspects of this and that is why we found it necessary to (put?) [*sic*] through the specifications for tender subject to the license being granted” (Transcript of Proceedings,

1969a, p. 259). When asked the same, Bateman answered: “I am sorry I could not accept the responsibility for deferring this application because it is my job to make sure we plan an adequate supply of power for the future, until somebody tells me that that is not my job, then I have to continue to plan on that basis” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 293). When asked if there is anything to indicate that the project should not be proceeded with, Kristjanson stated: “No. There was nothing in any of the evidence I have heard that would suggest to me that we should not proceed” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 264).

In his questioning, Buchwald maintained that Manitoba Hydro was responsible to show concern for the human and natural resources aspects of development; they made the application, they pressed for power development, and they developed engineering dynamics for the project over five to ten years. Kristjanson firmly disagreed and deflected the responsibilities onto other government agencies, such as the Water Control Branch. When asked to give comparative costs that considered of all aspects of resources, Bateman stated that he was “not responsible for those other resources. My terms of reference are very definite from my employer. I concern myself specifically with power matters,” an echo of Kristjanson’s perspective (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 277).

Kristjanson claimed that he “full well [recognized] the kind of sacrifice that is being asked of the people that are being displaced” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 257). But who was asking the communities to make this sacrifice, who was presenting them with a choice?

Kristjanson’s and Bateman’s opening statements alluded to the notion that Hydro did not intend to consider any of the high-level alternatives, and Buchwald’s cross-examination of Hydro’s agents firmly confirmed this. When the dissection of the high-level scheme started to impugn its merits, Hydro’s agents attempted to argue that the establishment of the Kettle Generating Station was dependent on the adoption of the high-level scheme. Mr. Dewar, the legal counsel for Hydro, asserted that the economic viability of the Kettle GS hinged on the high-level diversion and stressed the pressures of time:

“let me make the record clear from the point of view of Manitoba Hydro...Hydro's position is that our present commitment required to proceed, that the Kettle dam under construction half way finished at the present time is based upon the economics of having the high level diversion, that this plan was (submitted?) [*sic*] in 1966 and as Mr. Kristjanson has explained time is running out on getting the high level diversion underway” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 251).

Bateman stated that Hydro could not “justify” the Kettle GS without the high-level diversion and claimed this was the reason both projects were agreed to in 1966 (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 281). If this assertion was true, why did Hydro not apply for the high-level diversion license at the same time it did for Kettle in 1966? And why would the province risk \$142 million in sunk loans to Hydro for the Kettle GS? Either the latter’s economic viability was not dependent on the high-level scheme, or the province and Hydro were responsible for poor planning. Buchwald argued that Kettle would be viable with the low-level diversion; based on Overgaard’s testimony it would not run two of the ten generating units that were planned for the high-level diversion, thus it would still generate substantial power. Buchwald criticized Bateman’s “temerity to come before this Hearing and say the whole Kettle Rapids investment is wasted, is useless, is meaningless, without this high level diversion” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 302).

If the low-level diversion was viable, why was Hydro exhibiting such haste and steadfastness in the high-level plan being the best and only option? Kristjanson provided a simple answer to part of this question when he stated that Hydro’s responsibility “to the people of Manitoba” was “to provide power at the (lowest possible)? [*sic*] cost,” and since Hydro did not concern itself with human or environmental costs, they could deem the high-level scheme the best and most cost efficient (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 262). But why did Hydro not permit any leeway to the viability of high-level diversion’s alternatives? How could Kristjanson assert that the only options were the cost-efficient high-level diversion, expensive thermal plants, or brownouts? Certainly, Buchwald believed that by declaring the latter three as the only option available, Hydro produced a “blackout of basic and fundamental rights to have fair honest adjudication of this matter in accordance with justice” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 301). He stressed that Hydro and its agents had still not provided an any cost comparisons for the alternatives to the high-level diversion, proposing that Hydro had not “considered these alternatives with any seriousness but only long enough to basically reject them” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 303).

Though Buchwald conceded that, from the “minutest confines of limited engineering,” the high-level plan was viable, it was not enough (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 304). It was not nearly enough for Hydro to prove its case beyond a shadow of a doubt for the high-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake. Buchwald argued that the hearings amounted to a performance of power from Hydro’s agents when

“what the men of Hydro do at this Hearing is they come forward and they say this is it, take it or leave it, and if you leave it, we won't go ahead with Kettle; we will go into thermal plants; we will brownoff the province in 1972; there is no time; time marches on; this thing has to be dealt with this way or not at all; it is an (absolute?) [sic]” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 303).

According to Buchwald, “in the pursuit of power...there has been an exercise of power” and that his team, on behalf of the communities, are “arguing to resist power misapplied” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 303).

Dewar closed the hearing for Manitoba Hydro's side and tried to disprove some of the conclusions and statements made by Buchwald, from the viability of Kettle and the lack of concern for the human and natural aspects, to energy needs. While Dewar acknowledged that it may have been better to apply for the high-level licence at the time of Kettle's licencing, he suggested that while it was not ultimately applied for earlier, it was presented to the legislative assembly and “to criticize it for being late doesn't assist one way or another”, a grand claim to try to subvert the very purpose of the hearings (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 308). Dewar argued that the other resources of concern that were not addressed by Hydro, such as timber, recreation, and sport fishing, were “dormant” resources that lie in the future, unlike the hydropower Hydro could be harnessing the province. Dewar concluded by stating that Manitoba Hydro was aware of its responsibilities concerning the “dislocation” of South Indian Lake and Pickerel Narrows and that was it “prepared to co-operate in the solution of the problems arising” (Transcript of Proceedings, 1969a, p. 309 and 311). Yet the opposite was proven throughout the hearings, echoing the colonial legacies of the state.

Reflections and Conclusions

In this chapter, I revealed the attitudes and ideologies of the high-level scheme proponents which viewed the sacrifice of an Indigenous community as acceptable by-product of a development that would benefit southern consumers and industrial development.

Of the two initial studies conducted on the potential impacts of the high-level diversion scheme. The Van Ginkel Associates Report, which evoked longstanding perceptions of inferiority in its consideration of Indigenous peoples, was welcomed. While the Duckworth Report, which was critical of the high-level scheme and the potential extent of its impact was recalled and erased from consideration by Manitoba Hydro. Van Ginkel Associates contended that South Indian Lake

led a dead-end way of life that needed to change in totality. The consultants believed that the flooding of Southern Indian Lake would do nothing more than expediate the breakup of SIL and their way of life.

Days before Manitoba Hydro filed its license application for the high-level diversion, Hydro agents finally met with South Indian Lake. The conversations were futile as the agents failed to offer any relevant information to the community concerning environmental impacts and compensation matters, and the community felt blind-folded. SIL formed a Relocation Committee and hired legal representatives, Harold Buchwald, and his associates. Public hearings were held for Hydro's license application to obtain the views and considerations of the public. The hearings revealed that Manitoba Hydro believed that high-level diversion had to proceed, that the imperative of time superseded that of sufficient information, that the loss of Indigenous livelihoods was an inevitable sacrifice, and that it was not Hydro's responsibility to concern itself with human or environmental impacts. Hydro maintained their duties were confined to matters of power production and supply.

This chapter tested a basic question that has been shrouded by the past, hidden in archives, in the lines of testimony at long-forgotten public hearings – Who is responsible to the people of South Indian Lake and their lands? Is it Manitoba Hydro, the crown corporation applying for the licence that would reengineer northern waterways and ways of life? Is it the Water Control Branch, the government agency tasked with providing direction on the granting of the licence? Is it the Department of Mines and Natural Resources, the bureaucratic unit whose appointed political leader had the power to grant the licence? Or the legislative assembly, the elected political leaders that ultimately direct the other groups' purposes and responsibilities?

Chapter 3 - Bill 15: Technocracy “In the Interest of all Manitobans”

“The two Communities subscribe thoroughly to the positions taken by other responsible citizens who have appeared before you that there is not enough information to warrant the granting of the license and that more studies need to be made on resource effects – human and natural – to formulate an enlightened conclusion... If this Government and Hydro truly believe in the fundamental rights of the citizen, hold the public interest to be paramount, they will withdraw Bill 15 and cause appropriate studies to be made. Then, and only then, in the history of our times will it have been written that power technocracy was finally thwarted in 1969 out of a genuine concern for the native citizens of Manitoba” – Harold Buchwald (1969), legal counsel, on behalf of South Indian Lake and Pickerel Narrows (p. 15).

The public hearings on the high-level diversion plan left the question of who was responsible for the Hydro project and to the communities of South Indian Lake and Pickerel Narrows unanswered. Hydro agents denied any responsibility towards the communities and pointed to the Water Control Branch. The Department of Mines and Natural Resources pointed to its Minister, Harry Enns, as the agent who would be responsible for the outcomes of the Hydro project. For the communities, it was Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Government who were responsible for addressing and mitigating the potential human and environmental impacts of the high-level diversion. It was Hydro who developed the high-level plan and it was the government who argued for that plan to become a reality.

After the public hearings, Premier Walter Weir asked his legislative colleagues “to approve legislation granting a license to Manitoba Hydro for the high level diversion of the Churchill River at South Indian Lake” (Weir, 1969). Bill 15 would give legislative authority to Manitoba Hydro to proceed with the high-level diversion scheme. The same day, South Indian Lake served Harry Enns with an injunction against an Order in the favour of the Hydro project, but once the Bill entered the Legislature, the injunction was nullified. This chapter demonstrates that the government transferred the decision to the Assembly to ensure that Hydro would be granted the license. The Bill produced considerable debate in the legislature, but with the Progressive Conservative majority, it was approved and referred to the Public Utilities Committee (PUC). In the middle of the Bill being heard by the PUC, in May 1969, the Weir government called an election and was defeated, and the proposed Bill 15 seemingly disappeared from history.

The purpose of this chapter is to review what transpired in the legislature as Bill 15 was debated. The chapter aims to underscore the ideologies, opinions and idiosyncrasies espoused by Hydro project proponents, the majority government, and the members opposite. It aims to

showcase the procedural chaos and how this was mobilized by agents involved in the planning and decision-making of hydropower developments, deconstructing the many parts of the monolith of Manitoba Hydro along with the government it answered to. I argue that the Progressive Conservative majority government embraced and reproduced technocratic and colonial ideologies to press for the high-level diversion.

The content of this chapter is ordered chronologically for the evidence displayed to be attached to a specific moment in time and to showcase the often petty and imperfect nature of exchanges in the legislative assembly. The latter makes the assembly members more human and less removed from the people at large.

Evading Accountability: Weir's Conservatives and "Sugar Daddy Hydro"

"Mr. Speaker, the honourable member's presentation reminds me of a story that Tolstoi tells. When the rich man sees the poor man is perspiring, he will even go to the great length of taking a white handkerchief, a white silk handkerchief out of his pocket and wiping the brow of the poor man. And Tolstoi says the rich man will do anything for the poor man except get off his back" – MLA Green on his frustrations with Minister Enns (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1952).

Before the debate of Bill 15, the opposition to the Progressive Conservatives (PCs), including Liberals, New Democrats, and one Social Creditor, repeatedly expressed their discontent with the government's lack of transparency in the case of the Hydro project and the lack of concern it showed for South Indian Lake (see Hansard, 1969c, 1969d, 1969e, 1969f, 1969g, 1969h, 1969i, 1969j). In the House, they argued that the government was gatekeeping relevant information from the House and stifling democracy; they called for the government to accept responsibility over the matters of SIL and the Hydro project; and they challenged the government's indirect request for blind, unsubstantiated trust over the Hydro project. The PCs response to this was either dismissal, deferral, or circumvention through parliamentary privilege. Their overriding argument was that the majority government knew best, their information was privileged, and they would bring clarity in the second reading of Bill 15. New Democrat Sidney Green posited that the government was espousing a common ethic which saw Indigenous peoples as inferior, and that the Hydro project was an issue of morality (Hansard, 1969b). Was the government, in fact, willfully neglecting or ignoring Indigenous peoples and their livelihoods? And if so, why? The debate of Bill 15 laid bare the ethics and morals of members of the majority government and the members opposite with regards to Indigenous peoples and hydropower development.

On 14 April 1969, Minister Enns presented Bill 15 for the second reading – when the Bill could be debated and either accepted or rejected. Enns explained that the Bill had two parts, the first addressed the granting of the licence to Hydro to divert the Churchill River waters at Southern Indian Lake, and the second the relocation of the residents (Hansard, 1969c). Under Part One, Enns claimed that Hydro would be required to provide all construction plans to him for approval, to pay an annual rental for occupied Crown lands, to clear specific areas in the reservoir area, to conduct natural resource surveys on an ongoing basis, and to assess resources and the effects of the altered water regime. Under Part Two, mitigation measures would be addressed and a commissioner would be introduced to deal with the problems facing the affected communities: “guidance, counselling and information services, [to] assist the residents to establish new homes, to adjust to new surroundings, to take advantage of new opportunities and to accept new responsibilities” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1243). His comments can be read carefully to understand the logic that government applied to Hydro decisions.

Enns claimed that he made clear that the decision to grant the license “as far as the government was concerned, had been made” and that the public hearings’ only purpose was to document requests for “fair and equitable treatment” from the communities that would be affected (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1244). Enns alleged that when he announced the hearings to the press, they failed to report the very same comments he made in January which resulted in public outrage – that the hearings were called for the Indigenous communities to make their cases for compensation and not to question the project. Enns claimed the decision to proceed with the project was made in 1966, and because the hearings were thwarted, in that they did not follow his original intentions, the government had to present Bill 15 before the House.

While Enns asked the House to place their faith in technocratic management and “assume that Hydro does in fact know what they’re doing... [and] express a measure of confidence in this great utility that has served this province so well” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1245). Enns played down the human and natural impacts. Speaking in contradictions, Enns said that “no attempt has been nor will be made to minimize these losses and hard-ships but I will attempt in a rational and moderate manner to bring some degree of relativity to this very important area which has generated so much heat and so much controversy” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1246). Meanwhile, senior officials should be trusted because of their expertise and position. Deputy Minister Mair was “hardly the kind of man to pass over lightly the losses or the lack of concern that is being attributed to this

department over the other natural resources as they relate to this project,” that he is not a mere “yes [man]” to Enns (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1246).

To address the resources the public is “so concerned about,” Enns argued that the losses to timber, fish, hunting and trapping, and recreation would be minimal. He asserted that the commercial value of timber in the area is “regarded as nil” because it was not economically efficient to harvest scattered stands of forest (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1246). To compound this limited valuation of resources, Enns stated that the province likely loses “as much timber every year in forest fires as is being jeopardized in this particular project but no outcry of the public is heard on this particular matter” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1246). Enns did not account for the socio-cultural or environmental values of forestry to Indigenous peoples in his valuation of timber resources.

Enns applied a similar logic to losses to commercial fishing by linking this economy to an uncertain future. Barring scientific evidence from studies on South Indian Lake, Enns proposed that fish populations could increase as the water area increases, only “theoretically” though (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1247). Enns used the examples of Cedar Lake and Reindeer Lake to show that an increase in fish production could be possible for South Indian Lake. He used absolute fish production numbers in pounds to show an increase a couple of years after the establishment of a reservoir, though distinction in fish quality and species would be necessary to understand in disruptions or improvements in the fish populations. Enns’ rhetorical goal was to “reject totally the thought that this resource, namely commercial fishing, will be lost forever as a result of this project” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1247).

Enns’ solution to potential harms to hunting and trapping economies was to introduce domestic fur farming. Again dismissing the environmental, cultural, and social values of hunting and trapping to Indigenous peoples, he claimed “that it is not my dear friends in the wilds that are chasing the muskrats and the furs along hundreds of miles of barren traplines that are making the money in the trapping business but it is indeed the handful of domestic fur farmers” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1248). This characterization frames the settler colonial practice of paternalization by creating a distinction of the proper way to engage in a modern economy, by normalizing the seemingly organized practice of farming against the supposedly scattered practice of trapping, by fostering a politics of settlement, and by subsuming Indigenous cultural and economic modes to the oncoming waves of settler society.

As for other wildlife, Enns claimed there were more ducks, caribou, and moose elsewhere. Enns stated that there were many more areas in the province “more suited, more hospitable to the development, to the maintenance of wildlife” than Southern Indian Lake (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1248). The recreational value of Southern Indian Lake was compared poorly to those of Banff, Jasper, Yoho, and Kootenay National Parks where the annual value of the area’s economy had averaged at \$60 million, after capital investments of some \$100 million. And in contrast, Southern Indian Lake was “some 500 air miles north of Winnipeg and far removed from the populated centres with no capital investment in place” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1248). In this logic, the recreation and economic geography of the north favoured the government’s use value.

Enns held that the potential of Southern Indian Lake must not be valued at the “exclusion of all other recreataional [*sic*] facilities this province has to offer” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1248). The fact that the provincial and federal government had set aside lands and recreation programs showed that “administrations of this province have in the most responsible manner concerned ourselves with the provision and preservation of lands to ensure the enjoyment of Manitoba's yet unborn the pleasures of recreational pursuits” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1249). Yet the history of loss and displacement embedded in those park beginnings belies the colonial and capitalist roots of parks in Canada. Enns used various national parks as evidence of successful responsible concern over lands, ignoring that these parks displaced Indigenous peoples and while at the same time reproducing a settler version of Indigeneity (Sandlos, 2014). For example, the creation of Riding Mountain National Park, a park listed by Enns, which was a response to economic development and federal administrative priorities, dispossessed the Keeseekowenin Ojibway Band from a small reserve within the park boundaries (Sandlos, 2008). Here Enns continued a long tradition in Canada of parks as agents of settler colonial dispossession and resettlement practices (Braun, 2002; Thorpe, 2012).

While he did recognize that the SIL community was economically viable and independent, he stated that he was not prepared to “tie them down to what best can be described to a static or dwindling resource” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1249). Enns asserted that, since over half of the community was 16 years old or younger and resources were dwindling, the community would have to move anyway. Enns claimed “responsibility... to ensure that citizens of this province are in fact in a position to make that choice and not simply strapped into a given occupation because of lack of opportunity” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1251). By producing a near-future imaginary of SIL as barren,

economically unviable, and socially constricting, Enns reframed the consequences of the Hydro project to provide a moral and economic ballast for the government's actions.

Enns reminded the Assembly that many other residents of the province had to move for development to show that SIL and Pickerel Narrows' sacrifice was no different. He used the examples of Birds Hill Park and the Red River Floodway to show that his "acquisition" of property created "tremendous" social and monetary benefits for the province (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1952). And the people who were displaced in those schemes had "no sugar daddy Hydro to pick up the bill for them" (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1952). Enns had no choice: "I have to take this unoccupied Crown land from the residents who have become accustomed to living in that area of South Indian Lake, but, Mr. Speaker, the fact that it has to be done is patently plain and obvious to all of us" (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1952). Enns echoed the settler colonial practice of claiming Indigenous lands as uncultivated and unoccupied, a Lockesian residue (Brace, 2004; Mackey, 2016; Purdy, 2015)

Finally, Enns appealed to a kind of 'resource triumphalism' that could be brought to Manitoba (Bridge, 2001). He presented a limited perspective of the Hydro project's effects while challenging his colleagues to dream big or fall behind:

"Do you wish to participate in making perhaps the most important single decision fundamental to the economic well-being of this our province, because let there be no mistake about it, this is just that kind of a decision... The successful completion of this project will ensure that we have the capacity to fully develop and utilize our natural resources. The successful completion of this project will ensure that we will solidly join the ranks of the 'have' provinces in this nation. Mr. Speaker, one of our great opportunities is before us; let us grab it." (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1952).

Enns aggrandized the project to a province-building development, a chance to compete on a national scale. To forgo the Hydro project was to consign the province to the status unequal partners in the nation and to the wilderness of the underdeveloped.

Opposition reactions were swift, impassioned and predictable. Green claimed that Enns did not substantiate the claims that the project was necessary or that there were no alternatives. Enns merely bellowed that the "project is justified because it's plain and obvious" (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1953). Enns minimized the potential impacts of the planned project, reproducing a colonial fantasy of development, powered by engineering expertise and the northward flow of capital. Green also disputed Enns' explanation of the intention of the public hearings being misconceived, saying that, if that were true, Enns had plenty of opportunities to explain his case during the hearings, but he did not (Hansard, 1969c).

Green questioned whether it was “as important to flood South Indian Lake as was originally suggested” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1255). He trusted that Hydro agents, “in full conscientiousness to do a good job,” decided on the cheapest option available, insofar as electricity was concerned, and presented it. He did not blame Hydro, stating that “we regret the constant reference in the Bill and in the proceedings to the fact that Hydro will do this and Hydro will do that, as if the Minister is somehow divorced from this program” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1256). Green refused the technocracy of the Hydro project and placed it squarely within government policy: “this is not a Hydro program, this is a program which is tied hand in hand with the policy of the government of the Province of Manitoba” (Hansard, 1969c, p. 1256).

Green challenged the claim that the high-level diversion at SIL was decided upon in 1966. If the government had committed itself to the project, he asked, “then why did we go through this farce of the hearings,” why did Minister Enns say that Hydro would have to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt, and why was this legislation brought to the House (Hansard, 1969d, p. 1257). According to Green, Minister Enns could not have it both ways, and given the events surrounding the Hydro project it was clear that the project had not been committed to back in 1966. Green suggested that the government was set in its plan to move forward with the project and that they were using brute force to pass Bill 15 because they had the power to do so. Enns quipped, “democratic power,” but according to Green, there were times when even democratic governments did things they should not just because they have the power (Hansard, 1969d, p. 1258). “It’s happened in the past and it happens when a government gets into a box, and this government is in a box” (Hansard, 1969d, p. 1258), a response which prompted Lyon to mockingly remark, “that’s a wonderful understanding of democracy.”

Green explained that his party did not “know whether an alternative program would be less disturbing than the one that we know about, [but] we know about all the disturbances that will be created by this particular program” (Hansard, 1969d, p. 1259).

On 17 April, Liberal leader Molgat argued that neither the government, nor Enns had made the case for the high-level diversion being an immutable decision. Molgat argued the government was trying to evade the issues being raised:

“I think they are attempting to end public debate on this issue by saying we are prepared to make very large but unspecified payments to the people involved at South Indian Lake and thereby remove any complaints that these people may have. On the other side, they are saying we will proceed to have studies and thereby calm

the legitimate fears of other Manitobans who wonder what this is all about... We should not attempt at this point to buy off the Indian people at South Indian Lake, to buy off public opinion in Manitoba” (Hansard, 1969e, p. 1388)

Molgat asserted that a total re-analysis must be done that equally considers economically efficiency, northern development, and social costs (Hansard, 1969e). As a province “it is vital that we prove our commitment to recognize the social cost, the cost of wrenching people away from their traditional homes, of forcing people through a speeded up process of transition” (Hansard, 1969e, p. 1389). The issue, as Molgat argued, was more complex than Enns’ developmental imaginary:

“We’ve heard a great deal about genocide. You know some people will think I am stretching the point when I say this, but Mr. Speaker, let my friends - and the Minister of Finance is laughing right now - let him go up to South Indian Lake and see what it is we are doing to that community. It is not simply a case, as the Minister of Natural Resources was telling us the other day, of moving people from one location to the other, Mr. Speaker, it’s more fundamental than that. You are taking a group of people, a community, and destroying it” (Hansard, 1969e, p. 1389).

Molgat believed the “government should have no right to force people into an uncertain and unwarranted change,” the only certainty was that flooding SIL would foreclose the community’s future (Hansard, 1969e, p. 1389).

On April 22, New Democrat Ben Hanuschak claimed the government should bear responsibility for the Hydro project while highlighting the colonial ideologies the government’s arguments and language supported. The Bill’s ramifications would transcend the Hydro project:

“This Bill deals not only with the matter of flooding a few hundred square miles of land in northern Manitoba, but I suggest to you that the procedure that has followed, the factors that are taken into consideration in arriving at some conclusion in this matter is going to set the ground rules for future economic and industrial development of the whole Province of Manitoba” (Hansard, 1969f, p. 1530).

Hanuschak asserted that legislators and the public had become aware of the human factor, which could not be assessed “in terms of dollars and cents” nor ignored or “sacrificed” for the sake of industrial and economic development (Hansard, 1969f, p. 1530). Therefore, the procedure that was followed here would dictate future private and public industrial development. The social dimensions of development needed to be front and centre, both now and in the future. Green believed the government was liable because it was their responsibility to “concern [themselves] with the welfare of the people” (Hansard, 1969f, p. 1530).

Hanuschak problematized the argument of Hydro project proponents that only a small percentage of the land area of the province would be flooded it somehow less worthy of consideration. He argued that their stance would be different if the landscapes of southern Manitoba were flooded instead of northern Indigenous lands, highlighting the colonial vision behind the Hydro project:

“If we are just going to talk in terms of land, in terms of area of land, that it's just a small portion of land. I suggest to you that the reason why that portion of land is treated so lightly is because it happens to be on the shores of South Indian Lake, and I suggest to you that if the area to be flooded were the town of Tuxedo, which would be much smaller than the area to be flooded in the vicinity of South Indian Lake, that the reaction would be quite different from that which we have heard. In fact, the course of action of Manitoba Hydro, the course of action of this government would be quite different from that which it has been in dealing with South Indian Lake” (Hansard, 1969f, p. 1532).

Hanuschak further emphasized the colonial language used by the Hydro project proponents which asserted superiority of Euro-Canadian settlers and the inferiority of others:

“Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that I have heard enough of this term "upgrading" other peoples' skills and I'm beginning to wonder who is kidding whom. I think so much depends on what position of the fence we are on when we talk of upgrading peoples' skills... Maybe we can talk about retraining people, but this repeated reference to upgrading peoples' skills in the Province of Manitoba, I'm just wondering whether it isn't time that that term shouldn't be dropped and some other more appropriate one substituted therefor [*sic*]” (Hansard, 1969f, p. 1533).

In the same meeting, Social Creditor J. M. Froese said that he was disappointed with the conduct of the opposition, however, like them, he believed that not enough information had been disclosed. He thought that “some people...purposefully agitate[d]” the matter of SIL’s relocation, but he did suggest that a visit to SIL may prove beneficial for decision making, to “take a look at it firsthand so that there need be no fear of making a wrong decision” (Hansard, 1969f, p. 1537).

On the April 23, Liberal T. P. Hillhouse expressed his concerns with the investment the Hydro project would require, stating that a rushed judgment should not be made without all necessary information. The he said/he said continued – PC Gurney Evans, Minister of Finance, alleged that the opposition was misconstruing the Hydro project, reiterating the potential benefits of the project. Echoing the sentiments of Green and Hanuschak, Hillhouse believed that Bill 15 was one of the most important pieces of legislation that had been heard in the House (Hansard, 1969a). For him, it was because of the large sums of money involved, the most efficient use of the province’s resources, and the way people were being treated within the Bill. The social effects on

the SIL community were important, but he was most vocal about the monetary expenditure that would be required for the Hydro project. Legislators had a “duty to ensure that Bill 15 is indeed a wise way to spend public money,” according to Hillhouse who added that “once Southern Indian Lake is flooded there can be no turning back of the clock. The sums of money involved in this project are immense” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1548). If judgment on the Bill was rushed, all would “be guilty of gross mismanagement of public monies” and “negligence” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1548). Hillhouse demanded that more information be disclosed: “the fact that the government has the answers does not relieve us...from our obligations... to check over the government's answers on all these vital questions” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1548). The Liberal Party suggested stopping the debate of the Bill to refer it to the PUC so that “all the questions which to date remain unanswered” be answered (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1548).

Evans turned the blame to opposition tactics, claiming that the issue of the Hydro project had been grossly misconstrued: there had been “so much in the way of misunderstanding, misinformation, some irresponsible gossiping on the subject of the development... particularly the matter of Southern Indian Lake and I think it’s about time that a statement was made on behalf of Hydro” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1549). Evans asserted that the decision to proceed with the Hydro project was made “after most serious and detailed studies,” unlike the “back of the envelope type figuring... which has had some part to play in some of the irresponsible and uninformed views that have been placed before the public in recent weeks or even recent months” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1550). Doubling down on his stance, Evans exclaimed "Non-sense!" to those questioning if the project had be properly researched (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1550). He stated that the high-level dam at SIL was the best alternative and that it would save \$9 million annually, and \$550 million in 60 years, in comparison to the low level.

Evans stated the Hydro project could make Manitoba into a power-supplied province and appealed to a similar resource triumphalism which saw the province’s transmission technology development as “attracting world attention” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1550). The province and Hydro were “leading the world in this transmission development. We're ahead of Sweden and ahead of Russia. There is nothing to approach it in the United States” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1554). In this vision, Manitoba would be become regional hydroelectric power and global infrastructure technology leaders. Evans claimed that the “future of Manitoba's industrial development rests with this gigantic project,” adding that the government was going to proceed with the project because

“we must in the interest of all Manitobans” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1550). He stated that even a year’s delay in the completion of the project “could mean an unacceptable shortage of energy with the resulting loss of industrial production or interruptions in farm or domestic services” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1552).

Evans claimed the project would have great economic impacts, such as providing cheap electricity, supporting secondary economy of materials and supplies, and the prosperity of the province. It would have great social impacts, as the north would open with power sites, bringing opportunities for improvements in electrification, healthcare, education, recreation, employment, and standards of living. And these benefits were juxtaposed with the goal of making Manitoba an industrial player in Canada, emphasizing the role of power development in the growing national project. Evans projected the high-level diversion to the national scale, emphasizing the possible contributions of the project to the nation and the need to exploit the resources of the nation:

“A united and growing Canada needs to take advantage of every major natural resource that she has. We need power...Manitoba stands in the centre of this national interest. Our Nelson River development, which while it helps to build up the north and begins to take new values from our magnificent water resources, will play an important part in helping Canada to build more strongly into the future. Big power developments in our sparsely settled north are needed and new ways had to be found to transport that power over very long distances. The magnitude, the innovations and the value of Manitoba's power as an important link for the nation's power chain all make it possible for our unique Federal-Provincial partnership in this great project” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1554).

By referring to the nation in the feminine and emphasizing the need to harvest its resources, Evans engaged a colonial discourse of domination and control (Jacobs, 1994). In this binary, the obverse of the masculine are seen as lesser, supporting an exploitative relationship where men are superior and women and nature are their subordinates (see Otner, 1972; Roach, 1991). Evans produced Canada, and the empty north in particular, as the subject and foundation of domestication.

Evans assured the Assembly that the diversion at SIL was the best option as it stored the most water, and thus stored the most potential energy; without this project “the economy of the province could be crippled and further growth and expansion of the province would be stunted,” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1558). With this stable energy supply industries and enterprises would invest in the province. Nothing less than the province’s future prosperity was at stake. And Hydro calculated that the capital costs of the high-level storage scheme would save \$5 million compared to the “most attractive low-level scheme” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1558).

Evans minimized the concerns levelled against the Hydro project: “as work progresses on this vast undertaking it is natural, but unfortunate, to have a relatively small group of critics who become overly concerned about the consequences of any change” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1559). Molgat again interjected to ask Evans to produce the extensive studies to the House which Evans claimed had been done. Evans was unable to “identify” these studies but suggested that Molgat would have “ample opportunity” to question Hydro once the Bill would go to the PUC (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1560). He “couldn’t possibly provide them” to Molgat as there were “six and half million dollars [*sic*] worth of studies” (Hansard, 1969g, p. 1560). Molgat asked if studies regarding the \$9 million savings figure would be produce and Evans deferred to the PUC hearing again.

On April 24, Borowski criticized the government’s lack of transparency and accountability, Molgat was not alone. Borowski believed that while the financial expenditure at play was concerning, the issue of relocation warranted greater concern: “Until the government comes up with some kind of a reasonable scheme to put forth in front of the House here, we're not really in a position to discuss [Bill 15],” (Hansard, 1969h, p. 1575). The lack of a “reasonable scheme” was compounded by the fact that the Indigenous communities had, time and again, stated they were not willing to move. Borowski pondered what would happen if the government forced them out with brute force. He wanted the Bill to be moved to the PUC to “hear the facts” (Hansard, 1969h, p. 1576). He suggested a delay of the flooding of “six months or a year more for study to see just what can be done to, if not to prevent this thing here, to do something to lessen the damages” (Hansard, 1969h, p. 1577).

Moreover, Borowski rejected the comparison Enns used with the Red River Floodway and Bird’s Hill Park against the flooding of SIL in terms of acquisition of property and development. There was a significant cultural and economic difference between both circumstances:

“When you compare that type of project to the project in the north it just doesn't make sense, because first of all, whether we like it or not these people are Indians and the people you move here are white, and there is a big difference. In the Floodway they took the land away from them and they paid them good money for it and a person simply just moved his house over and his machinery and kept right on farming... But in the case of the Indians, you're not just moving him half a mile away so he can continue his trapping and hunting and fishing, whatever he does. And you're taking all his land. And not only are they taking all the land they're not giving anything in return for it. They're going to give him huts of some type, so far undisclosed... But even if they give them good homes they've destroyed their land completely, making it the biggest graveyard in the world; they've taken away their land; they've destroyed their means of livelihood and yet they've got the nerve to

stand up and say it's no different than the Floodway or the St. Lawrence or the Bird's Hill Park" (Hansard, 1969h, pp. 1576-1577).

Borowski highlighted the PC member's settler arrogance which dismissed Indigeneity and the historic unequal treatment of Indigenous peoples.

This was plainly anti-democratic and authoritarian. The government was ready to "to use brute force instead of brains and they're going to ramrod this bill through. And they could do it. But that doesn't make it right" (Hansard, 1969h, p. 1577). The government's agents "can talk about democracy all they like but this isn't democracy" (Hansard, 1969h, p. 1577). Borowski's opinion was that the "real argument" the government had in the Bill 15 debate was power; they did not have to make any concessions to, or acquiesce to suggestions from, the members of the Assembly or the people they represented because they simply had the power to push the Bill through without them (Hansard, 1969h, p. 1577).

On April 25, Liberal Gordon E. Johnston argued that the government had still not proven the need for the Hydro project: just because "something has potential value [it] does not prove that it is economically worthwhile to develop" (Hansard, 1969i, p. 1621). The existence of hydropower potential in the north "does not prove that it is economical to develop this power today" (Hansard, 1969i, p. 1621). The hydropower potential of the north would be "very hard to destroy," but granting a licence to flood SIL would "clearly and sharply change the potential of some of our other northern resources, potential resources such as recreation, fishing, trapping, wildlife, and others... these resource potentials will in fact be irrevocably destroyed" (Hansard, 1969i, p. 1622). Hydro development would preclude other forms of economic development by quite literally sinking them. If the many studies there were claimed to be done by government official existed, they needed to be made available to the legislators so that they could understand the full scope of economic development potential: "without these studies we are simply asked to accept on faith all the statements and figures which are used to support Bill 15," and that was unacceptable (Hansard, 1969i, p. 1623). Manitoba had options. Johnston argued that "any agreement between the Federal Government and the Government of Manitoba regarding Phase 1 facilities does not bind Manitoba to each program as initially defined in Phase 1" (Hansard, 1969i, p. 1627). The legislature were, in fact, not "locked in" to any aspect or project defined in Phase 1 (in Hansard, 1969i, p. 1626). A prime example of this was the Winnipeg Lake Regulation. The Winnipeg Lake Regulation was part of the Phase 1 Development scheme and was referred to by Stephens, Chairman of the Board of Manitoba Hydro, in 1966, as being "of paramount importance to the development of power on

the Nelson River” (in Hansard, 1969i, p. 1626). Yet the position was reversed, and the control of Lake Winnipeg was “legally abandoned” (Hansard, 1969i, p. 1627). Johnston ended his speech by presenting a motion for the Bill to be “held in the House and that the contents of the bill be sent to the Public Utilities Committee for consideration, and that the Public Utilities Committee report back at this Session” (Hansard, 1969i, p. 1629).

In late April, the Speaker announced that the motion presented by Johnston was ruled out of order because bills must have a second reading in the house in the House and Johnston had not provided “special reasons” for halting the second reading of Bill 15 (Hansard, 1969j, p. 1671). A similar motion by Liberal Elman Guttormson decrying that “insufficient basic information has been supplied to this House” was also rejected on process grounds by the Speaker (Hansard, 1969j, pp. 1675-1676). Hanuschak tried a different tactic to access information. He asked Enns when the Weber report from the public hearings would be received, to which Enns answered that he did not expect to receive a report from Weber because “the action now under way in this House supersedes those hearings and the anticipated report that he refers to” (Hansard, 1969k, p. 1713). Hanuschak believed that “scrapping” the report was a “betrayal of the people of Manitoba” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1776). Enns was voiding or ignoring what had transpired at the public hearings, despite opposition members continuously pleading for more information to be provided.

The attempts to solicit information continued. Liberal Laurent Desjardins argued that the government had not provided enough information, beyond limited economics, to prove that the Hydro project was sound. Like Hanuschak, Desjardins believed that the ramifications of the Bill 15 would extend to committing the province “to a form of decision making which does not seem to be clearly in accord with good planning principles” (Hansard, 1969l, p. 1742). The information shared by the government did not show Bill 15 to be sound because it did not examine any other aspect than the straight economic benefits of hydropower production (Hansard, 1969l). Desjardins complained that the government would conduct resource studies only after the flooding of SIL, a delay that was dangerous because of the physical size of the project. SIL would become the “largest man made impoundment in the world,”; would “future generations of Manitobans praise us or curse us for this act,” Desjardins pleaded (Hansard, 1969l, p. 1743). Enns retorted: “they’ll praise us. They’ll praise us... I’m certain” (Hansard, 1969l, p. 1743). His response alludes to a mastery over nature modality that is commonplace in settler colonial discourse, an Enlightenment legacy of taming the wild (Adams, 2003; Braun, 2002; Simpson, 2018; Wallace et al., 1996). River

engineering personified the “capacity to out-think and control nature...[to] create a macho world of concrete, steel and human endeavor” (Adams, 2003, p. 236). Enns could control northern Manitoba nature to bring prosperity to all, or most, Manitobans.

“We cannot proceed without the studies, without the facts, without all relevant information,” Desjardins stated, “Why is the government keeping us in the untenable position of being asked to vote in ignorance?” (Hansard, 1969l, p. 1744). Desjardins presented another motion which asked for the contents of Bill 15 to be referred to the PUC:

“Having regard to the seriousness of the matter before us, and in view of the need for full information, and in view of the fact that the Minister of Finance failed to answer basic questions pertaining to Bill 15, and further that the Minister had admitted that he does not know the answers to these questions (see Page 1560 of Hansard) regarding Bill 15, and further that studies have not been provided to the House to permit members to make a responsible decision at this time on the principle of the Bill, that the subject matter of Bill 15 be referred to the Standing Committee on Public utilities and Natural Resources for immediate study and report back to this Session of the Legislature” (Hansard, 1969l, p. 1745).

The motion was heard by the Speaker and was accepted to be posed to the House.

On April 30, PC J. B. Carroll, Minister of Recreation and Tourism, and PC Warner Jorgenson defended Bill 15 and the Hydro project while Hanuschak interjected to criticize the Bill’s proceedings. Carroll claimed that Southern Indian Lake’s recreational value was nil and that the Hydro project would provide a better future for the SIL community. There were “literally hundreds, if not thousands, of alternatives that offer equal or better recreation potential than the Southern Lake system” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1770). According to Carroll, though the recreational potential of SIL was unknown, it was known “that there is no recreation development on South Indian Lake, on Granville Lake, or on the rivers that are tributary to it or that are part of the area that will be subject to the flooding by means of the high level diversion” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1769). Insofar as the Department of Tourism and Recreation was concerned, there was “no use being made of this facility, except perhaps by local people, for recreation purposes” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1769). There was “very little interest” in the area that had now, in the legislature, become “so important to the recreational future of the people of our province” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1769). In comparison to those areas that were “more accessible,” SIL and the land that was to be flooded had “very low priority” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1770). The conflation of recreation and subsistence hunting and trapping again shows, at best, a dangerous ignorance of Indigenous lifeways in the north or, at worst, a dismissal and devaluation of these same economic and cultural practices.

Carroll asserted SIL was overcrowded with overused resources: “one of the real tragedies of northern Manitoba is that our populations have been growing and out-growing the resources upon which they have been depending, so that we've had a diminishing return, and these diminishing returns are starting to show up for the people of South Indian Lake” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1771). Hence, the relocation of SIL was seen as the quickest way to provide better opportunities for the people. In Carroll’s figuring, the high-level diversion was a blessing for the people of SIL. When Hanuschak asked Carroll where the community was moving, the latter retorted, “are we going to go in there and play God to these people and tell them where they should go and what they should do?” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1771). The government would force the community to move, but would not want to “tell them where to go or how to run their lives” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1771). For Carroll and his Conservative colleagues this was the best way to ensure “participation,” “democracy,” and “community development,” because the community would be allowed to make their own choices (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1772). The benefits of individualism would be applied to “allow” the people of SIL to forge their own paths, but the benefits of the collective would be applied to convince Manitobans that the dams and diversions were developmental necessities. Borowski maintained that democratic rights could not be claimed when the government had yet to explain where the community would be relocated, how they were going to live, and what the government would do if the community refused to leave. “What is your plan?” Borowski asked,

“You’ve got all the other figures you are handing out here, but you don't seem to think this is important enough to tell us what you are going to do with them and where you are going to put them. There's all kinds of wilderness down there but there's no place to make a living as you very well know. You look at the welfare rolls in the north and you'll know how many Indian people and Metis people are self-supporting and how many of them on welfare. You have those figures” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1783).

Was the opposition to “trust a morally bankrupt bunch of demagogues” with the fate of Northern Indigenous peoples and lands (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1783)?

Hanuschak again urged that studies on the social and environmental impacts of the Hydro project be done, particularly because Manitoba Hydro had made clear they had not performed them, in spite of claims by the PC government: “it is the responsibility of the Manitoba government to seek out all information, all relevant information that may in any way affect not only the land, not only the provision of electricity to the people of Manitoba but the people themselves, be it in

South Indian Lake or be it elsewhere” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1778). He asserted that proceedings of Bill 15 were especially important because they would establish guidelines for future industrial and economic development in the province: “whatever price tag the government puts on human values in this project, that is the price tag that will be put on human values by future governments and by private enterprise” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1777).

Jorgenson defended Bill 15 and argued that the criticisms levelled against the Hydro project grew into “pusillanimous nit-picking” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1780). For example, Jorgenson decreed that over the course of the Bill’s debate, this one lake, which “very rarely gets about 45 degrees,” became a “blossoming recreational area” that had to be preserved (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1780).

Jorgenson had a blank cheque of faith for the government. The latter was “entrusted with the power of making those decisions...if they’re right or wrong, they take the responsibility and are going to be judged on the basis of accepting that responsibility” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1782). Jorgenson was “prepared to accept years of tradition in this Chamber... in following the practices that are laid down for the smoothest passage of the business of a Chamber of this kind” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1782). For Desjardins, Jorgenson was suggesting to vote on Bill 15 “only on the say so of the government” (Hansard, 1969m, p. 1782).

On May 1, Evans asserted that the Hydro project was the “cheapest and best way to produce power” and that it was “best thing for the north” (Hansard, 1969n, pp. 1797-1798). What about the alternative schemes? According to Evans, the government had not challenged Hydro’s competence in deciding that the high-level diversion was the most economical; “I am satisfied; the government is satisfied; the government is putting forward...the development of the Hydro site” (Hansard, 1969n, p. 1798). The Hydro project was the “very best” option because “nobody in their right mind” would think about producing steam power in the south and transmitting it north; it would be an “exercise in absurdity” (Hansard, 1969n, p. 1800). According to Evans, there was no “alternative way of making power for Manitoba’s needs between now and at least the year 2000, which has any prospect of being more attractive than the development of the hydro resources on the Nelson” (Hansard, 1969n, p. 1801). This was the only way to develop the entire province equally. The “development of the north requires powers,” because without it, there could be no contemplation of industrial activities or of “modern communities” in the north (Hansard, 1969n, p. 1800). He claimed that the “people of the north will be the first to benefit” from the project “in a very very [*sic*] substantial way” because it would be a building block for new opportunities

(Hansard, 1969n, p. 1800). Evans guaranteed the opposition that the \$9 million dollar savings figure was, in fact, “confirmed” (Hansard, 1969n, p. 1803). Molgat asked if he could provide the studies which confirm the savings figure, but again, PC members asserted that the question would be best answered at the PUC.

On May 2, Green argued that the Hydro project was neither the best nor the only option for the province. On a “billion dollar project,” the low-level scheme’s capital costs were only \$5 million greater than the high-level scheme (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1846). If a disaster came upon the province, and it would inundate SIL “permanently, irrevocably and with no possibility of changing the situation, by 35 feet of flood water...[and] destroy two Indian communities.” Green asked: “wouldn't this same government come in and say, ‘We can stop this. We can save the lake. We can save the Indian population if we allocate \$5 million which is going to save that lake in perpetuity?’ Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that they would do it” (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1848). Green reasoned that the government did just that when it came to the City of Winnipeg. The issue was that the Red River waters could flood the city every 20 years when they rose to a “distance of more than 26 feet above its regular level,” and the government decided to spend \$64 million on the floodway to “prevent a momentary flood” (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1848). How could the same government say it was “worthwhile to spend \$64 million to prevent this partial flood,” and not worthwhile to “spend \$5 million to prevent a permanent flood?” (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1848). And if this same government spent \$6.5 million on reports “we can’t even read,” could they not spend an additional \$5 million to prevent the significant ramifications of the high-level diversion at SIL (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1848)? Enns retorted that if the House wanted to see reports, they could go to the Manitoba Hydro library, they are available to “any members of the public” at the library (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1848). Enns omitted the fact that the only publicly available materials were those exclusively commissioned by Manitoba Hydro: Cherniack had filed an Order for Return for the *Transition to the North* report, but it was rejected because it was deemed a confidential government report. The PCs would not submit to legislative scrutiny.

Green also referenced the previous year, when the government had spent an additional \$28 million when a contractor made an error in his budget calculations, \$28 million more than the original tender of \$73 million: “Doesn't everybody in the room recall that? Don't we recall that a contractor came in with a \$73 million tender... [then] he indicated to us that he measured a road wrongly and that it's really going to cost him another \$28 million more, and after expressing

misgivings and saying tough luck, we said that we had no choice but to give him the other \$28 million” ?” (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1849). If the same government had \$28 million to spend then, why could they not concede \$5 million now? The fiscal priorities were clear, but they were also locked in based on a kind of path dependency. Green argued that the government was locked into the Hydro project because of its initial monetary investments. The government could not change its direction to accept the low-level diversion, because it would have to admit that it already “wasted” “millions of dollars” (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1851). Green remarked that if they could change their mind, they would, because “the alternatives are better than their scheme” (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1852). The low-level alternative would not just cost \$5 million, it would also cost the abandonment of “an unknown millions of dollars” that the government had already spent on the high-level scheme (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1852).

Green added to the dialogue challenging the planned dislocation of the people of SIL by asserting that “we collectively have proved ourselves failures at integrating these communities” (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1851). If that was not true, Indigenous communities, so the logic went, would be just as well off as settler communities:

“The Minister of Consumer Affairs would be able to show me that Indian citizens are working relatively on the same basis as every other citizen, that they are being educated on the same basis as every other citizen, that they are not at the bottom of the economic ladder, that they are not of the highest ratio in our correctional institutions, if he was able to show me that when these people go they are going to find an equally wholesome life in the rest of the community” (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1851).

Green explained that SIL was a community “healthy”, “culturally happy”, and on “very high level” economically, and the government wanted to change and dislocate them (Hansard, 1969o, p. 1851).

Later Molgat insisted again that the government had neither adequately assessed the alternatives to the Hydro project nor adequately studied the human and social aspects of project. He challenged the government’s vision of progress. Molgat reminded the Assembly that the debate on the bill had made clear that the legislature was “legally and technically free to review all part of Phase 1 not yet constructed” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1901). Molgat followed up on Enns’ claim that all reports were available at the Hydro library, despite his previous uneventful visits. Molgat and his colleagues were only supplied with studies that were commissioned directly by Hydro, but not joint or government reports. These were not publicly available, contra Enns’ claims. Molgat

argued that, even with the noted absence of comprehensive report lists, the Hydro reports that he was able to access made clear that “crucial subjects have not been subjected to thorough study” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1902).

In 1966, according to Molgat, the First Report of the Nelson River Programming Board indicated that there were two major alternatives, the diversion at SIL and Sturgeon Weir diversion in Saskatchewan (Nelson River Programming Board, 1965). In the reports retrieved from Hydro and the Water Control Branch, Molgat and his colleagues were able to find only one consultant study which attempted to assess the Sturgeon Weir diversion, the 1964 Crippen Report (G. E. Crippen and Associates, 1964). The report did not evaluate the economics of the Sturgeon Weir scheme; after “noting a few problems” associated with it, including that it would interfere with the Island Falls generating station, the report concluded that in view of the few identified problems and “the limited information available for a more comprehensive assessment at this time, no further reference will be made to this diversion possibility herein” (in Hansard, 1969p, p. 1903). In 1965, Gibb, Underwood & McLellan produced a report on the CRD, but it did not study the Sturgeon Weir scheme because any scheme outside of Manitoba was not in their terms of reference (Gibb Underwood & McLellan, 1965). However, they did comment that a benefit of the Sturgeon Weir diversion would be that it passed “through existing hydro-electric power developments at Grand Rapids and at Kelsey” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1903). According to Molgat, since 1963 there had been no further studies on the Sturgeon Weir scheme, all new consultant studies focused on the diversion at SIL.

Since the Lake Winnipeg Regulation was outlined in the Phase 1 Development plan and the government had stated it was no longer part of it, Molgat and his colleagues searched through the reports they acquired for more information on the subject. While they found no reports to explain why it was removed from the plan, they did find reports that “led to the conclusion that Lake Winnipeg control is a vital part and necessary ingredient for the development of hydro-electric power on the Nelson” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1903). They stated that the power of the Nelson River’s seasonally variable runoff could only be realized with the regulation of Lake Winnipeg.

The Hydro reports that Molgat saw only addressed engineering and economic factors. The human and social values had not been addressed, though the Gill, Underwood & McLellan (1965) report did comment that a “realistic appraisal of the effect of increased levels must include a deeper assessment of the other resources and human aspects involved,” and that costs and benefits would

hinge on this appraisal (in Hansard, 1969p, p. 1903). The review of the Hydro reports then, meant that the members opposite were still “dark” on social effects of the Hydro project, and according to Molgat, it seemed the government was too. Molgat highlighted that the Minister of Tourism and Recreation himself admitted to not knowing the recreational potential of SIL. Molgat believed that the government was “perfectly willing to remain uninformed and unenlightened, although millions of dollars may be at stake” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1903): “In how many other areas of this project have the government adopted the attitude of willful, in fact even cheerful ignorance?” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1905). Prior to reviewing the Hydro reports, Molgat believed that the government was only guilty of “concealment of vital information,” now it seemed as through the “necessary information” did not even exist (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1905). However, the members opposite were unwilling to believe that “any government would proceed without such information,” but now, this government was caught in a “dilemma” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1905): “either the information exists and they are concealing it, or the information does not exist and they are guilty of monumental folly” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1905). While the government could use the “sheer weight of its majority to stifle the opposition,” and proceed with Hydro project, the members opposite would not condone Bill 15 or add “an air of legitimacy” to the government’s proceedings (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1905).

While the government claimed the opposition stood in the way of progress, Molgat argued that their “northern vision” and definition of “progress” consisted of the permanent destruction of any potential recreation and tourism at SIL and the dismantlement of “one of the most successful Indian communities in Manitoba at a time when such communities were sorely needed” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1905). The opposition had a “larger vision of the north,” one that is built rather than destroyed; they did not look at the north as a mere vast wilderness area, they believed “the future of Manitoba lies in the north” (Hansard, 1969p, p. 1905).

Desjardins’ motion from April 29, to refer Bill 15’s contents to the PUC, was put to vote and lost, 23 yeas and 28 nays, by way of the PC majority. Yeas included 11 Liberals, 11 New Democrats, and 1 Social Credit, nays 28 PCs, and the rest of the Assembly members either did not or could not vote or were not present. This supported the opposition’s claims that the government’s agenda was to force Bill 15 through by a simple legislative majority.

On May 6, Minister Enns demonstrated again that the government prioritized cost savings over Indigenous peoples and their livelihoods. He first claimed that while the opposition had praised the competence of Manitoba Hydro, their opposition to the bill actually represented a clear

challenge of Hydro's competence. He, for one, was not "concerned" with the alternatives presented by the opposition, with their "laymen's views," because they did not concur with Hydro's planning expertise (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1972). He did not have "much difficulty in accepting" Hydro's plan as being the "proper one or the best one in the interests of the citizens of Manitoba" (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1972). Challenging the opposition's claims that not enough information had been disclosed, he asserted that they clearly had not listened to the information provided by the government during the legislative meetings. Enns argued that if the opposition was not prepared "to accept government advice or government information," that was their own problem (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1974). The schoolyard logic continued.

Enns maintained that if the opposition voted against the Bill they would be standing in the way of progress; they would be "voting against 18,943 good paying jobs in the north in the future...hundreds of miles of blacktop pavement in the north...the kind of social services that we need in this province" (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1974). Enns was "happy" to explain that the opposition "fail[ed] to understand" that the government had made a "carefully computerized corporation decision that puts every element of financial advantage, of economic advantage, that makes a decision as to whether or not a plant locates in here, and it becomes extremely important to us in this province" (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1975). That was how industrial expansion and economic development came to the province, Enns highlighted. The government claimed that the province's

"advantages are our ability to produce power at reasonable rates, and I suggest to you it is not unreasonable for all of us to grasp that that single fact is more important to us in Manitoba than the same fact is in Ontario or perhaps in B. C. where they have other advantages to offset perhaps higher power" (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1975).

Enns did not waver about the priorities of his party. Indeed, these priorities were positioned as virtues: "Maximizing to the optimum our opportunity to produce power at a reasonable price" was the priority, indeed, it was why the high-level diversion at SIL was the best option. The alternatives would only be considered "if the government wishes to pay a price," but once the government pays a price, the advantages of the scheme "begin to slip," and so do the "advantages that it spreads over the whole economic development of this province" (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1975).

Before closing the debate, Enns attempted to rid the government of responsibility over the social impacts of the Hydro project onto the opposition and criticized the latter's failure to create plans for the government's "accountability" (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1976). A disconcerting criticism for the opposition given its consistent barrage about transparency, social effects, and paternalism:

“We hoped to, in a very clear and definitive way, by statute, ensure that certain things would be done, particularly with respect to the human resources in this area, the communities that are going to be affected in this area, that they would not simply by an internal bureaucratic committee of senior people within government, who would be in essence directing their affairs, their relocation problems, their retraining problems and so forth, like that, subject to day to day or month to month changes, decisions, something like that, but that in fact some of these specific concerns and needs would be identified in legislation and as such, an accountability will have to be made by this government or future governments as to how we live up to these obligations that we now undertake to these people at Southern and Granville Lakes. This was part of the reason, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation is before us. Unfortunately, a good portion of this reason received scant attention during the debates before us” (Hansard, 1969q, p. 1976).

In this version, the government was the benevolent party, and the opposition wasted their time challenging the foundation of Bill 15 when they should have been establishing mitigation measures.

Bill 15 was put to vote and was passed, 26 yeas and 12 nays. The yeas included 26 Progressive Conservatives, the nays, 12 New Democrats, and most of the remaining Assembly members abstained from voting. But it was all for naught. On May 22, two days after the PUC hearings began, Premier Weir announced the dissolution of the government to the Assembly which concomitantly dissolved Bill 15 and the high-level diversion (Hansard, 1969r).

Reflections and Conclusion

This chapter sought to review Bill 15’s debate in the legislature to draw attention to the settler colonial ideologies promoted by the majority government, the proponents of high-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake. I assessed the values, assumptions, and interests that shaped the debate of Bill 15, particularly those relating to Indigenous peoples. Liberals, New Democrats, and a lone Social Creditor all challenged and showcased the Progressive Conservative government’s devaluation and neglect of Indigenous peoples and their livelihoods. The majority government’s social policy produced and reinforced the colonial ideology that Indigenous peoples were an Other, a lesser then, which asserted settler fantasies of personhood, entitlement, and possession. As such, the high-level scheme could be rationalized as virtuous and beneficial simply because it resonated with ideologies of the PC government.

Thematically, the chapter demonstrated the PC government’s colonial and technocratic ideologies by investigating the presentation of Bill 15 by Harry Enns, the arguments for the Bill

made by PC members, and the criticisms against the Bill made by opposing members in the parliament. Before starting the second reading of the Bill, Enns made clear that, insofar as the government was concerned, the decision to grant the licence for the hydro project was made. Enns implored the legislative members to have faith in Manitoba Hydro and the technocratic management of the province which had served the province favourably. He minimized the environmental and cultural values of Southern Indian Lake and entrenched his beliefs arguing that compared to other areas of the province, it was barren and unworthy. As for South Indian Lake, Enns claimed that he just could not tie them down to a dwindling resource. Enns produced the hydro project as advantageous for both the community and the province at large. He ended the second reading of the Bill by appealing to a resource triumphalism which saw the development of water resources as being the most fundamental element of the province's well-being and future.

The PC members defended the hydro project and further minimized its potential impacts, mainly by negating the opposing's members concerns and aggrandizing the project's benefits. They asserted that serious and detailed studies had been undertaken and that the decision to move forward with the project was not done in a rudimentary or summary fashion. When the opposing members asked for the studies and the figuring, the PCs were either not able to provide these details or were keen to obfuscate their impacts. The PCs claimed the project would have tremendous impacts in the north, like employment, electrification, health, and education. But when they were asked to provide evidence for these claims, they did not. The PCs went on to claim that the project was of national interest to help build a strong, united, and growing Canada, adding that nothing less the province's prosperity was at stake. The key argument the PCs made during the debate of Bill 15 was that the high-level diversion was the most cost-efficient alternative and so it just had to proceed. As before, the opposing members asked for the data and cost comparisons, but these were not provided. Instead, the PC members assured them that this alternative would save the province costs in the order of millions.

The opposition members were united in their trust of Hydro, in terms of power matters, and in their lack of faith and allegiance in the majority government. They made clear that the project was a government policy, not a Hydro one. The members challenged and criticized the lack of information and the lack of studies on the project throughout the second reading of the Bill – which lasted two months. Requests for information, for studies to be completed on the social and environmental impacts, and for the project to be delayed were frequently made, but to no avail.

Many were concerned about the potential ramifications of the project and the passing Bill 15, specifically with regards to the consideration of the human factor in industrial developments. They claimed that the manner in which the government dealt with Indigenous peoples would set an enduring precedent for future developments. They challenged the government's minimization of the potential impacts on the South Indian Lake, stating that more than just a relocation that would occur; the destruction of a group of people and their lands and livelihoods would also happen if the project proceeded. Members added that if this was happening in the south of the province, the government would surely pay greater attention. Throughout the second reading, opposing members made multiple attempts place motions to hold the Bill in the parliament and refer to the Public Utilities Committee immediately in order to be capable to gather more information on the project, but these were dismissed for being invalid and finally voted against by the majority government.

The chapter's analysis showed that the hydropower project was imbued with politics, people, and ideologies. The hydrostructure that would raise the level of Southern Indian Lake was used by the PC government to reinforce and perpetuate ideologies of difference which saw Indigenous lives, practices, and lands as barren and in need of improvement. This same ideological matrix concurrently produced the hydropower project as a benevolent development that would lead to progress in the province and would benefit and improve the Indigenous peoples of the provincial north.

The majority government promoted an industrialized Manitoba and a vision of Manitoba society that minimized the potential impacts of the Hydro project, largely disregarding the socio-environmental values of Southern Indian Lake and circumscribed the prosperity and future economic viability of South Indian Lake. Minister Enns' closing speech on Bill 15 solidified the oppositions cause for concern. He showed only that the government's priority was to produce the cheapest power. In this accounting, producing the lowest possible cost meant neglecting the environmental, social, and cultural costs of the Hydro project. For the government, the high-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake was the only rationale choice. That it was located on land that was occupied by Indigenous peoples was not an obstacle.

The majority government entrenched settler colonial ideologies in the materialization of hydropower development at Southern Indian Lake. Indigenous communities were "victims of deceit, deception and manifold breaches of faith," according to Buchwald (Hansard, 1969r, p. 2305). South Indian Lake was victimized government agents asserting their powers, formed by

colonial processes and directed by colonial ideologies. But let us not forget that South Indian Lake's resistance did reverberate on the parliamentary floor through members of the opposition.

Conclusion - “Come to the Table”

What is today referred to as the Churchill River Diversion was, in the 1960's, termed the low-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake. The low-level diversion was one of the alternatives presented by Hydro engineers to complete a diversion of the Churchill River into the Nelson River. However, contrary to what was ultimately constructed, the alternative that was most prominently considered was the high-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake. This alternative was championed by the Progressive Conservative majority government as being in the best interest of Manitobans, in large measure because of the deeply embedded technocratic and colonial ideologies that have been detailed in this thesis. While the high-level diversion did not become a reality, the discourses that sustained the arguments for its construction are embedded in the hydrostructures of the Churchill River Diversion; the colonial narrative of settler superiority and technocratic development produced by Manitoba Hydro agents and PC officials is a part of the Churchill River Diversion's past and present, a marker of meaning that has made Hydro installations appear inevitable and correct in northern Manitoba. To put this bluntly, settler colonial ideological frameworks and technocratic developmental ideals have produced both modern Manitoba and the conditions that undermine the social, economic, and ecological lives of northern Indigenous peoples.

Chapter One places in sharp relief the arguments posited by the high-level scheme proponents. South Indian Lake was a robust self-sustaining, semi-nomadic Cree community where traditional ways of life mixed with contemporary resource pursuits; a prosperous commercial fishery sustained economic and social networks within the community. This community thrived on the shores of Southern Indian Lake, a lush and biodiverse lacustrine habitat with rich riparian ecosystems. This changed when Manitoba's political and economic establishment – representing a complex assemblage of business interests, modernist technocrats, and government rank-and-file – began to envision a different, hydrostructure-based, future for the province. Ignoring or misrepresenting the lifeways of people in the provincial north, this assemblage decided that northern hydropower development had to be pursued. The Churchill River Diversion impounded Southern Indian Lake without meaningful consultation with SIL and created profound environmental, economic and social impacts. The impoundment's infrastructures fragmented South Indian Lake's wellbeing and sovereign economies, disrupted livelihoods and lifeways, subverted the integrity of fragile ecosystems, and confounded non-human natures in multiple

ways. Southern Indian Lake became a silt filled reservoir unable to support healthy and abundant aquatic populations.

Chapter Two investigates the network of ideologies and agents involved in the northward expansion of hydropower development as it relates to South Indian Lake. I argue that Manitoba Hydro ‘missapplied’ power; Hydro agents produced a narrative which championed the urgent pursuance of the high-level diversion and sidelined social and environmental accountability. South Indian Lake was either not adequately informed or was frequently misinformed on the high-level diversion project; community members felt like they were holding meetings with Manitoba Hydro and the province blind-folded. The community maintained that the government of Manitoba had to prove, beyond reasonable doubt, that the project was economically sensible, that it accounted for social consequences, and that it was the better than the alternatives. Public hearings were held to, presumably, obtain the views and considerations of the public on the high-level diversion license application. Manitoba Hydro agents offered no relevant insight into the project’s merits, but after interrogations from South Indian Lake’s legal counsel, they did reveal that no social and environmental studies or cost-comparative studies had been undertaken. Though Manitoba Hydro agents were not certain who was responsible to account for human and environmental impacts, they were explicit in stating the duty did not fall on Hydro; the latter’s duties were confined to matters of power production and supply. The sacrifice of South Indian Lake was seen as an inevitable by-product of a development that had to be pursued for the benefit of the province. However, as the project challengers made clear, the project’s benefits could only be qualified under the technocratic parameters of limited engineering.

Chapter Three investigates the network of ideologies and people involved in the early history of the Churchill River Diversion on the parliamentary platform. I argue that the Progressive Conservatives of the majority government espoused and reproduced technocratic and colonial ideologies in their support of the high-level alternative. The chapter demonstrates the government’s wilful neglect of South Indian Lake and their condemnation of Indigenous livelihoods. The majority government applied force to proceed with the high-level diversion of the Churchill River at Southern Indian Lake through the introduction of Bill 15 in the legislative assembly – the legislation would grant a license to Manitoba Hydro for the project. The debate of Bill 15 consisted of PC legislative assembly members evading accountability, minimizing the potential social and environmental impacts of the Hydro project, and paternalizing and

disregarding Indigenous peoples and livelihoods. Members of the opposition – Liberals, New Democrats, and a lone Social Creditor – consistently challenged the majority government’s anti-democratic and authoritarian governance and the project’s purported fiscal and social merits. The members of the opposition problematized the majority government’s lack of transparency, lack of studies, and lack of concern for Indigenous peoples. Bill 15 passed because of the government’s majority, but as it entered the Public Utilities Committee, the Weir PC government announced their dissolution and Bill 15 dissolved with it.

What history does Manitoba’s Churchill River Diversion (re)produce? Through the high-level diversion discourse, it (re)produces a social policy which creates Indigenous peoples as an Other and asserts dominance and superiority to settlers and their agendas (developmental, industrial, managerial, etc.). It reproduces a technocratic and modernist discourse which values economic development over ethical and legal obligations. And it reproduces hydropower as a nexus for colonial practices and ideologies – a nature-society hybrid that, as I emphasized at the outset of this thesis, “reside[s] at the intersection of complex networks of altered hydrologies, technical expertise, financial circuits, political desires, displaced communities, and hegemonic ideologies” (Sneddon, 2015, p. 5). The Churchill River Diversion entraps a complex of colonial ideologies, government agents, engineers, and resisting Indigenous communities into a cemented structure which continues to alter hydrologies and humanities.

Research Limitations and Recommendations

My research focuses on South Indian Lake and the events which instigated the Churchill River Diversion. This focus provides the necessary details to analyze the historical narratives in question, but what is South Indian Lake’s experience, in and out of parliament, with the Churchill River Diversion? What is the context for South Indian Lake’s experience in juxtaposition with other hydro-impacted communities during that time? Did national politics produce an imperative to champion the high-level diversion? My research frames the intensely local experience of water politics and hydroelectric diversion alongside a regional politics of development and political machinations, but in doing so, it also leaves these questions and many others unanswered.

A clear limitation of my research is that my foregrounding of archival records. While archival records can serve as salient primary sources, archive deposits are inherently selective, they hold records selected by those that produced them (Stoler, 2002). For the Manitoba Hydro

archival records stored at the Manitoba Archives, what documents, if any, have been omitted, stricken from the record? Using only the community voices and experiences denoted in archival records prohibits a thorough representation and understanding of their experience. Though I attempted to address this imbalance the use of transcript-based records which provide a detailed verbatim record, they are of a time-limited event often with barriers to attendance, like meetings regarding northern development being held in the south, late notices for the meetings, and the inability to take time off work or family care. Transcripts can be salient, they record voices and offer relevant insight and primary source material, but they do not account for the whole picture. This picture could have been supplemented by other methods of research, such as community-based engagements, oral histories, newspaper databases, or the exploration of other modes of understanding complex and overlapping pasts.

The Churchill River Diversion impacted multiple northern Indigenous communities; thus, my investigation of South Indian Lake cannot fully elaborate upon profound social, environmental, and cultural impacts hydropower developments endured by northern Indigenous peoples at large. There is a great deal of work to be done to fill in this history and I look forward with enthusiasm to the work that is to come. Due to the scope of my research questions, time investment of archival research in general, and the need to pare down a perhaps too ambitious original research plan, I did not use many of the archival records I retrieved and studied. The records that Manitoba Hydro deposited at the Manitoba Archives span a wide array of planned and proposed projects. What other hydro-histories are hidden within thousands of pages of archival material? What other hydrostructures and networks of ideologies and peoples can be made visible? What other community stories can be highlighted?

My research, especially the third chapter, borders a partisan analysis of a political intrigue. The Progressive Conservative majority government is examined as the main agent that advanced colonial and technocratic agendas, but does this hold true over time? Certainly, New Democrats advanced these same ideals with the Churchill River Diver and Lake Winnipeg Regulation. If not partisan agendas, what is the common thread in the pursuit of northern hydropower in Manitoba? What produces the persistent imperative to develop power? The broader historiography of Manitoba's hydropower regime (see Martin & Hoffman, 2008; Neckoway, 2018; Waldram, 1988) has set the foundations of the story, but the full reckoning of the social, economic, and ecological effects of hydro in the province has yet to come.

Considerations for the Future

My research tested a basic question shrouded in technocratic hydropower politics – who is responsible for hydropower development and its myriad consequences? Manitoba Hydro has borne the brunt of blame and criticisms in the public realm, but I suggest that the provincial government is equally responsible because it has always directed and overseen the Crown corporation. It is time the government be held accountable, and accept accountability, for the historical damage hydropower developments have caused in northern Manitoba because the Northern Flood Agreement and its individual implementation agreements have proven to be inadequate as demonstrated by the ongoing hydropower legacies in northern communities.

In 1977 the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) was signed between the government of Canada, the government of Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro, and five Cree nations – Split Lake (Tataskweyak), York Factory (Kiche Waskihekan), Nelson House (Nisichawayasihk), Cross Lake (Pimicikamak), Norway House (Kinosao sipi), and Fox Lake. The NFA did not recognize inherent Indigenous rights and, in the words of one commentator, “deepened rather than alleviated frustrations felt by the affected communities” (Dobrovolny, 2008, p. 117). The NFA shielded signatories from legal and financial claims by making vaguely-worded promises of restitution and responsibility, built around the suggested potential for things such as land exchanges, potable water, and remedial and capacity building measures (“Northern Flood Agreement,” 1977).

In their work to assess the challenges affecting the relationship between Indigenous peoples, the Canadian government, and Canadian society, the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996a) investigated the impacts of lost lands and resources on Indigenous livelihoods and sovereignty. As part of this investigation, RCAP commissioned a report into the Northern Flood Agreement to demonstrate the creation of barriers for Indigenous peoples to create self-sufficient economies because of losses of land and resources. According to RCAP

“the [Northern Flood] Agreement as drafted, was vague enough and imprecise enough, to permit grudging approval by Canada, Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro, none of whom had reconciled themselves to acceptance of responsibility for the impact of the Project. The three parties did not intend, and have never intended, to co-operate energetically in measures designed and determined to be effective in confronting the adverse impacts of the project. They have instead used every legal device to limit their individual liabilities under the Agreement” (Larcombe, 1993, pp. 123-124).

Indeed, Canada, Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro did not act on the promises held in the NFA until 1992, when they started to negotiate individual settlement agreements with each of the signatory communities. These individual settlements were designed both to abstract the contents and to implement the vaguely worded proscriptions of the NFA. These Master Implementation Agreements (MIAs) “induc[ed] the Cree communities to accept a one-time cash buy-out in exchange for full and final extinguishment of their Treaty rights” (Grand Council of Crees, 1998 in Hoffman, 2008, p. 119). The MIAs narrowly implemented NFA.

South Indian Lake was excluded from the NFA because it was not recognized as Treaty community, but “after years of debate and legal manoeuvring” the 1992 Community Association of South Indian Lake (CASIL) Agreement made them a lawful claimant of the NFA (Hoffman, 2008, p. 120). But akin to the MIAs, the CASIL Agreement did not “imply any admission of guilt,” provided a one-time cash buy-out, included a contentious claims procedure, and resulted in divisive frustrations (Hoffman, 2008, p. 121). The agreement was a once-and-for-all resolution whose legal negotiations were impeded by “poor advice, funding restrictions, legal stalling tactics and the refusal on the part of the Government to disclose necessary information” for South Indian Lake to determine its legal position (Waldram, 1984, p. 233).

While Manitoba Hydro has developed partnerships with northern Indigenous communities to construct the newest Wuskwatim and Keeyask generating stations, many contend they are laden with issues that undermine the signatory Indigenous communities (Craft & Blakley, 2022; Graham, 2022; Kulchyski, 2004). For example, most recently, York Factory First Nation (YFFN) called for the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement be reopened and updated to renew the letter, spirit, and intent of the Agreement (York Factory First Nation, 2022). The Agreement was signed in 2009 between Manitoba Hydro and four partner nations – YFFN, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation and War Lake First Nation – and “after 13 years...the First Nations are now facing a future of negligible financial returns and the potential of significant financial losses from the Agreement that was meant to offer...an equitable future” (York Factory First Nation, 2022, p. 1). YFFN Chief Leroy Constant states that

“despite the promise of Keeyask, the reality has been very different... Relationships in the Keeyask Board have been strained: we have been outvoted; Manitoba Hydro representatives have walked out of our Partnership meetings; and we have been treated with closed and muted zoom screens during meetings of the Partnership. With Manitoba Hydro as Project Manager and majority decision-maker, our actual

‘say’ and promised ability to direct the Project has been virtually non-existent” (York Factory First Nation, 2022, p. 2).

According to YFFN, in addition to the unrealized equity and economic benefits, the project site has been fraught with gender and racial discrimination which Manitoba Hydro brushes off (York Factory First Nation, 2022). YFFN is calling Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to “come to the table” with the partner nations (York Factory First Nation, 2022). Why is history repeating itself?

Manitoba Hydro works for Manitoba and it should work for the people. It is a Crown corporation accountable to the province of Manitoba, it managed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and the Board is accountable to the Minister responsible for the administration of the Manitoba Hydro Act who is also appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (Manitoba Government, 2023; Manitoba Hydro, 2022). Historically, the Minister of Finance in the cabinet, which approves Hydro’s borrowing schedules, has been responsible for Manitoba Hydro. The Minister of Finance is a member of the legislative assembly who, as part of legislative duties, interacts with the rest of the legislative assembly when legislative sessions are open, which constitutes the majority of the year (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2023a, 2023b). Members of the legislative assembly need to be petitioned, especially so by settlers benefitting from hydropower developments, to place Indigenous voices at the forefront, to hear and address the concerns and damages brought forth by past and current hydropower developments in the north. Social negligence and discriminatory practices should not be characteristic of developments that directly impact Indigenous peoples, including hydropower.

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Appendix 1

Eroding island and shorelines at Southern Indian Lake (Djordjevic, 2019).



Appendix 2

Change in annual water levels at Southern Indian Lake (adapted from Environment and Climate Change Canada [ECCC], 2020).

