



York Factory First Nation

YORK LANDING, MANITOBA R0B 2B0

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June 13, 2012

Tansi!

As Chief and Council of York Factory First Nation, we would like to introduce Kipekiskwaywinan (Our Voices), our volume in the Keeyask Generation Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In Kipekiskwaywinan, we explain how our people were relocated in 1957 from our traditional territory on the Hudson Bay coast to the southeast corner of Split Lake, which has become our current home and community of York Landing (Kawechiwasik). Our history, culture, and relationship to the land both at the coast, and where our community is now located on Split Lake, are essential in understanding who we are as Cree people.

Since the late 1950's, our members have been observing, experiencing, and discussing the effects of hydro-electric development. With the Keeyask Project, however, we have become a co-proponent of a hydro-electric project for the first time – and, for the first time, have the responsibility of explaining our perspectives on this development in an environmental impact statement. We have taken this responsibility very seriously, and have written Kipekiskwaywinan as an honest account of our understanding and feelings about the Keeyask Project, our decision to become a partner in Keeyask, and our hopes, fears, and expectations for the future of the Partnership.

In preparing Kipekiskwaywinan, it has been important to us that the voices of our members come through – as honest, varied and conflicting as they are. Many voices express anger, hurt, sadness, uncertainty, and distrust with Manitoba Hydro and hydro-electric development, and demonstrate the difficulties we faced in deciding to become a partner in the Keeyask Project. The introductory chapter attempts to represent the full range of opinions and feelings of our members. The reader must understand that Kipekiskwaywinan has been the first time our members have been able to acknowledge our thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of hydro-electric development in writing. This has been an important process of healing and reconciliation for our members that we call minowechitahewaywin. For this reason, it is imperative to read our entire document to understand our history and experiences that led us to support and become a partner in the Keeyask Project.

In March 2009, our members voted in support of the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA) and Adverse Effects Agreement (AEA). As a result, our Chief and Council signed the JKDA and AEA demonstrating YFFN's support for the Keeyask Project and becoming a co-proponent. While we support the Project, it is important to acknowledge we are impacted by this project in profound ways that concern our worldview, our culture, and our deep relationships with Askiy, which is our Cree word for the whole of the land,

water, plants, people, animals, and all the creatures. While there are YFFN members who believe becoming a partner in the Keeyask Project means we have become active participants in the inevitable damage to Askiy, we feel that it is very important that our First Nation has influence in the Keeyask Project and for our future generations to benefit from the training, employment, and revenues generated from the Keeyask Project.

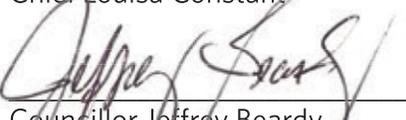
Over the past 10 years we have participated throughout the Keeyask Environmental Impact Assessment, including planning, research, working groups, negotiations, and reviewing the Keeyask EIS. The opportunity to participate in the Environmental Impact Assessment was one of the reasons behind our decision to become a partner in the Keeyask Project. We are also grateful to have the opportunity to write Kipekiskwaywinan and include it in the Keeyask EIS. Manitoba Hydro's present actions are promising, showing positive signs of efforts made by a company that, until recently, failed to even consult our membership.

As we look to the future, we want to work with our partners for the entire life of the Keeyask Project to sustain and achieve respect for our Cree culture and self-determination, produce sustainable, tangible benefits for our First Nation, and continue to build trust and a meaningful partnership with Manitoba Hydro and the other Keeyask Cree Nations. If we can achieve these objectives, then the Keeyask Project and Partnership will make a significant contribution to fulfilling our hopes and expectations for our current and future generations.

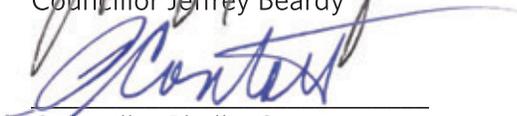
Ekosi!



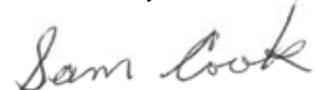
Chief Louisa Constant



Councillor Jeffrey Beardy



Councillor Phyllis Contois



Councillor Sam Cook



Councillor Gordon Wastesicoot

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Ininimowin is the Cree term we use to refer to the Cree language. There are a variety of ways and traditions to write out *Ininimowin*. While some individuals use the standard roman orthography system, others use the syllabics system. Throughout Northern Manitoba, many other individuals phonetically spell out the Cree language based on personalized styles. The Cree terms used in this report have been written based on the personalized styles of our community translators along with Cree syllabics.



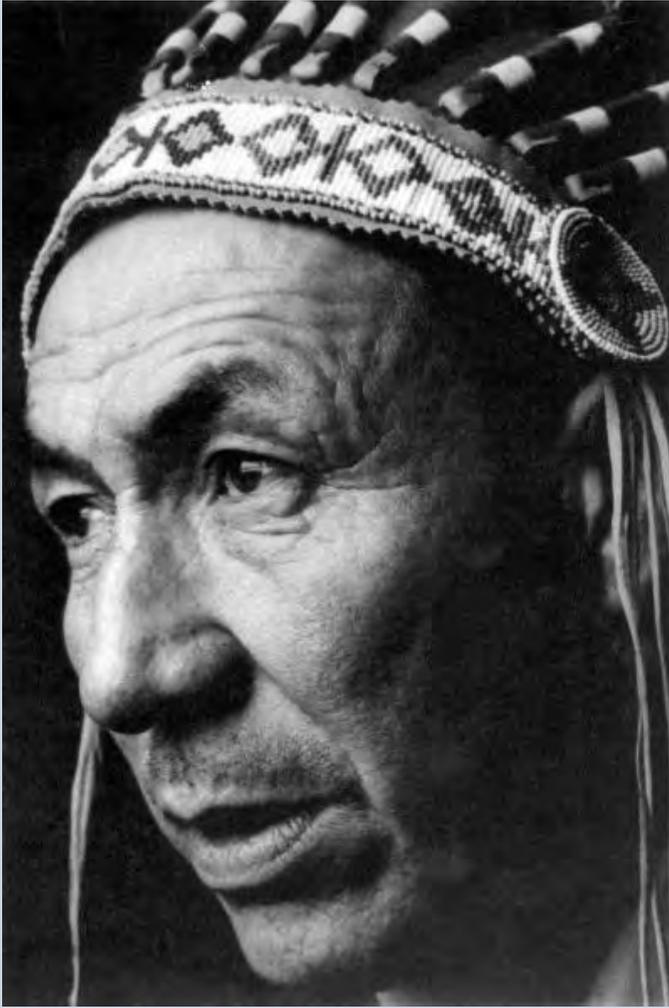
Clockwise from left: Elizabeth Ouskan (Nee Anderson), Mary Spence (Nee Thomas), Maryann McPherson (Nee Gray), Alice Ouskan (Nee Wastesicoot), Eliza Spence (Nee McPherson), Simeon Spence, Dinah Dick (Nee Ouskan) and Flora Beardy (Nee Spence).



York Factory Cree would freight goods from York Factory to Upper Fort Garry.



Amaziah Neepin, Sarah Beardy, Dorothy Redhead and Ruthia Beardy.



Fred Beardy



George Beardy



Rachel and Roderick Ouskan



From left to right: Moses Neepin, Sam Saunders, George Spence, Alex Chapman and Harold (Kayo) Bignell



Albert Beardy and Reggie Ponask



Mike Beardy and John George Spence



Joseph Saunders



Dorothy Redhead, Johnson Saunders, Eric Saunders, Johnny Saunders and Ken Saunders (back row)
Freddy Friesen (front row).



Jemima Spence and Mary Ann Saunders



Clarence Wastesicoot (Bluecoat)



From left: Maryann McPherson, James McPherson and Family



Marie Beardy (Cook), Marion Beardy and Thompson Beardy



David Massan



Obediah and Sarah Wastesicoot



Isaiah Saunders and Amos Beardy



Raymond Beardy



Jessie Massan, Elizabeth Ouskan and Salome Beardy with Gertie Beardy (front). Four Generations.

A Note on Sources:

The photographs that appear in this report have been provided by various sources.

The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society provided photos taken by Rev. Faries (Faries Photo Collection) at York Factory. Library and Archives Canada also provided many of the historic York Factory photos. We are enormously grateful to Mr. Bert Brown for sharing copies of the many photos he took while living in York Factory from 1952 - 1957. Thank you to Helen Friesen who agreed to share copies of several photos taken in York Factory in the 1950s by her late-husband Dave Friesen. Thank you to Helen Pope who also agreed to share copies of several photos she took while living in York Factory in the 1950s. Various community members provided numerous photos of the people of York Factory First Nation and places around York Landing (Kawechiwasiq) and York Factory.

Text in some sections of "Our History and Values" is based on a community history developed by Virginia Petch of Northern Lights Heritage Services (Pre-Contact and Colonization; Colonization; Homeguard Cree, Coasters and Inlanders; Traditional Uses and Activities; and Places of Use and Occupancy in the York Factory Area).

The section, The Manitoba Trapline System, is informed by R.G. Carmichael's 1973 unpublished report "Innovation and Enterprise: A History of Fur Conservation in Northern Manitoba, 1935-1948."

The discussion of Treaty 5 draws from the website:
<http://www.canadahistory.com/sections/documents/Native/docs-treatyfive.htm>



Nanaskomowina

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people shared their voices and contributed to the development of this environmental impact statement. We owe great thanks to all who helped to bring YFFN voices to the Keeyask EIS:

-  To Members of the Kipekiskwaywinan Steering Group, and others who provided a vision for this document, coordinated sharing sessions and workshops, and offered thoughtful feedback on successive drafts of the document. Members included: Wayne Redhead, Flora Beardy, Eric Saunders, Obediah Wastesicoot, Ted Bland, Roy Redhead, Martina Saunders, Evelyn Beardy, Jimmy A. Beardy, Tamara Beardy, Georgina Redhead, Edwin Beardy, Donald Saunders, Amelia Saunders, Nellie Redhead, Joseph Sinclair, Marie Ryle-Beardy and Isaac Beardy;
-  To all of the YFFN members who shared their words with us, and agreed to be quoted in this report;
-  To 28 youth, who shared their vision, comments and drawings about York Landing (Kawechiwasi) & the Keeyask Project;
-  To others who helped in preparing translations, sharing photos and reviewing the quotes that appear in these pages: Bert Brown, Johnson Saunders, Donna Saunders, Darcy Saunders, Marie Cook, Johnny Saunders, Lisa Ryle, Daryl Beardy, Georgina Redhead, Dorothy Redhead, Arthur Beardy and Darcy Wastesicoot;
-  To all of the Chiefs, Councillors and Elders who have led our people in responding to the cultural, personal and political challenges brought by hydro-electric development in our lands.

Ekosi!



This report is presented

IN MEMORY OF SAMUEL GEORGE SAUNDERS

February 26, 1950 - December 28, 2008



Sam was born in York Factory on February 26th, 1950, to Joseph and Amelia Saunders. He was the youngest of eight children. He spent his first seven years with his parents and grandparents before attending school in Dauphin, Manitoba. He attended the Dauphin Collegiate Technical Institute from Grades 1 to 12. Sam was an athlete at heart, with his passions being hockey and long distance running. Sam was a family man, he cared dearly for his children: Craig, Ryan, Dustin, Georgina, Samantha, and Shauna. Sam loved his community so much that he and his partner Madeline relocated their family to York Landing (Kawechiwasiq). There he was able to contribute to the community at different levels throughout the years. Sam was Chief of York Factory, he played a fundamental role in the creation of York Landing Minor Hockey, the establishment of the local School Committee, and the Recreation Committee. He was the Northern Flood Agreement Implementation Officer for York Factory First Nation, and served for nine years as the Financial Officer on the Board of Directors of North Central Development. Sam was one of many negotiators for York Factory First Nation over the years and was involved in many other community projects. Sam was a very humble man and will be dearly missed.

To his community he would have said:

"Thank you. It was an honour to have worked for my people."

IN MEMORY OF DONALD RICHARD SAUNDERS

February 10, 1948 - December 24, 2010



Donald was born in Pennycutaway River near York Factory on February 10th, 1948. His parents were Isaiah and Mary Saunders. Donald was the oldest of twelve children. He went to residential school in Dauphin at a young age and continued his education at the University of Manitoba as a certified counselor after completing his grade twelve.

Donald had his first job as a Band Manager in the late 1970's. He worked as a Key Communicator with the Northern Flood Committee, Home School Coordinator, Store Manager, and Truck Driver. He also completed his training as a Treaty Land Entitlement facilitator. Donald was a very spiritual person and he strongly believed in the importance of his language and culture. He loved to sing and played many musical instruments. He also loved being on the land, fishing, and respecting Askiy.

He missed his homeland of York Factory so much that he decided to assist Helen Fast with a land use study of York Factory, which led to the publication of *From Kihciwaskahikanihk to York Landing: A Land Use History of York Factory First Nation* (1996).

He was also a Board Member of Seepastik Development Corporation, Wapusk National Park, and Housing Committee member for several years. He was a role model for his daughters and grandchildren. Even though he struggled with his illness in the early 1990's, he remained active and dedicated to his community and family.

He had a dream, a vision that our document Kipekiskwaywinan (Our Voices) would be completed and placed in libraries and archives.

To his community he would have said:

"Thank you for putting my comments in our special document, and thank you to my wife Amelia for her support."



Elders meeting in York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) (clockwise from bottom left): Marion Beardy, Thompson Beardy, Ken Saunders, Isaac Beardy, Flora Beardy, Modena Beardy, Stella Chapman, Ida Chapman, Douglas Chapman, Jimmy A. Beardy, Eric Saunders, Obediah Wastesicoot and Joan Saunders



Johnny Saunders, (above). Eric Saunders

KIPEKISKWAYWINAN TELLS OUR STORY IN AN HONEST WAY

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

“Kipekiskwaywinan tells our story in an honest way. It is very emotional because we listen to all the pain the people carry with them because of the relocation from York Factory, the promises that were made, the residential school experiences, and our experience with Manitoba Hydro. I have never experienced anything like this before we began working on Kipekiskwaywinan and recording these stories.”

 DONNA SAUNDERS

“Kipekiskwaywinan is our healing because our people have spoken truthfully. This has been very important for all of us.”

 WAYNE REDHEAD

“Kipekiskwaywinan is part of a healing and reconciliation process. It’s like crying; it’s part of healing (it’s good to cry). This is a good thing for our people. Sure, it says a lot that is negative. It’s part of healing and reconciling. Other pieces of our healing and reconciliation process still need to be pinpointed.”

 ANNETTE ELLS

“I don’t know whether or not our voices are going to be heard. I just hope Hydro respects our voices about the impact of the dams.”

AMELIA SAUNDERS

“This document is very sacred to me. It was really good to see the words of those who have passed and to see their perspective of the future. It is important not to forget these teachings that our people have provided. We need to tell our children about this work. I tell my grandson and he may not understand today, but some day he will. We need to keep moving forward and do the best for our people and the community.”



OUR TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE HAS BEEN ALTERED BY PAST HYDRO DEVELOPMENT

ERIC SAUNDERS

“Our traditional way of life has been altered by past hydro power developments. Our relationship with the land, water, and wildlife has been drastically eroded by these hydro power developments. The proposed development of Keeyask and Conawapa, and any other future developments will continue to erode our traditional way of life into the future. Our ancestors have always been conservationists and keepers of the land. Destruction of land and its resources is not a part of our tradition and this is what concerns me the most. We have to respect and uphold what our Elders taught us in terms of how we use the land and how to take care of it. It is important for our younger generations to be taught and learn the traditional ways of life, so that these teachings can be passed on to future generations.”



Douglas Chapman, (above). Edwin Beardy



Eric Saunders

WAYNE REDHEAD

“Hydro development has had an adverse effect on the fish and the animals, and it’s not just confined to certain regions, it’s far reaching. A lot of times we hear Manitoba Hydro [representatives] say that it’s isolated – I don’t believe that. It’s far reaching.”

TED BLAND

“Now we have to go further away [to fish], and the fishing isn’t as good.”

EVELYN BEARDY

“The environment is already in rough shape, with two more projects coming, what will be there after?”





Fred and Sarah Beardy

☞ YFFN YOUTH

"I feel that it is not fair for me and the people in my area to build a new dam because it's [going to] affect the fish around my town and that is not fair."

☞ DOREEN SAUNDERS

"It's like fooling around with nature."

☞ MARTINA SAUNDERS

"It scares me. We're not supposed to do things like that."

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

"Waters are our Brothers. We don't have the right to contaminate them or destroy them."

☞ YFFN YOUTH

"I just don't want that to happen because they're affecting our water and the animals."

☞ STELLA CHAPMAN

"I first moved to this community in 1968. There were a lot of Elders living then, today there is not that many. I think that the change in the lifestyle of the people is that they don't live on the land like they did when they were living in York Factory. The water quality has changed, loss of beaches – people have to go far to hunt for food. The fish don't taste as good as they did before the flooding."

WE HAVE TO DO CEREMONIES TO GIVE THANKS AND ASK FORGIVENESS

☞ WAYNE REDHEAD

"We have to do ceremonies to give thanks and ask forgiveness for our sins, and our sins are having these effects on the land."

☞ ROY REDHEAD

"Hydro is destroying the whole river system and we're becoming partners of that. I've struggled so hard on a personal level with trying to reconcile the destruction of the environment and our participation in destruction





Reeva Dantouze

of the environment as a partner. At many times I've wanted to walk away from the process. But we have to stay and get ready for the future."

FLORA BEARDY

"The laws of Munito need to be followed. If you cut down a tree, you need to make peace with Askiy."

TED BLAND

"We have this term called ohcinewin. If you do something to harm an animal, anything, anybody, it's going to come back to you. So, our Elders and our people were asking, 'what are we going to do? We're going to be harming the environment. How do we make peace, not only with ourselves but with the environment and the Creator? How do we balance that out?' Having ceremonies, having feasts, and giving thanks. The church plays a big role in that process too. It's not only a traditional way—it comes in different ways so people can feel their peace with what's happening."

FRANK WASTESICOOT

"In the past Manitoba Hydro hasn't been concerned with Aboriginal participation. As a partner we need to continue to make efforts. We will be living with the environmental and socio-economic impacts. The [York



Donald and Amelia Saunders





Viola Wastesicoot



Obediah Wastesicoot and Eric Saunders, (above).
Edwin and Flora Beardy

Factory] Future Development staff had to develop an approach so that our voices were heard. These gatherings and meetings we've had within our community with our Elders and younger members have been very important. I think this is going to be a historic document."

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

"That's another reason why we wanted to be a part of this. It would help with our reconciliation with the adverse effects of the hydro development. We want to be able to be a part of restoring that relationship with Manitoba Hydro. We want to see that relationship grow, especially for the young people who are going to inherit this project and we're setting out the path for them. That's why it's really important for us to be a part of this because we want Hydro to know who we are as York Factory First Nation. We want them to know where we came from and where we're going. I hope that we're going to continue to move forward together and when it's time for the young people to work with Manitoba Hydro they know where they stand with this project and as York Factory First Nation.

I WANT FUTURE GENERATIONS TO KNOW HOW THIS DECISION WAS MADE

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

"I want future generations to know how this decision was made. We decided to be in this partnership so we could have a say in what goes on in



some of the negotiations rather than not be a part of it at all. What I want most is something for the future. If there was nothing for the future, I couldn't live with myself today."

☞ NELLIE REDHEAD

"When I think about it, to me Keeyask is just one more thing that's forced on our people like everything else that has been forced on us – either way the dams will go up. But also, I try to see the pros and cons, like there is going to be some jobs and money for some, but not for everybody. But there's also the cons, like what's going to happen to our land, trees, medicinal plants, animals. We can hope for the best."

☞ FLORA BEARDY

"I had really mixed feelings about the agreement – voting yes or no. Listening to the Elders and hearing what they were saying about the destruction that will happen, and did they want to be part of it. They have experienced this in the past, so they know what will happen. But I hear of jobs happening for the people so there are some good points."

☞ AMELIA SAUNDERS

"I was involved in the JKDA [Joint Keeyask Development Agreement] voting process. We informed our people and they had several months to decide. I don't think we were forced. A majority of people voted in favour of the JKDA and AEA [Adverse Effects Agreement]."

☞ DONNA SAUNDERS

"We are the future of the community. The negotiations are new to us and we're learning how Manitoba Hydro does business. We're learning how to stand up for ourselves and have a voice. We're not going to sit back and let the dam be built without us. We decided to become a partner to make sure we have a voice in Keeyask. And we will continue to educate our people and give them opportunities in business development. This is a new way like self-government. We're working towards that and it's still new to us. We will never lose our culture. It's still in us and it will always be in us, passed down from generation to generation."

☞ RODDY OUSKAN

"When I read our document [Kipekiskwaywinan] I see a lot of distrust and apprehension in our members' voices. I have my own distrust with those we have partnered with. I didn't vote for the partnership and I think I was right. But I don't think that should stop our community from moving forward."



French Creek





York Factory children

 TED BLAND

"They're [Manitoba Hydro] making more of an effort to have a relationship. They understand that in order for us to be partners we need to improve our relationship. So they are making a bigger effort to come into the community and contribute in different ways."

I'D LIKE TO SEE A BETTER FUTURE

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"I'd like to see a better future. I'd like to see more benefits for our people. We need more opportunities for the future of our people, for our youth. I'd like to see them have jobs. I'd like to see more business development. We have very little in York Landing. We don't even have a restaurant. Sometimes I'd like to go and sit around in a restaurant and have somebody cook for me or have a cup of coffee, that kind of stuff. I'd like to see more health and wellness programs, because our community has really gone downhill. We need to start developing programs to heal our people. Training people to handle social programs. With Keeyask I hope that there is more training and more work for our people."

 TED BLAND

"It was hard negotiating this deal with Manitoba Hydro. We felt that we had a limited voice. When dealing with Manitoba Hydro we felt we had to take what was offered or leave it. Now we have this agreement [JKDA] and have to do something with it - no I don't want a bleak future. I believe there can be change if we really want it."

 FLORA BEARDY

"When we talk about our traditional values, our culture, it's so important to have our voices be heard. We need to train our people - they need to learn our ways. You have to start with our people. They [Hydro] need to know how our traditional values work, and what our culture is all about. So many of our people don't know where they come from, they don't know where they belong, they don't know their history and their language. We have to train and educate them, then we have to go to the regulators and we have to make them listen to us - explain how important Askiy is for us. We need this knowledge in the [Environmental Impact Statement] document, and we need to make our partners understand."





Sunset

☞ EVELYN BEARDY

"But when we stop and think for the future generations, they need all that – they need to be able to be supplied with good jobs for their family, so I guess that is one good thing. But like someone said here, I don't trust Hydro."

☞ ROY REDHEAD

"It's a hurtful experience because we're part of the [Keeyask] partnership. We have to find courage – the strength to move forward. I think we're up to that."

☞ DONNA SAUNDERS

"These changes are coming and hopefully the positives will be there in the end for our future."

☞ ANNETTE ELLS

"It is for the future of my children and grandchildren and for the jobs that will be available that I voted "Yes". This is my own opinion: I don't want my grandchildren to say "Grandma voted 'no' for our future." Even though we are small, we still want to be heard and respected."

☞ RODDY OUSKAN

"I am really concerned for our future generations. Yes, there is promise of jobs with Keeyask, but I am skeptical of these job opportunities for our



youth and future generations. I have seen how difficult it has been for our members with Kelsey, Limestone, and Wuskwatim.”

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

“I’m hoping for our children and even the teenagers to grab onto training opportunities. There was a golden opportunity to take advantage of training leading up to the construction of Keeyask. They could sharpen their skills and use the tools you were taught with Keeyask. That’s one thing I really like and thought would be really good for our people: the education, the training, the programs. Like what we got out of it with the cross-cultural training and retention and catering [Direct Negotiated Contracts].”

☞ VINCENT OUSKAN

“The reason why I voted “yes” was for the jobs, for the community, the younger people coming up. There’s not very many jobs around here. It’s good to go out of town and work. I just got back from work myself. I was working out of Gillam [with the] environmental studies. I’ve been doing that for the past 7 years now.”

☞ EMILY KEMATCH

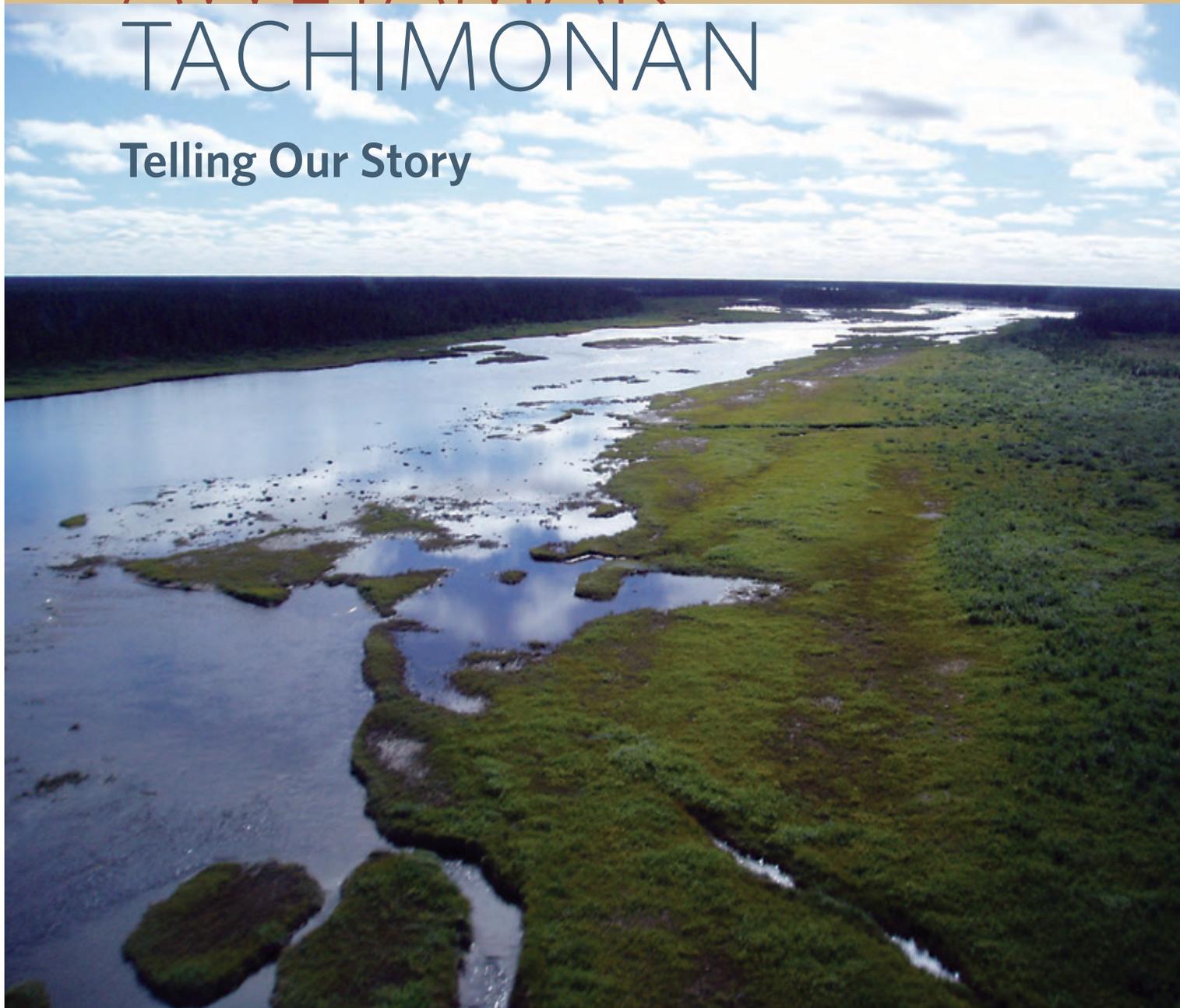
“It is time. It’s time to move forward. We’ve been stuck too long.”



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AWETAMAK TACHIMONAN

Telling Our Story



Kaskattama River.



From left to right: Reggie Ponask, Edith Saunders, Taleah Saunders and Franklin Ponask

TELLING OUR STORY

We are a people with an oral tradition. We did not traditionally write about how we live; how we learn, share knowledge, experience our culture, take decisions and act out our lives. Rather, we have learned from our parents and our community Elders. They have taught us about the land and waters: how to live with and survive on the animals and plants of the land and travel safely through the forests, muskegs, waters, ice and snow; how to respect the land for giving us everything we needed to live and raise our families; how to live respectfully and share with one another, living difficult but good, meaningful lives in our families and communities, celebrating our Cree culture and who we are as a people. We were told about these things, shown these things, listened, learned and did these things.

Our purpose here is to tell our story, of how we have come to this crossroads in our history. In the rest of the Keeyask Environmental Impact Statement we see a great deal of technical information and description by professional, technical, western-trained biologists, social scientists, Manitoba Hydro officials, lawyers and consultants. Our aim here is to return to our oral tradition and give voice to how we feel about Keeyask; what it means to us. By telling our story in Kipekiskwaywinan (Our Voices) we are continuing our oral tradition in a new way.

 FRANK WATESICOOT

“In the past Manitoba Hydro hasn’t been concerned with Aboriginal participation. As a partner we need to continue to make efforts. We will be



Cecilia Keeper (above photo) From left to right: Renee Redhead, Andrea Morin, Isaiah Saunders, Erin Wastesicoot and Travis Morris





Sunset on Split Lake.

living with the environmental and socio-economic impacts. The [York Factory] Future Development staff had to develop an approach so that our voices were heard. These gatherings and meetings we've had within our community with our Elders and younger members have been very important. I think this is going to be a historic document."

Our voices do not make for a tidy, coordinated written account, that tries to make everything sound objective, balanced, certain, predictable and manageable. Rather, they are full of many contradictions, uneven treatment, bias, fear, anger, wariness, resignation, yet hope. We aimed to set down the impact of the Keeyask Project and Partnership on who we are as a community and people. This has not been an easy process, to put down our oral sharing and feelings about the Keeyask Project and Partnership in writing. We have differed with each other in meetings and workshops; some of us have come to tears as we tried to describe the pain of changes to our way of life and the threats to our cultural survival. We are deeply anguished about what our partnership decision means to our sacred, respectful relationships with the land and how we are now party to adding to the damage to the land and water.

We asked our consultants to help us write down our words. But, they too are outsiders and cannot begin to feel what we feel. Yet, we insisted in this report that our voices come through, as varied and conflicted as they truly are. We know that there are responsibilities as a project partner and we conclude this

*Our aim here is to...
give voice to how we
feel about Keeyask*



Councillor Jimmy A. Beardy, Councillor Phyllis Contois, Chief Johnny Saunders, Councillor Jeffrey Beardy and Councillor Gordon Wastesicoot at JKDA signing ceremony.



We conclude this account with our intention to try and make this partnership work

account with our intention to try and make this partnership work for our community and realize the hopes, aspirations and expectations that led our community to sign the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA).

We want to first tell our story of what this has meant to us as a Cree community; what it will continue to mean throughout the long period of partnership that lies ahead. We want the regulatory bodies, the public, and our future generations to understand the deep social and cultural impact of this project and partnership decision upon us. We want this accounted for in the terms and conditions of the environmental license for the Project. We want our partners and ourselves to be held accountable for environmental changes and management; that there must be a continuous, ongoing commitment in this partnership to monitor, learn, adapt, manage and both culturally and spiritually reconcile with the inevitable and unpredictable environmental changes that we will be party to unleashing through this development.

OUR WORLDVIEW AND VALUES

"One of the things really important to me is the Cree worldview... there was a lack of understanding of the Cree worldview, the things we do, and why we do them."

-Eric Saunders

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"One of the things really important to me is the Cree worldview. I think it's important to have it in the Environmental Impact Statement because there was a lot of misunderstanding before we started working with Hydro. There was a lack of understanding of the Cree worldview, the things that we do, and why we do them. They are our beliefs, what we were taught when we were growing up. We learned that from our ancestors, our Elders, our parents. But a lot of times it wasn't done orally. A lot of times you learned by observation and that's how I learn a lot of my stuff, just observing what the Elders do. Or when they take you out, they'll say something that you're not supposed to do. That's the only time they'll tell you and you're supposed to learn from this. But a lot of times that's not really understood, where we come from, and I think it's important to have some definition for words that we use. That's why we want Hydro or "White" society to know and understand the Cree view."





Wayne Redhead, Eric Saunders, Sam Cook and Isaac Beardy Boating up the Aiken River.

ININIWI- KISKÉNIHTAMOWIN (TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE)

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"Traditional knowledge means that which is passed down from generation to generation, but learned when growing up about how to survive and take care of the land. Like when you go camping you can't litter. You respect people and take care of people. It is our forefathers who have taught us, and we have to honour that. Every culture has their traditions and their way of doing things. We aren't the same as the white people, so there are lots of misunderstandings."

 LOUISA CONSTANT

"Traditional knowledge is in our language and our traditions. It's a way of life. It's who we are as Ininiwak, and who we are is built on our identity as Cree people, on our relationship to the land, water, and all of creation. Even with everything that happened to us, like residential school, we still educate our young people that way."

Ininiwi-kiskénihtamowin is absolutely fundamental and central to who we are as a people and culture. Our traditional knowledge is held by our Elders and passes from generation to generation. It is a dynamic, living process that is added to and adapted in the



Freshly picked strawberries

*Ininiwi-
kiskénihtamowin
is absolutely
fundamental and
central to who we
are as a people and
culture.*



lives of successive generations of Cree people. It lives within our way of life and it includes many aspects:

- Traditions
- Cultural identity and activities
- Language
- Stories, teachings and legends
- Humility and listening
- Spirituality
- Respect for Askiy (land, water, people, plants, animals and all things)
- Maintained by older generations (Elders) and taught to our younger generations
- On-going process of learning and applying our knowledge and teachings

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"There is so much stuff in traditional knowledge. How can you put it in a few words in the EIS? There is an issue explaining it in a way that people can understand, to explain this to white people. I guess the main thing that is important is that they understand that we have our knowledge, and they believe us."

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"I find it funny that when you ask the Elders something they would always respond with a joke. Humour is part of the teachings. When talking, that was one way they would teach. For example, they would tell you how to do something, but the wrong way so that you would go and learn. The reason the Elders tell us these things is so that people listen. You will remember the teachings with humour."

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

"We don't share our knowledge easily because we are taught to listen and respect others."





Albert Saunders

 OBEDIAH WASTESICOOT

"Our traditional knowledge is still happening today. It isn't just from long time ago (kayas). Traditional knowledge is from the past, but it continues on."

Today, our community Elders, members and resource users are maintaining our traditional knowledge, and one way it is expressed is through Kipekiskwaywinan (Our Voices). This document doesn't represent all of our traditional knowledge, but it is based on our traditional knowledge, cultural values, and worldview. Our traditional knowledge informs and adapts along with the Keeyask Project.

However, our knowledge isn't just information to be recorded and included in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); rather it is an ongoing process of sharing and participating in the Partnership. Because traditional knowledge lives within our way of life, the process of engaging our community Elders, members and resource users is the most important way our traditional knowledge, values, and worldview enter the Keeyask Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). For this reason, it is important that our community representatives, Elders, youth, resource users, and knowledge holders continue to participate in the Keeyask Project's next phases including construction, operation, environmental monitoring and adaptive management.

"Traditional knowledge is from the past, but it continues on."

-Obediah Wastesicoot



Ripple River Falls.





Maryann Sinclair, Rev. Martha Spence, Flora Beardy, Edwin Beardy and Obediah Wastesicoot (behind Edwin). 48th Wedding Anniversary Vow Renewal Ceremony, York Factory.

We are inherently spiritual people. We believe that everything we have in life comes from Munito.

SPIRITUALITY

We are inherently spiritual people. We believe that everything we have in life comes from Munito.¹ We come from Munito and all things come from Munito. We believe that we must respect all things in nature – that our relationships with living and non-living things are two-way relationships. To live a good life we respect and care for Askiy, other people, and all things in this world for our ancestors and for future generations. We call this minopimatisiwin.

With the arrival of Europeans many of our people accepted Christianity and Christian beliefs into our lives. Today, diverse spiritual beliefs and practices are found among our people that could be called traditional, Christian or more blended forms of spiritual belief. Regardless, spirituality is very important in our culture and in our world view. Our spirituality informs our stewardship of the land and we must fully acknowledge spirituality through our participation in the Keeyask Project. It requires respect among our partners and respect for everything in nature.

 LOUISA CONSTANT

“When you connect to the land, spirituality is more than the church. It is about having relationships to animals, praying to the land, and practices and protocols. For example, just taking what you need and handling an animal carcass that you have killed properly and not throwing them in the dump. This is who we are as a people.”

 EMILY KEMATCH

“With our teachings today, I have heard you have to offer tobacco to Mother Earth (Askiy). Say you kill a moose, you offer tobacco, or give tobacco to water as thanks for what it gives. For example, you wash your clothes with water. I know there are ceremonies. Some people practice the sweat. That’s how you connect to your spirituality.”

¹ Munito can also be referred to as “Kisci-Munito”





York Factory First Nation Traditional Territory

OUR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE UNDER THREAT

Over the last several generations, we have been resilient to the forces of colonialism, the introduction of western religion and a trade economy into our communities and traditional territories. We adapted to these changes and still retained much of our way of life, culture and traditions. Then, in 1957, we were moved from our traditional territory on the Hudson Bay lowlands, and relocated to the southeast corner of Split Lake, which became the community of York Landing (Kawechiwasiak). This is a very short time ago in the history of our people being on the land since time immemorial. Yet, we have experienced profound changes over this short time. Where in the past we lived on a vast territory and moved with the seasons, we are now assigned to a small community trapline (Trapline #13), within the jurisdiction of others, defined largely by the Manitoba registered trap line system.

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"The problem I have around York Landing is the land. The minute you



York Landing (Kawechiwasiak), Manitoba.



Kelsey Generating Station.



"We want our voices heard in the Environmental Impact Statement"

-Eric Saunders



Lindsay Laliberty, Talia Saunders, Sarah Wastesicoot and Tabitha Brightnose



Ashley Beardy and Talia Saunders

go out on the land you're feeling like you're intruding into someone else's territory. Out at York Factory you don't feel that - it's wide open. Out at the coast, you see a lot of moose out on the land and no one is hunting them. I really want our youth to learn to hunt and trap. That's what I'm talking about when I talk about cultural programming. One of my main concerns is the size of the Resource Management Area around York Landing [Trapline 13]. There are many hunters in this area, sometimes it gets dangerous. I don't feel the same here that I do out there - I feel free at York Factory. I don't even have to be hunting, I just feel free because that's our traditional territory. That's where I was born. We want our voices heard in the Environmental Impact Statement so they will know that not everything is how Hydro sees it. A lot of people are against the project. I think it's important to teach the youth those things - how to survive on the land."

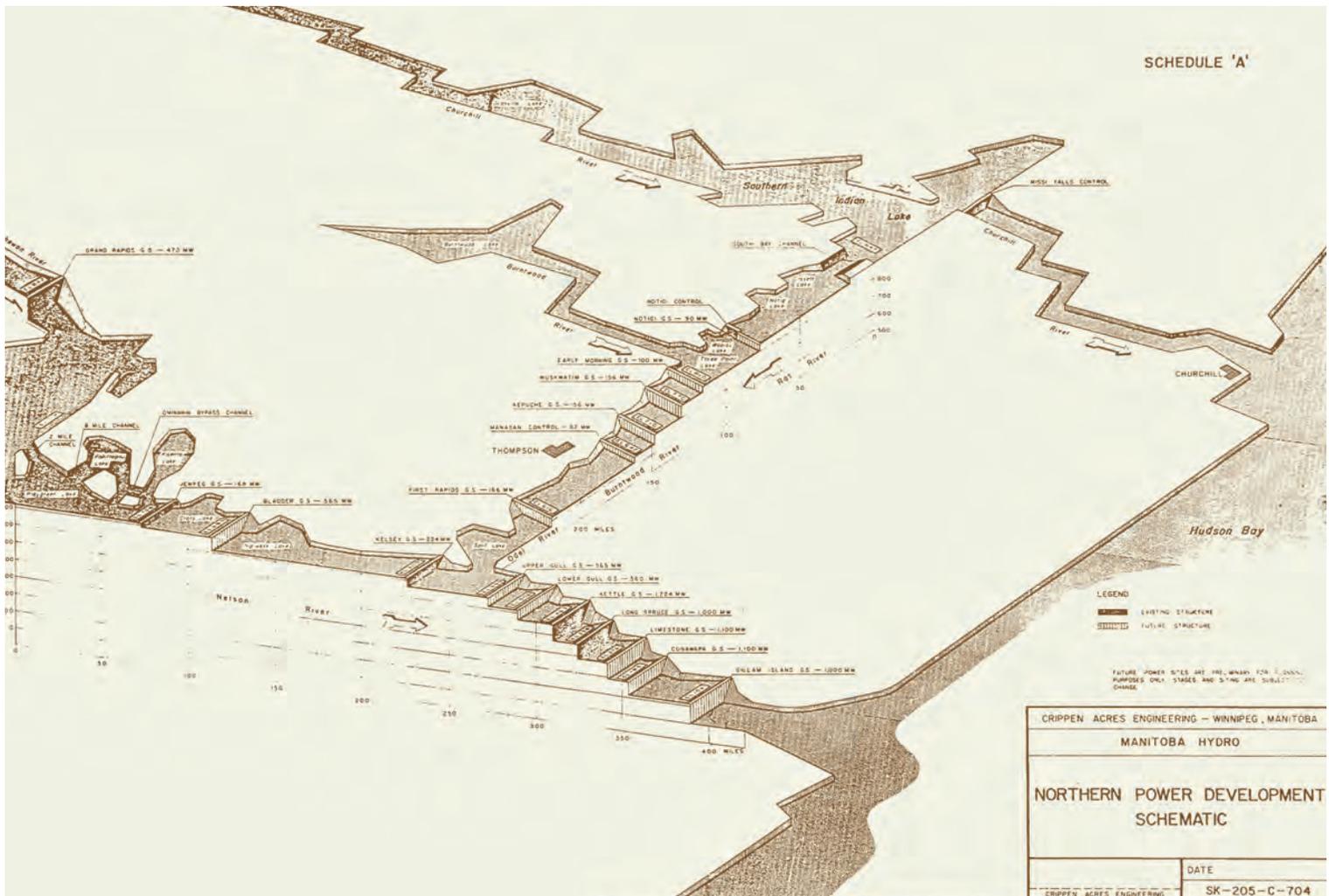
We no sooner were re-settled on the Aiken River at Split Lake when the first hydro-electric dam at Kelsey was built. Our new homelands and waters were changed, before we had barely begun to understand and learn about them. Then, the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) and Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) soon followed, reversing the seasonal water levels on the Split Lake basin where we live. Our water was made bad, the shorelines were flooded and eroded, and the fish and animals became poorer in health and abundance. We became defined as a Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) community by outsiders, rather than a proud Cree community that shared vast territories, history and culture with Cree people now living in different places like Shamattawa, Churchill (Mantayo Seepee), Gillam (Akwayskimakuk), Bird, Fort Severn (Wasahoo), Split Lake (Tataskweyak) and Ilford (Moosokootchisik). We became a community under threat; under siege from outside forces, especially hydro-electric development.

 ARCHIE REDHEAD

"The water is no good now. The fish are not good. But, the water and the fish were good when we came here. When the water flowed it was good but when you dam it, stop it, back it up, water goes bad. Every year the water has got worse with the dams."

And today, more hydro-electric dams are on the way and we find ourselves in a new partnership relationship with Manitoba Hydro and our neighbouring Cree communities. We voted in favour of becoming a Keeyask equity partner through the Joint





Schematic of development on the Churchill and Nelson Rivers, 1977

Keyask Development Agreement (JKDA) in March 2009. We have become a co-proponent and now seek to obtain, with our partners, the required licenses, including an environmental license from regulatory authorities, so the Keyask Project and Partnership can proceed as planned.

WHY WOULD YFFN BECOME A PARTNER IN KEEYASK?

We want to address, up front, a logical question our statements must pose in the minds of those who read and try to understand them: "Why would York Factory become a partner in hydro-electric development and the Keyask Project when you feel this way; when you feel these impacts?"



Youth Workshop, 2010



Felicia Beardy, Nicole Saunders and Ameer Saunders





Ted Bland, Senior Negotiator with son Rylan.

Our decision to become a partner in the Keeyask Project was not an easy one. Leading up to the JKDA vote, we looked at future hydro-electric development, our experiences with past hydro-electric development and what hydro-electric development means to Manitoba as a whole. Based on the many negotiations and our relationship with Manitoba Hydro as a corporation, we felt it was important to become a partner and have a voice in the Keeyask Project, rather than let it move forward without us. When we held our vote to decide whether or not to sign the JKDA, Tataskweyak Cree Nation and War Lake First Nation had completed their vote. A majority of TCN voters voted in favour of their Chief and Council signing the JKDA, thereby establishing sufficient support among the Keeyask Cree Nations, as defined in the JKDA as the 'KCN Majority', for the Project to proceed to its next phase and the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement.

 TED BLAND

"I never felt comfortable with the situation we went into, where Tataskweyak Cree Nation (TCN) was the main First Nation negotiating with Manitoba Hydro. We were put in a situation where we felt that we were either a part of it, or we were out of the deal. A lot of people didn't [still don't] understand that this thing was going to happen whether we liked it or not. You either watch it happen, or become a part of it. With us being partners, we have a limited voice. Our only real benefit is for our children, and their children after that. We did this for our children and future generations."

While the conditions at the time of the JKDA vote substantially influenced how our community members felt about our own vote, we considered the Keeyask Project very seriously and decided to partner with Manitoba Hydro, TCN, WLFN and FLCN so that we could contribute to the Keeyask Project. We said to ourselves, "we can stand by and watch this happen, or we can try to have a say in the governance and management; to share in the potential benefits of revenues, jobs, training, capacity-building and community empowerment".

Many of our community members were equally torn with our decision to become a partner because of our past history with Manitoba Hydro. We have come to know and respect many individuals working for Manitoba Hydro in these processes; but some of our community members do not trust Manitoba Hydro



From left to right: Zack Redhead, Lauren Spence, Alex Redhead, Adrian Saunders, Southwind Redhead, Derek Beardy and Chelsea Beardy

as a corporate entity. This was especially the case during the JKDA and AEA negotiations.

☞ TED BLAND

“With Hydro, we needed to be on their case, keep on top of them with all their research and everything. Historically they [Hydro] didn’t seem to really care what was going to happen to the environment.”

☞ EMILY KEMATCH

“Hydro said there will be minimal impacts. It’s not true because we have seen changes with our eyes.”

☞ RODDY OUSKAN

“When I read our document [Kipekiskwaywinan] I see a lot of distrust and apprehension in our members’ voices. I have my own distrust with those we have partnered with. I didn’t vote for the partnership and I think I was right. But I don’t think that should stop our community from moving forward.”

☞ TED BLAND

“They’re [Manitoba Hydro] making more of an effort to have a relationship. They understand that in order for us to be partners we need to improve our relationship. So they are making a bigger effort to come into the community and contribute in different ways.”

“Hydro said there will be minimal impacts”

-Emily Kematch





Ice Fishing.

"There's a deep moral dilemma that we experience"

-Martina Saunders

We want to be at the table with Manitoba Hydro every step of the long way ahead, building trust and a better relationship. Some community members will never trust Manitoba Hydro, and others will continue to question if our community made the right choice to join the Keeyask Partnership. However, as a community our decision to sign the JKDA and become a partner in the Keeyask Project means taking some control over our own destiny, having a voice and influencing the Project with our knowledge and values, and seeking tangible benefits and self-determination for our community.

As a partner in the Keeyask Project, this is a deep moral dilemma for us; to effectively add to the destruction of Askiy; to change our respectful relationships with the land, water, plants and animals that have sustained our people, our culture and that are entrusted to us to pass on to future generations so that they too can live meaningful, fulfilling lives and nurture their culture. We think, if we work hard with our partners, we can achieve the benefits of Keeyask while retaining our values and sustaining our community.

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

"There's a deep moral dilemma that we experience. I experience that on a daily basis when I sit back and think about being a part of this Keeyask dam. Like, in the future, what is going to be left in the future? But, at the same time, when we were making the decision about what we wanted and what we didn't want, we needed to think about the future for our children, our future generations in terms of the benefits."



 VINCENT OUSKAN

"The reason why I voted "yes" was for the jobs, for the community, the younger people coming up. There's not very many jobs around here. It's good to go out of town and work. I just got back from work myself. I was working out of Gillam [on the] environmental studies. I've been doing that for the past 7 years now."

 AMELIA SAUNDERS

"They said "yes" because they wanted better jobs, better housing and better training for our community. We have the arena, but we are looking for more business opportunities in our community. Our children in the future will have something. That is the main issue. There's going to be training for them; there's going to be jobs for them; there's going to be a better future for them than what we have today."

 JOHNSON SAUNDERS

"We thought it was important at the time. We should try to get something for our children, the future. We tried to get the best that we could for them."

 TED BLAND

"The opportunities that are coming are good opportunities—employment, training, developing of our membership and, like I said earlier, the partnership side and the ownership. But, when everything came down to the final decision, I thought it was important that we look after our future generations. I always said that we're never going to see the benefits in our lifetime. Not in my lifetime. The real revenue and the benefits are going to come maybe in 25 years. After the completion of the dam, we will pay back our loans and then the revenue will start coming. So, in essence I'm looking at my children, my grandchildren, and my great-grandchildren."

We must somehow continuously reconcile our participation in this partnership with our relationships and obligations to the natural and spiritual world - and to our future generations. If we do not, our Elders and their teachings tell us we will not survive as a people. This is the central, core message and impact for us as a people in this deal. We want everyone to understand this.

"I thought it was important that we look after our future generations."

-Ted Bland



*We want our
partners to respect
and work with us*

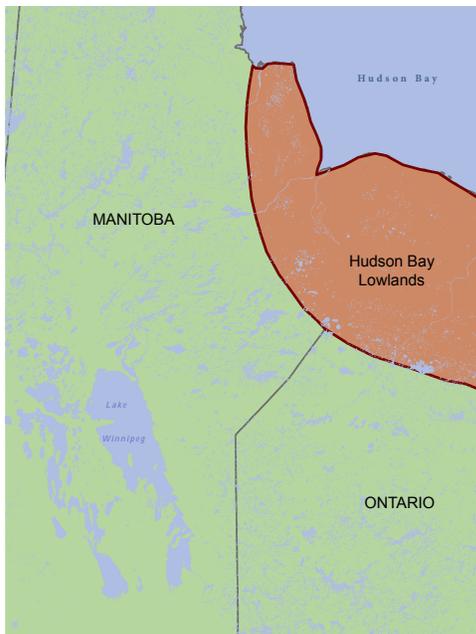
We want our partners to respect and work with us to continuously reconcile our role as partners, as well as heal and build trustworthy relationships, through processes, programs and decision-making, throughout the life of the Keeyask Project and Partnership. We especially want our children, their children and all who follow to know that we entered into this partnership with these feelings and deep misgivings, insisting on a long term, ongoing commitment to healing, reconciliation, mutual respect and self-determination. We seek to sustain our Cree values and culture in the process. We are cautious and uncertain for what lies ahead (Ayakohmisewin: meaning a person must be cautious of his/her actions when there is uncertainty) but as we have had to do many times since first contact with European colonizers, we must continue to adapt and keep our place as Cree people.

So, we approach this partnership with hope and determination to keep our values, control our destiny and provide opportunities for our young people. It is the future generations who will inherit the outcomes of the Keeyask Project and Partnership.





Barbara Gordon explores house foundations at Kaskatamakan, 2007.



PRE-CONTACT AND COLONIALISM

We have already shared that where we live today is not where we lived for most of our history. We want to add more about this and we have commissioned Dr. Virginia Petch, a professional archaeologist and anthropologist, to help us tell this part of our story.

Anthropologists refer to us, and other Cree communities of northeastern Manitoba as the Swampy Cree, who inhabited the area known today as the Hudson Bay lowlands. We have always called ourselves "Ininiwak".² To be Ininiwak was, and still is, to be a part of an ancient tradition that mastered and specialized in life within a most challenging environment. The intimate relationship that we, as Ininiwak enjoyed with the land did not come easy. Through many years of observation and experience our ancestors became experts in reading the lands and waters that they used and occupied since as long as they could remember.

The Hudson Bay Lowlands are a vast area of wetlands and across this expanse of low-lying, often frozen swamp are gravel beach ridges that outline former, ancient shorelines. Through these

² There are different terms used to refer to ourselves including Nehenow Ininiwak and Maskego Nehenow Ininiwak.





Kaskattama River.

physical barriers, large and powerful rivers and many streams have carved their paths, replenishing the living ocean and providing a network of accessible travel routes for our people.

Ground cover is mainly mosses and small woody plants and shrubs with pockets of spruce, and sometimes poplar and birch in well protected valleys. There is not the abundance or variety of wildlife found further south.

Only a few animals are hardy enough to survive the fierce and uncompromising winters. Those plants and creatures that do inhabit the lowlands have developed remarkable abilities to sustain themselves in spite of the odds. These modest gifts of the land and water have nourished us. We have come to know the land well and our survival has depended upon this.

Ininiwak have lived along the coast of Kihcikamîy (Hudson Bay) for a long time. So long ago in fact, that Kayas (long ago) is remembered only through Kayas Achimowina, the oral tradition and Kapesiwin, the scattered remains of former campsites.³

Our oral history speaks of a time when the great ice or glaciers (Kische Mus komi) covered the land. The great flood (Kischi Niskipewin), that followed and the gradual emergence of the earth are also documented in our oral history. As soon as the

We have come to know the land



Beach Ridges at Hudson Bay Coast.



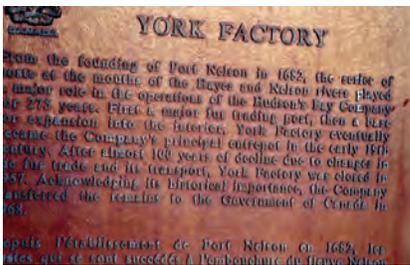
Four Mile Island, Hayes River.

³ Kayas ka ke pay che spa nik (the beginning of time), Mawac Kayas (ancient time), Kayas (long ago), and Unos ka is pa nik (recent past). (Flora Beardy, personal communication 2006).





York Factory Hudson's Bay Company Post



land was clear of ice and water, the ancient people (Keteyatisak), explored the landscape naming the lakes, rivers and other features in their own language.

While many signs of the Keteyatisak life have been reclaimed by the land there are some that have survived the test of time. Stone spear points (takachikana), arrowheads (che po kusk), and clay pottery (asiski askik), attest to the ancient and long-standing occupation and use of the coastal areas of Hudson Bay by Cree people. In association with these ancient tools are often found the fragile remains of animals that sustained life. The bones of caribou (attik), moose (mooswa), sturgeon (numa'o), jackfish (unjobayo), rabbit (wa'pos), beaver (amisk), Canada goose (nis'ka) and waterfowl (seesee-puk-ako-kotuk-pinasesuk) that have been recovered at some ancient campsites confirm that these were not only preferred foods but that they were also used for specialized tools such as fleshers, harpoons, awls and needles.



Cemetery at York Factory.

There are well over 200 ancient and historical sites, some up to 5,000 years old, identified to date across the Hudson Bay coastal area of Manitoba. Many of these are associated with our Ininiwak ancestors.



Our people have hunted, fished and trapped in specific areas out of an ancient tradition



Frederick McPherson and Charlie Bland

(Makaysew Sakahegan), Ten Shilling Creek (Seepastik), Crooked Bank (Wanatawahak), Fifteen Mile Esker (Kis chi Wa chee), and the Weir River (Kisaymichiskan Seepee). Although many sites are overgrown or no longer identifiable, we know that there are many, many more. It is important for us that the locations of burials and other sites be recorded so that good land management decisions are made. Knowing where culturally sensitive areas are located will help ensure that these areas will not inadvertently be damaged or destroyed. There is an unbroken cultural thread that runs through the nature of these sites, showing that the availability of local natural resources has not changed much over the past several thousand years and that our people have hunted, fished and trapped in specific areas out of an ancient tradition.

THE HOMEGUARD CREE, COASTERS AND INLANDERS

In historical accounts, we are referred to as the Homeguard Cree, or the Coastal Cree. We did not plan on going to the coast because of the Europeans; it was because the coast was part of our seasonal activities rooted in the ancient past. While much of the year was spent at the coast hunting, fishing and gathering, we, like our Ininiwak ancestors, wintered inland in the protection of the forest. Gathering together in the summer and dispersing in winter were two distinctive parts of our ancestors' seasonal activities. Each family would go inland to their customary, family wintering areas - the traditional lands on which the original registered trap lines under the Manitoba trap line system would later, in part, be based.

As the Homeguard Cree our role quickly changed from a transitory, short-term to a permanent and long-term relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). As provisioners for the forts our people ensured a reliable source of food, clothing and many other services to the Europeans at the forts. We were critical to the success of the fur trade. Many Cree (Ininiwak) women took European husbands (country marriages) and





Hector Spence and Alex Spence

became their partners in the fur trade. The women not only took charge of managing their households but also were instrumental in cementing alliances with their Cree relatives throughout the coast and upland regions. The children that were born from these marriages went on to provide a continuing blood link with the HBC. Many fur trade names are found throughout the York Factory families and beyond.

Other terms such as “coasters” and “inlanders” were used by the European traders to distinguish between the geographic areas that people lived in. Our ancestors named themselves based on the river basins that they occupied. For the York Factory area, people living along the Ka pi na si way chi wak seepee (Lower Hayes River) and Ooho seepee (Owl River) were coasters while those inhabiting the Apet seepee (Hayes River) and Chackatinow seepee (Hill or Upper Hayes River) were inlanders.

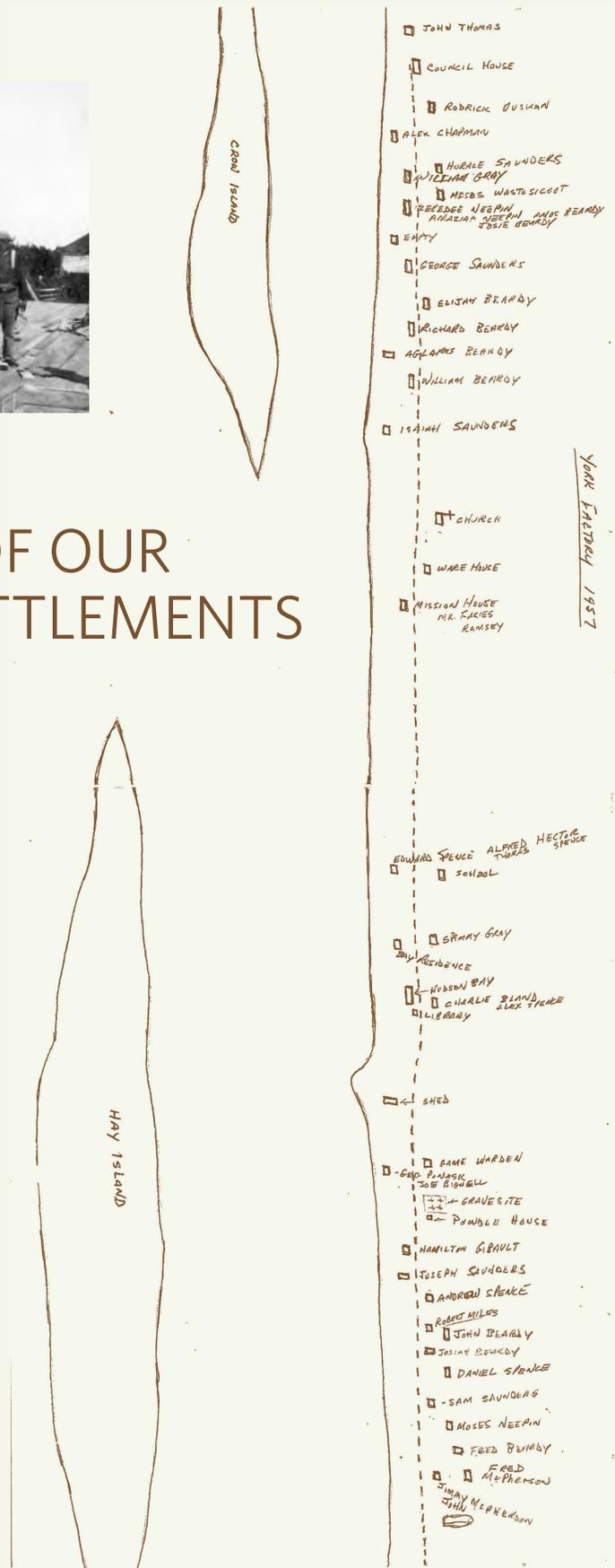
One of the distinctive features of our culture was a fluidity that allowed for free movement and autonomy. Whether on the coast or in the forest, our ancestors adapted their knowledge and technology to the environment. Our community oral history project confirms that within the living memory of present day Elders, our families regularly moved between Fort Severn (Wasahoo), Big Trout Lake (Namakoos Sakahegan), Kaskatamakan, Shamattawa, York Factory (Kischewaskahekan),





Building the Church at York Factory, 1933.

MEMORIES OF OUR COASTAL SETTLEMENTS



York Factory, circa 1957 by Eric Saunders.

The Omen of the Rabbit

I went to check my rabbit snares and I got one rabbit. This was at Shamattawa. I walked back across the river on the ice towards home. I decided to take a rest, so I sat down and laid the rabbit right beside me. The rabbit's coat was all frosted and its head was all covered with snow. It was dead. As I went to pick up the rabbit, it was gone! I noticed the tracks leading away and when I looked up I saw it running away! There was this one old woman that told us something's going to happen in your family. The rabbit was a sign. Not too long after, your [Flora Beardy's] father arrived and brought us the bad news. This is what this old woman had told us. She said that when someone arrived here, that person will have bad news. So it wasn't too long after that your father arrived. He told me: "It's your father. You do not have a father any more." That is what he said. That's why I had this sign.

It is a good power to have, to be able to know what these signs mean. But sometimes the omens can be bad.

Amy Hill: Yes, because it involves spirits.

Albert Hill: Not that anything would happen to the person who receives these signs; the spirits are usually friendly but knowing that someone in the family is going to die is the hard part. Some people are not able to handle this. This is what is called the ghost/spirit omen. This is what it was called, a long time ago.

Albert Hill

- From "Voices from the Bay" p. 73-74

Learning by Experience

The kids were out on this flat rock and they had just finished dancing. Anyway the tide was coming in and they were out on this flat rock. They were standing on this rock, not realizing that the tide was coming in! So I told my husband, "Those kids are going to get stranded out there." I wanted him to call out to them but he said: "Just wait. Don't say anything yet. They'll realize right away what's happening." So I didn't say anything. The boys were busy watching a seal swimming in the river. My husband said: "They'll find out in a minute to listen to what they were told! They were told to always watch out for the incoming tide." Frank was standing there too with the boys. The seal they were watching dove under and when it popped up again, it was right in front of them. You should have seen them. They started yelling, turned around to run for shore. Well, that's when they saw all the water around them so they had to wade through the water! They didn't take long to get to shore. They got scared of the seal. At that time, the chief was my late uncle Abraham Beardy. He was standing on shore laughing at the boys. He told them they wouldn't have been in that situation if they had listened to what they were told. Everyone that was watching laughed at them!

Mary Redhead

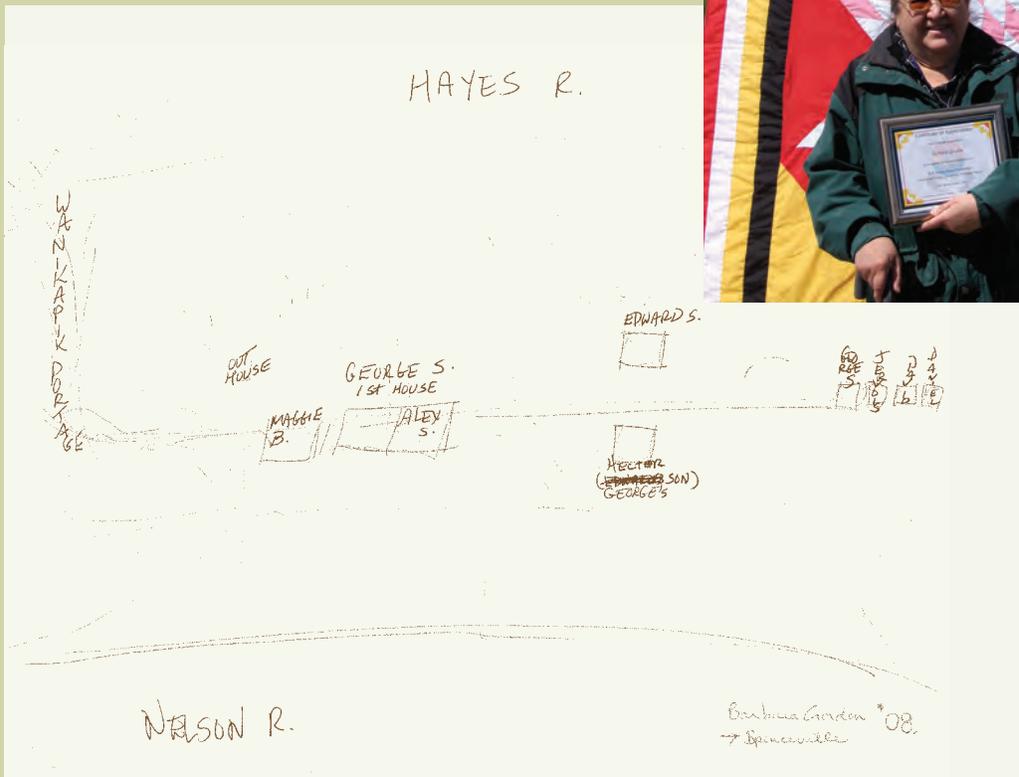
- From "Voices from the Bay" p.72



Kaskatamakan, by Dorothy Redhead.



Raised foundations still visible in the grass at Kaskatamakan, 2007.



Spenceville, by Barbara Gordon.



Barbara Gordon

Our relationships with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) varied from positive to negative

Port Nelson (Pawinakaw), the Bay line (Otapan Maskanow) and Churchill (Mantayo Seepee).

Our Ininiwak ancestors who became known as the Homeguard Cree incorporated the needs of HBC into their seasonal hunting schedule. Initially, hunters were probably asked if they could provide some fresh meat for the men of the fort. Our traditions of sharing and exchange were extended to these foreigners, especially when some of our women married European men.

Our relationships with the HBC varied from positive to negative and changed us as a people. The HBC provided work and goods for our people and food during periods when country food supplies were less secure and available. At other times, company officials ignored our needs, leaving our ancestors to starve at the very doors of the fort. The HBC introduced liquor into the fur trade to take advantage of our ancestors. Alcohol abuse followed, since our people had no prior knowledge of alcohol and its effects. In turn, the historical record shows that certain HBC officials viewed our ancestors as “unruly untamable savages”. Such persons viewed our people as a nuisance at York Factory and sought to discourage our settlement there. When the company could use us, they did so; when their business economy declined, they no longer had any concern for our welfare. This story was repeated over and over again until the time of our relocation to York Landing (Kawechiwasik) in 1957.

TRADITIONAL USES AND ACTIVITIES

The seasonal resources of the coast drew our Ininiwak ancestors from the shelter of the forest. Geese, waterfowl and birds, bird eggs, spawning fish, mussels, small and large mammals, marine mammals, and seacoast medicinal herbs and plant foods provided vital nutrients and a welcome change from the winter menu. We hunted caribou all year round for food. While the spring caribou were lean they provided a much-needed source of protein. The spring migration of caribou to their coastal breeding grounds marked the beginning of our seasonal moves to the coast and the opportunity to intercept large herds for food.





Alex Spence and Hector Spence

Two hunting strategies were employed - "deer" fences and spearing. The people located fences along reliable and ancient migratory routes. Many people constructed and operated the fences and butchered, processed and stored the meat. The fall hunt used a much different strategy. As the caribou herds retreated to the forests our people speared them at the river crossings. The fall caribou were fat and healthy and provided both high quality food and skins for clothing and shelter.

The spring caribou hunt was followed by the arrival of migratory birds. Snow geese (wawao) and Canada geese (nis'kuk), ducks such as mallards (eninisip sese'p) and a variety of shore birds were hunted especially during the moult. Willow ptarmigan (wapinayo) were hunted all year round. We used snares, nets, bows and arrows and occasionally clubs long before European technology was introduced, and continued to use them throughout the historic period. Our people quickly mastered the use of the gun. Being attached to the fort meant that they were issued two guns: as one was being fired, the other was being loaded, usually by a man's wife or children. Specific locations were known to be prime waterfowl habitat, and brush stands or blinds were set up throughout the marshes. From these hiding places our people lured the birds by mimicking their calls, just as we do to this day. As our ancestors became an integral part of the operations of the fort, larger numbers of geese were



Frederick McPherson



Thompson Beardy





hunted. These were salted and shipped overseas or kept for post provisions. Our people continued to provide their families with geese and other wild foods in addition to supplying the forts. Geese are a favourite part of our diet to this day.

Fishing was a year round activity, but the most productive periods were during spring and fall spawning. We used many methods of fishing, depending on the type of fish and time of year. Spawning fish were usually speared or trapped in fishing weirs. Gill and seine nets, and hooks were also used. During the winter months we set nets under the ice. The sucker was the first fish to spawn in the lowland regions, closely followed by sturgeon and northern pike. These and other species of fish were netted during the summer months and provided a reliable source of protein and essential oils for our ancestors. The fall fishery was perhaps the most important. Spawning whitefish were usually caught in seine nets or in weirs. Net fishing continued all winter and was especially important in providing “survival” and dog food. Our Homeguard Cree ancestors provided the Europeans of the forts with fish throughout the year in addition to feeding themselves and their families.



Fred Beardy



Francis Spence

Species-specific fishing was very much a part of the seasonal round and extended families and friends of our ancestors moved according to the traditional knowledge of fish behavior. In addition to the fishery, whale and seal hunting frequently occurred. Whale and seal were also netted in hand-woven nets and seal skin was used for leather. Sealskin was also used to make rope and whale “grease” was sold to the HBC.

PLACES OF USE AND OCCUPANCY IN THE YORK FACTORY AREA



Seal in Hayes River

In the past, our families lived in small settlements at many of the river and creek outlets from Churchill to Kaskatamakan and along the Hudson Bay coast to Great Whale River. Five family groups lived in small settlements near York Factory (Kischewaskahekan): Port Nelson (Pawinakaw) (10 families);





Alex Spence, Hector Spence and Leonard Nippe

Crooked Bank (Wanatawahak) (4 families); Ten Shilling Creek (Seepastik) (4 families); Kaskatamakan (12 families), and Shamattawa (several families).

According to David Massan, he and Moses Neepin spent a good part of the winter at the Owl River (Ooho Seepee) trapping. Abel Chapman (Moses Neepin's son-in-law) and his family also trapped in this region. More recently, Joseph Saunders also recalled that whales were caught at "the portage"⁴ for oil and dog food. Some people ate whale meat. Joseph Saunders recalled life at Kaskatamakan with his family. The winter was spent hunting and trapping, with fishing and gathering more prevalent in spring and summer. A small HBC store at Kaskatamakan supplied basic staples to the families who wintered there. This store closed in 1951.⁵

 SARAH BEARDY

"We would stop along the way to Kaskatamakan and hunt. We had lots of food, geese and ducks. We liked our life. We felt we were rich because we were never short of food. We had lots to eat."

 ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA GORDON, 2005

Barbara: That was, these were the people that went from York Factory

"We felt we were rich because we were never short of food."

-Sarah Beardy

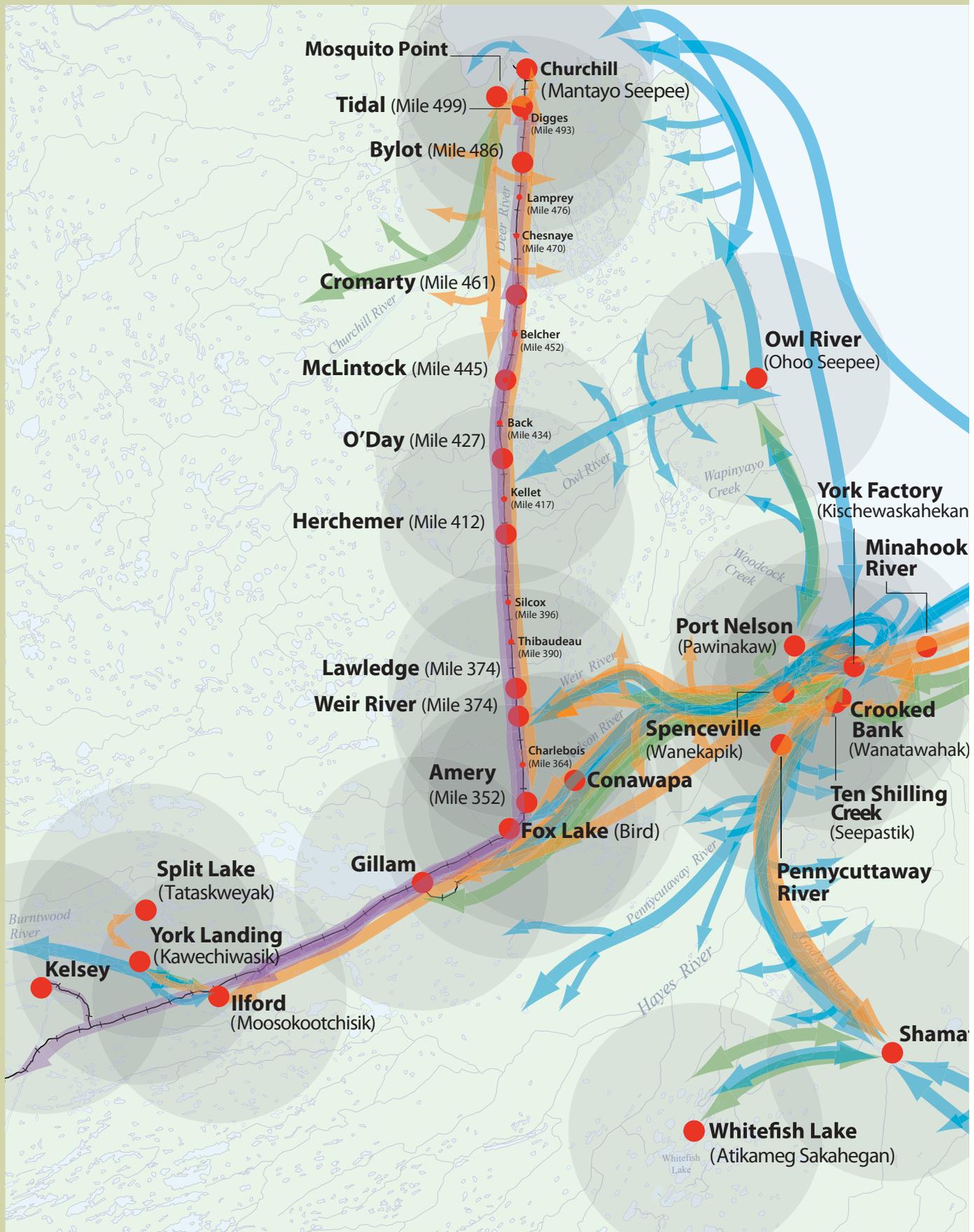


Spenceville, 2007.

⁴ The portage may be the one from York Factory that opens out on the east side of the Nelson River. A former settlement (Spenceville or Wanekapik) is located on the east side of the Nelson River at a portage.

⁵ Hill, D.N.W. (1993) History of the Reindeer and Nejanilini Lake District to 1820. M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba Department of History.





SETTLEMENTS, HARVESTING AREAS AND TRAVEL ROUTES

Identified in oral history interviews with 19 YFFN Elders.

Hudson Bay
(Kischikamee)





Bridge and Island at Port Nelson.



Eric Saunders and Douglas Chapman with Elly Bonny at Port Nelson, 2007.

to Kaskatamakan, to be near their trap line, their trap lines were close to Kaskatamakan so they didn't have to travel from York Factory to Kaskatamakan every time they want to go trap so they wintered in Kaskatamakan; and Dad used to have to go look after the Hudson's Bay Post that was there.

Evelyn: Ohhh.

Barbara: And they were very helpful, every one of those people that were there, they helped each other, even in York Factory, if somebody killed a moose or two moose, they'd share with everybody because there was no way of keeping it to themselves, it would go spoil, there was no fridges...so everybody, if Dad went hunting and got two moose, he would clean it and give it all away to all the people that as far as it would take to get rid of one moose or two moose.

Barbara: ...fish, you catch lots of fish in your net, you share with everybody, you can't keep it, some of them, they used to dry, dry fish and dry meat, that way would keep a little bit longer but not too well, 'cause it was too hot in the summertime to be keeping dry meat and dry fish that also would go bad or slimy or something from the heat, those people from York Factory or Kaskatamakan, they always helped each other, even when they moved, they help each other.

The settlement site at Pawinakaw, or Port Nelson, was considerably altered by the provincial government's \$6M effort to establish a coastal port at the site. Between 1912 and 1918, crews of up to 900 workers a year arrived at Port Nelson, developing a radio tower, residences, dry docks, a bridge and an artificial island, before abandoning the project in favor of the port at Churchill. York Factory members continued to occupy the Port Nelson site for another four decades, with some individuals purchasing and moving into the abandoned buildings of the work camp.

In 2007, we conducted coastal field studies of our old family settlements at York Factory (Kischewaskahekan), French Creek (Natahoto Sipisis) Ten Shilling Creek (Seepastik) Crooked Bank (Wanatawahak), Spenceville (Wanekapik), Port Nelson (Pawinakaw) and Kaska (Kaskatamakan). We took community Elders back to these places where they and their families had lived. They helped identify cabin sites and the artifacts of the past lives of our people, demonstrating their unbroken and deep ties to these places.





Treaty Signing. August 10, 1910. From left to right: Councilor Robert Beardy, Chief Charles Wastesicoot and Councilor Sandy Beardy.

TREATY 5

The Government of Canada negotiated treaties with aboriginal peoples from the late 1880's to the early 1900's in order to make way for European occupancy and settlement of the Canadian western territories. First Nations suffered depleted animal populations during this period that made them both hungry and vulnerable. We were willing to sign the treaties in order to receive some relief from the harsh living conditions. In 1875, the Crown signed Treaty 5 with the Saulteaux and Cree at Berens River. Treaty 5 covered the area south of the Hudson



*We still retain
unfulfilled treaty
land entitlements*



Treaty Day Celebrations.

Bay Lowland and an adhesion was signed in 1908 by Split Lake (Tataskweyak) and Nelson House. Our predecessors at York Factory (Kischewaskahekan) wanted to be included under Treaty 5 but the Government was not interested in the Lowlands for settlement purposes and wished to avoid the cost of signing another treaty. It was not until August 10, 1910 that YFFN signed an adhesion to Treaty 5 that included, amongst other things, provision of reserve land for YFFN.

At the time Treaty 5 was signed, no land transfer was made to us. A reserve on the Hayes River at York Factory was discussed, after Treaty 5 was signed, but was never set aside. It was not until 1990 that a small area of reserve land was established for our use at York Landing (Kawechiwasi). However, we still retain unfulfilled treaty land entitlements.

 JIMMY A. BEARDY

"Our Elders weren't stupid. No one was stupid enough to say 'you can have this land'. What they were saying is 'you can use it, the areas that we're not using'. You can't give away land."

In 1933, the York Factory post lost its status as a customs port of entry, leading to a reduced level of traffic and trading. As well, Port Nelson (Pawinakaw) was abandoned and many of our relatives moved to Split Lake (Tataskweyak), Shamattawa, Churchill (Mantayo Seepee) and other sites along the railway line. In 1947, two different groups of York Factory band members formed the Shamattawa and Fox Lake Bands. We continue to share a common history, even common grandparents, with Cree families in Shamattawa, Churchill, Bird, Ilford (Moosokootchisik), Split Lake and Gillam (Akwayskimakuk). The York Factory Homeguard Cree who chose to remain at York Factory became the York Factory Band: our immediate ancestors and families. We were the last of the Ininiwak at York Factory. Five family groups continued to spend the summers at York Factory (Kischewaskahekan) – one from Port Nelson (Pawanikaw), another from Crooked Bank (Wanatawahak), another from Ten Shilling Creek (Seepastik), another from Kaskatamakan and the remainder from Shamattawa.



THE MANITOBA TRAPLINE SYSTEM

*We were the last
of the Ininiwak at
York Factory*

 ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH MARY NEEPIN, 2005

"Yes they have these areas divided up and marked and that's where a person had to trap. They didn't have these a long time ago. People never argued over land. This never happened, people shared the land."

Between 1935 and 1948 the harvesting of wild furbearers was "rationalized under a system of registered trap lines and fur rehabilitation areas."⁶ The recovery of fur prices after a low in 1930-31 led to an influx of outsiders to northern Manitoba and competition for furs became intense. Most newcomers were interested in little more than making money and "left few stones unturned towards this end"⁷, employing the widespread use of poison and snares to take furbearers.

Overharvest and "high-grading" led to severe depletions of the fur resource. Cree Chief Albert Sinclair of Cross Lake, went to Ottawa in 1938 and petitioned the federal minister to... "conserve our fur. Legislate against its destruction. Put the beaver back in the northland. Create preserves or sanctuaries. Give us trapping areas and formulate a form of supervision, which will bring back the Indian to his status of a natural conservationist".⁸ Thus, under the prevailing authority of the 1930 Natural Resources Transfer Act, Manitoba introduced the Registered Trapline (RTL) system in 1940 with the basic feature of allocating exclusive trapping rights for a defined area to one individual.

By 1944, the RTL plan had proven its worth in a limited part of the Province (from Ilford to The Pas) and it was considered desirable by the province to bring all of the north under the plan. However, aboriginal fur harvest differed markedly from that of the white trappers of European descent. In our way of life, several men would work one, large area rather than several individual



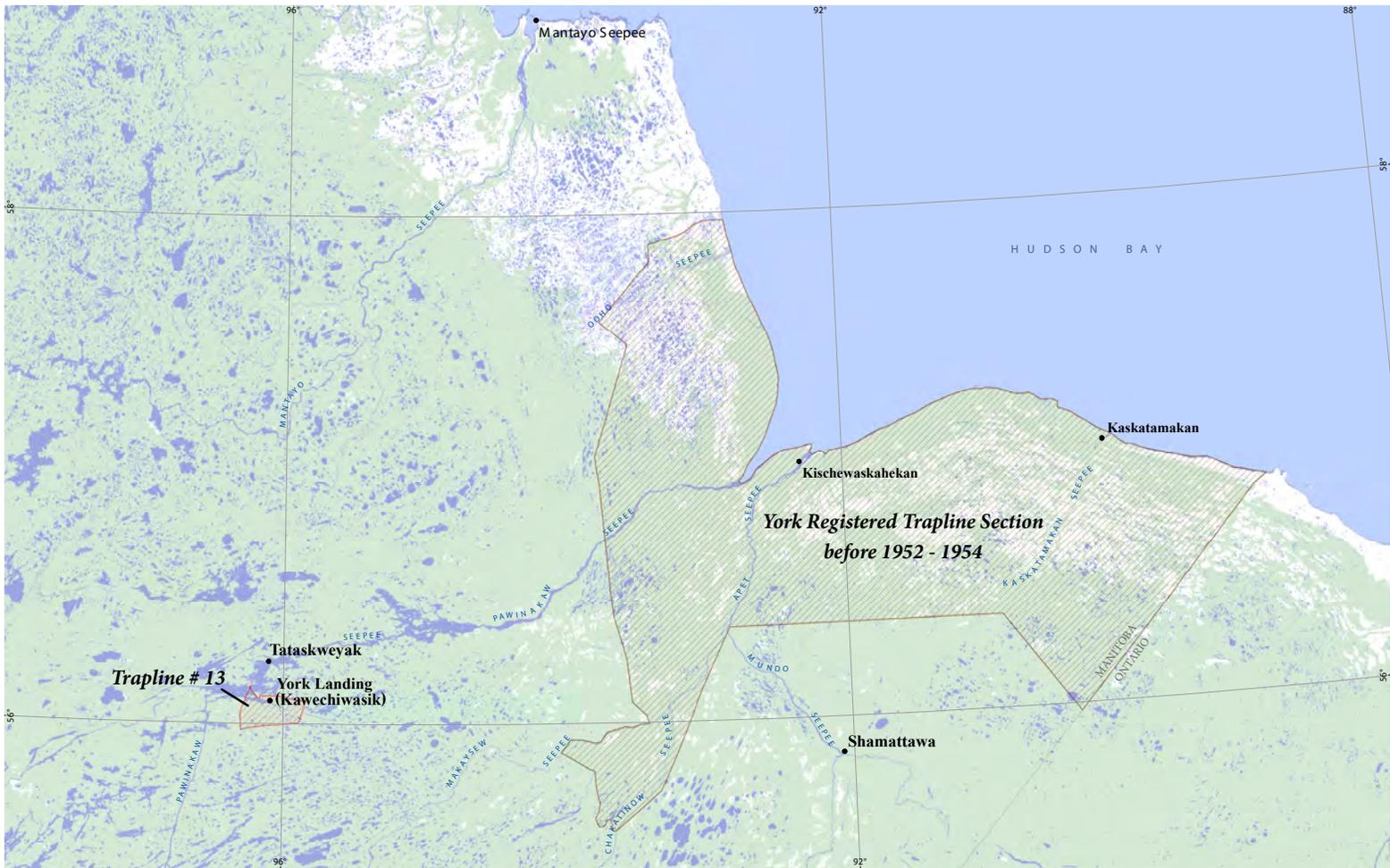
Obediah Wastesicoot

⁶ Carmichael, R.G. (1973) Innovation and Enterprise: A history of Fur Conservation in Northern Manitoba, 1935-1948.

⁷ Same as above.

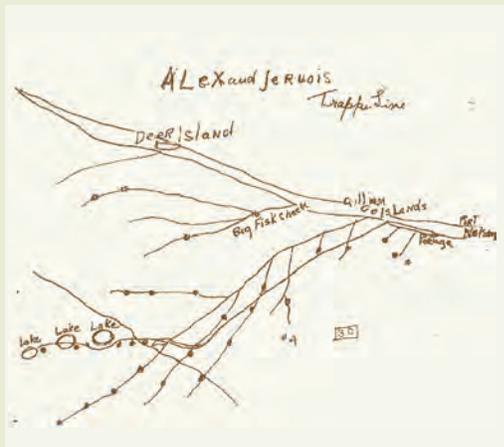
⁸ Same as above.





York Registered Trap Line Section

The original YFFN Registered Trapline Section was established in our coastal territory in 1948. After relocation, we lost our coastal trapline section and were granted use of one trapline, Trap Line 13, at York Landing.



Members' trapping area, circa 1950.



Members' trapping area, circa 1950.

lines. As such, all of Manitoba north of the 53rd parallel was declared an RTL district, with sections allotted to each band, after the few white trappers received trap lines. Boundaries were to be confirmed between the Chiefs and councilors of neighbouring bands, based upon natural lines of division which our bands had followed over the years.

No attempt was made by the Province to market furs under the RTL scheme. The established system of barter and credit between our members, private traders and the HBC was left intact. Overall, the RTL system was embraced by northern First Nation communities, in the face of competition for fur from outsiders and the decline of the resource.

The RTL sections established in 1948 included the large York registered trap line section for our York Factory Band along the Hudson Bay coast east to Ontario, north beyond the Owl River (Ooho Seepee) and inland, up the lower Nelson River and Hayes River; another large section for Split Lake (essentially the same boundaries as today), and south of the York Factory section, the Shamattawa trap line section. These trap line sections mirrored what had been negotiated between the bands, with provincial government facilitation. The York Factory registered trap line section negotiated by our ancestors is a very good proxy of our traditional territories. Its subsequent elimination and replacement with newly drawn trap line sections after our relocation represents a significant loss and confinement imposed on our First Nation. The Resource Management Areas (RMAs) (see map on page 62) subsequently recognized by Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro in our Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) Implementation Agreement are a poor proxy for our traditional territories (see page 44-45).

The Resource Management Areas... are a poor proxy for our traditional territories

RELOCATION TO YORK LANDING (KAWECHIWASIK)

In the fall of 1956, representatives from Indian Affairs traveled to York Factory (Kischewaskahekan) and told our people of plans to





Elders and dignitaries commemorate the 50th anniversary of the relocation.

move us inland. Sales at the York Factory post had fallen in the previous year. Facing low fur prices, the HBC decided to close operations at the fort. The Chief had left the community a year before in search of work, and left only two Councilors to act on the community's behalf. Our members were taken aback at the idea of being relocated. We had everything we needed. The Indian Agent promised that if we agreed to move, a store, school and church would be provided. As well, we were instructed to leave behind all personal belongings and told that they would be replaced. Our boats, sleds, dog teams and sewing machines were all left behind. We traveled with only our families and basic possessions.

"They didn't get what they were promised at all."

-Dorothy Morand

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY MORAND, 2005

Dorothy: We started to stay here. That's when they said, they want to close down York Factory. They told us, they were going to close that. That was Mr. McIvor. That was the last manager there. He's the one who told us that. It's best that you leave, there's going to be no one here he said. That's too bad you know, that shouldn't have happened.

Flora: The people would have survived.

Dorothy: Oh yes. We survived all those years. I don't know why we couldn't.

Flora: We could have had a road there by now.

Dorothy: Oh yes. There would have been something there, if they didn't close it down. But that's what they say, we didn't want to bring no more freight there. It was costing too much money. That's what they were looking at. Costing too much money, to stay there. So we had to go, you can't go back there again.





York Landing (Kawechiwasiik).

Flora: Yes the other old timers there. They tell of stories of why they moved, and tell what happened when they moved. They were promised this [and] that.

Dorothy: And they never got around to that promise. The Promise. They didn't get what they were promised at all.

Flora: No.

Dorothy: Yes well I guess that's what happened.

Flora: Yes they would have survived there.

Dorothy: Oh yes.

Flora: That's what that old Chief [Abraham Beardy] wanted. He didn't want the people to leave there.

Dorothy: He was the Chief that time. Even Shamattawa and York Factory.

Flora: Yes but William Beardy was the Chief, at that time (when they closed the post)... He left his people, then John Beardy became Chief.

Dorothy: Oh yes, he left first I think. He left first, he went away from there. And then after that, the rest followed. And then they told us, we had to move. That we couldn't stay there no more. Cause there's nothing there no more, they said.

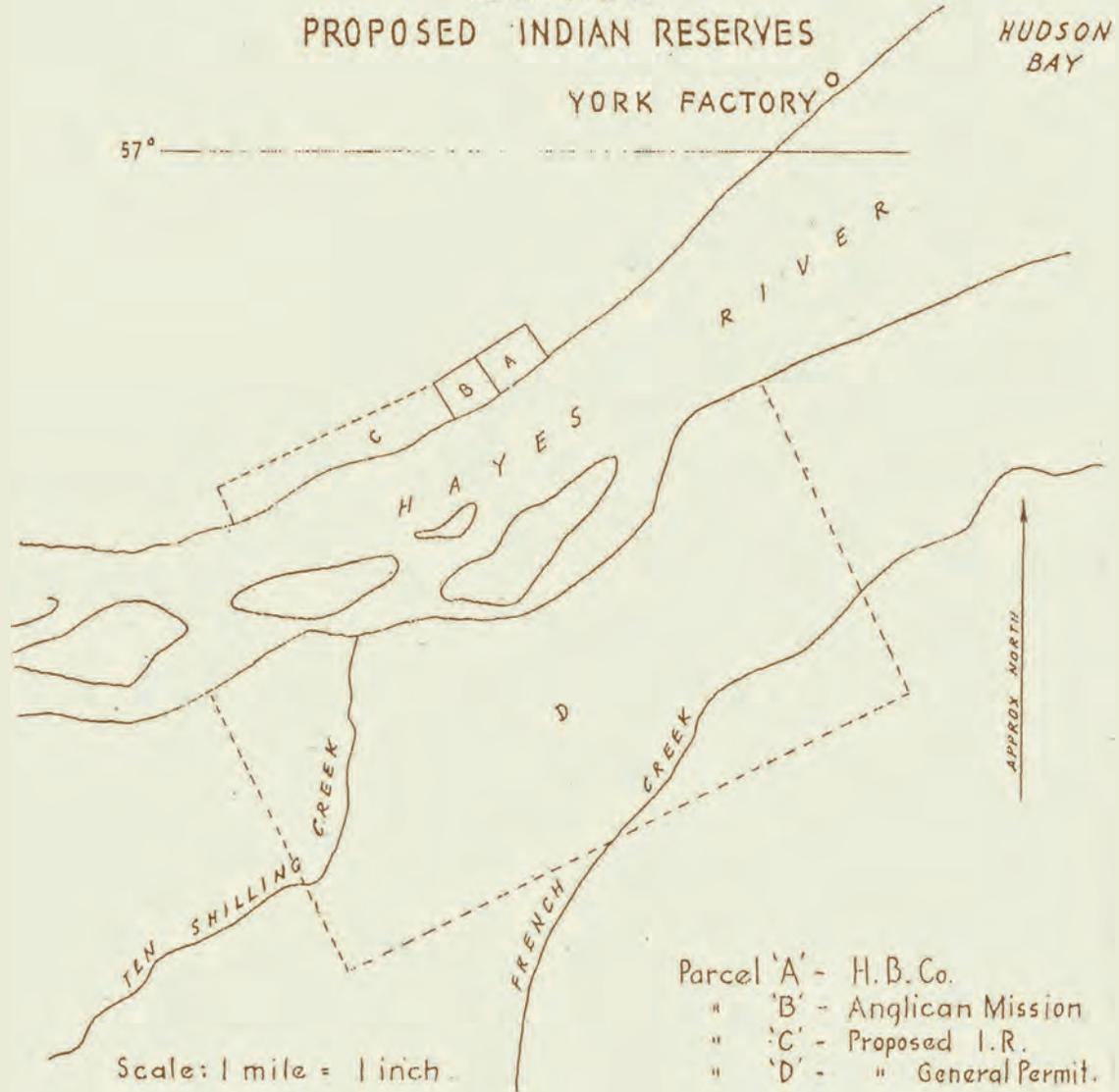
At least one hundred children under ten years of age and a hundred other members traveled over 250 kilometres inland from York Factory to York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) in 1957. We left with no idea where we were going or what our new location would look like. When we got to York Landing (Kawechiwasiik), there was nothing there for us except a pole on the shore of the lake. Our personal belongings, left behind at the coast, were never replaced by Indian Affairs.



Lawrence Saunders Jr., Nadine Saunders, Marvin Flett, Janice Ouskan and Jackie Ponask



GENERAL PLAN
 PROPOSED INDIAN RESERVES



Government correspondence shows that a Reserve was considered at York Factory, prior to the relocation. (Correspondence from Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies to Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Jan. 28, 1952).



York Boat at York Factory, "Bob".

 WAYNE REDHEAD

"We were the last of our people at York Factory and were manipulated, forced out and relocated to our present location at York Landing in 1957."

It was past the middle of August when we arrived at York Landing (Kawechiwasiik). The men began to clear trees and brush and started to build log cabins for their families and people lived in tents while houses were completed. By the winter that first year, 12 cabins had been completed.⁹

Everything was different at York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) for our people. Joseph Saunders said that, "it was like changing our way of thinking and looking at things in a different perspective. All our lives we had known exactly where to go to continue living and supporting our families under our traditional life style."¹⁰

The relocation disconnected us from the land that our people had been a part of for centuries. We knew this land in intimate detail. It is where we were born, raised, and learned to support our families. This land was part of who we were as a people – a place where every landmark echoed with memories of how our parents, grandparents and ancestors lived before us. York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) was a foreign site on a lake 250 kilometres from York Factory. Though we were able to build houses and find resources to harvest there, it was not our homeland.

"We were the last of our people at York Factory and were... forced out"

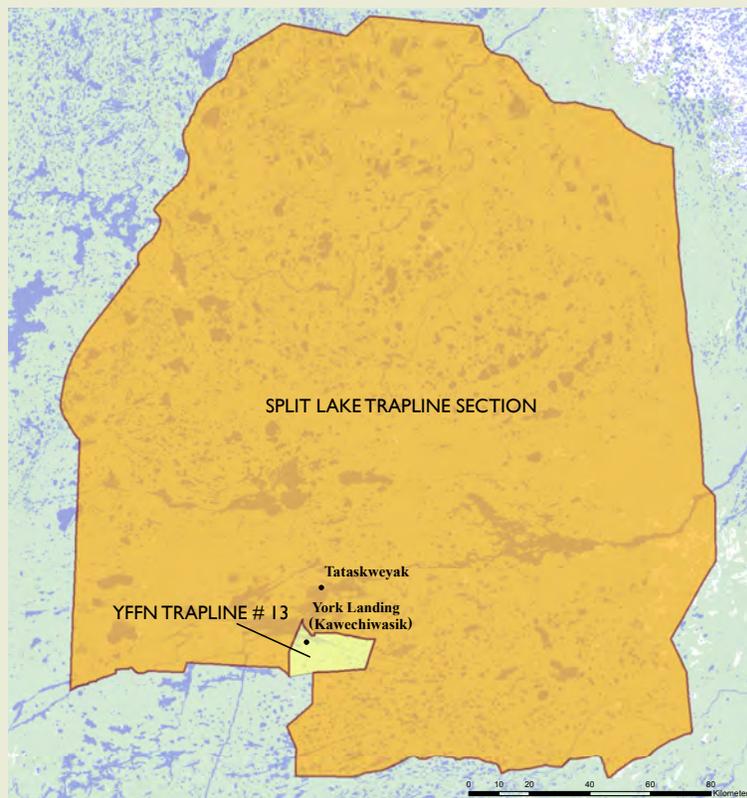
-Wayne Redhead

The relocation disconnected us from the land that our people had been part of for centuries.

⁹ Fast, H. and D. Saunders. (1996) From Kischewaskahekan to York Landing: A Land Use History of York Factory First Nation.

¹⁰ Same as above.





YFFN Trap Line No. 13 and the Split Lake Trap Line Section.

The community is isolated for up to 12 weeks each year as freeze-up and break-up make the lake impassable

At York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) there was no resource area like at the coast. While the York Registered Trap Line Section on the coast existed until 1973, access to the area was not viable on a continuous basis. The RTL system, which had first served us well, ended up being a jurisdictional confinement to our people, given our relocation. When we were relocated to York Landing (Kawechiwasiik), Tataskweyak Cree Nation gave up one of their traplines, Trap Line No. 13, for our community to use surrounded by the Split Lake Trap Line Section, but it was small, crowded and insufficient to support our people, even though it is still being used today.

A second challenge at York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) is that the site was - and continues to be - isolated from economic centres. With no all-weather road, or railway access, York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) is only accessible over water, ice, or by air. The community is isolated for up to 12 weeks each year as freeze-up and break-up make the lake impassable. Since we were assigned to this location in 1957, its isolation has continually inflated the costs of bringing construction supplies, groceries, equipment, contractors and specialists into York Landing (Kawechiwasiik). Travel out of the community for meetings, medical appointments, grocery trips, and family visits has been equally expensive, creating an on-going sense of social and psychological confinement in the community.



While the relocation was an unwelcome and traumatic imposition on us, we have now lived in York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) for more than 50 years. Our younger members were born in York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) and take only occasional trips to York Factory, Port Nelson, and Kaskatamakan. We now have homes, memories and a friendly community in this new place. Though we continue to be frustrated by isolation, resource access and conditions on Split Lake, and though we work hard to maintain ties to our coastal territory, York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) has become a home to us as well.

*We have now lived
in York Landing
(Kawechiwasiik)
for more than 50
years.*

 DARCY WASTESICOOT

"I didn't know what to think when I was a child growing up in York Landing. It wasn't until I was becoming an adult that I started to learn about who I was and where I came from. This is home to me. I Didn't have any choice to make it my home. We were healthier people when we used to live off the land twenty-four-seven. Now that we have all these inventions and technological advances to make life easier, we are not as healthy as we used to be."

THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Our families have been changed forever by the residential school system that pulled us out of our childhood homes in order to "isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures and to assimilate them into the dominant culture as it was infamously said... to 'kill the Indian in the child.'"¹¹

 BARBARA GORDON

"The parents had no say, the government sent somebody in there and said you, you, you, your child is going to residential school, they had no say, they just took them."

 WAYNE REDHEAD

"There was a school there at York Factory. Some kids went out to [residential] school, but some took school right there at York Factory. When they came here [to York Landing] there was no school. People

¹¹ "Statement of Apology - to former students of Indian Residential Schools" as presented by Stephen Harper, June 11, 2008.



were living in tents while they built houses, so there was no school and all the children had to go away. There wasn't a school here until sometime in the 70's. In Split Lake it's different. That community was established long before and had its own school, so kids there traveled for a few years to residential school, but for York Factory [kids from YFFN] we spent so many years there."

 CONVERSATION WITH DOROTHY AND WAYNE REDHEAD, 2010

Wayne: What about us when we went to school, myself, Roy, Louisa... how did you feel when we left?

Dorothy: I never liked it too. I used to cry too when my kids are going away to go to school over there. I don't know what they're doing to them, I was thinking about that too one day. I used to think about that and I don't know what happened to them. It's awful when your kids get taken away. The little ones when they're only six years old.

Wayne: What about York Landing, what was it like with all those kids gone? There was only adults and young kids and Elders, what was it like here with all the kids gone to school?

Dorothy: People were sad, there's no kids around there after they went to school. All the kids are gone. Just for the summertime to come, we don't have any kids when they went to school. There's no kids around there when they started going to school in Dauphin. We can't go visit, nobody help us to go visit in Dauphin until you finished school, that's when I went over there. Indian Affairs doesn't even help us to go visit. Nothing. And when somebody's kids are sick there, just like Sylvia Saunders died over there and my brother died over there, we never even go see him. He went to the hospital right there after when he finished school. My mom used to cry lots taking it hard. Indian Affairs only coming there by plane from Ilford to tell my parents my brother is dying.

 GORDON WASTESICOOT

"In the late sixties, I was going to School on the George Gordon Reserve Residential school ran by the Anglican Church (in Saskatchewan). It is located approximately 90 kilometers north of the capital, Regina. In the fall of that year there were students running away from this school. I had no plans to do this - it was just my second time of running away [the first time we got caught by the police, and were sick from eating the wrong berries]. There were four of us when we started. After a few days of being out in the cold fall weather, the other three gave up. It took me about one week to make it to York Landing. In those days the only communication



MacKay School, Dauphin.



available to our people was by mail. So when I arrived home it was sort of like someone coming back to life after being dead. There was a lot of hugging and greetings from my family and other community members. I really enjoyed being home with my parents. I never noticed any other children my age in the community except for babies and adults, some young people. I never saw anybody drunk or doing anything that was not accepted by the community. It was quiet. They were all preparing for winter. I learned a lot about respecting nature, and about our language. Most things were handed down from one generation to the next. I had the privilege of having the whole community teach me how to live off the land, and communicate in our language. But I also saw the look of loss, loneliness, of hopelessness in our people. They had no power to keep their children with them. Only twenty-one miles away in the little town of Ilford there were mothers and fathers that had their children at home with them. It must have been heartbreaking for people from this reserve to see this. I really enjoyed being home that year. I enjoyed my people and saw their willingness to accept things both good and bad and move on. It takes a lot of courage to do this. They have been relocated from their homeland, had their children taken away, been flooded, and told to live on two thousand acres of land that is composed of muskeg and mud in exchange for what... nothing but misery. You cannot replace families. Families are the reason we live. I ran away because I wanted to be with my family. Why would anyone make that long journey?"

 FLORA BEARDY

"Mary was with a group that was sent out of York Factory to go to school. She said they were gone for seven years. Not once did they come home during that time...This was when they started sending the children out to residential school down south...She said she was 16 when the minister from York Factory, Reverend Faries, came to get them and take them home. There was her, late Elizabeth Oman, probably five or six of them. While Mary was at school, her father passed away at York Factory... She said she just about died. "I just about went crazy! They didn't even bring me home for his funeral. I was in the hospital for a month" [she became sick grieving for him]... ."

 GEORGINA REDHEAD

"I was 16 years old before I realized my first language was Cree and I didn't know how to communicate in Cree with my grandparents."

 ESTHER SPENCE

"There's stories about how badly the children were treated at these schools... I'm told stories... ."



 DONALD SAUNDERS

"The residential schools, did you ever talk about that with your father? No, that is one thing I never, I never did talk to him about that. I always struggled, I couldn't tell him. I told my brothers. I talked to a couple of my brothers. And I said it to a couple of my sisters when we were sharing. When we would share from the heart and talk. It's too hard."

 EMILY KEMATCH

"Residential schools are a big issue in York Landing. Most of us went through that system and have been and continue to be severely affected. Our children have been impacted because we did not know how to parent them. Because we were taken away from our parents, our parents did not pass down parenting skills to us. While attending residential school, we were treated very harshly. Now that we are parents; we learned to parent either very passively or very aggressively, but these are extremes; they are not healthy ways of parenting. Also, there is so much alcohol and drug abuse in the community. Today it seems like children are abusing drugs at a younger age."

 GEORGINA REDHEAD

"The residential school, losing our language, family, connections, and culture. I wasn't shown parenting. And so you grow up not knowing healthy boundaries. You lose examples for learning to hug and love your kids and your siblings."

 DONALD SAUNDERS

"I think that a lot of spirituality was lost through the residential school system. For me, that's how I feel and how I see it. So they uh, work with, a lot of them are school survivors, too many negative things that they have to deal with so, and negative experiences, and it doesn't really build any strong emphasis on the church. So they, a lot of people turn to drugs and alcohol. I went through a lot of that myself, the alcohol. I know what it is doing, and what has happened to a lot of survivors. Some survivors are gone, and never really had the opportunity to work on those things like alcohol and drugs. Because I've lost two family members to that - two of my siblings. They were alcohol related. That's how I see how strong the impact was on the residential school survivors. And a lot of us are still fighting that today."

Cree communities across the north and we, as YFFN members, have been profoundly changed by the residential school system. Many of us who attended the schools in The Pas, Dauphin, Elkhorn, Brandon and elsewhere, have deep personal wounds



that have not yet healed. Our Cree culture is being eroded by the loss of our Cree language, the separation from parental and family teachings and the chaos of drug and alcohol abuse, much of which stems from our residential school experiences. Many of us raising children today were in the residential school system, and that has hurt our own parenting skills and personal physical, mental and emotional well-being. These effects carry forward to the youth in our community, many of whom struggle with drug and alcohol abuse and their school, social and working lives.

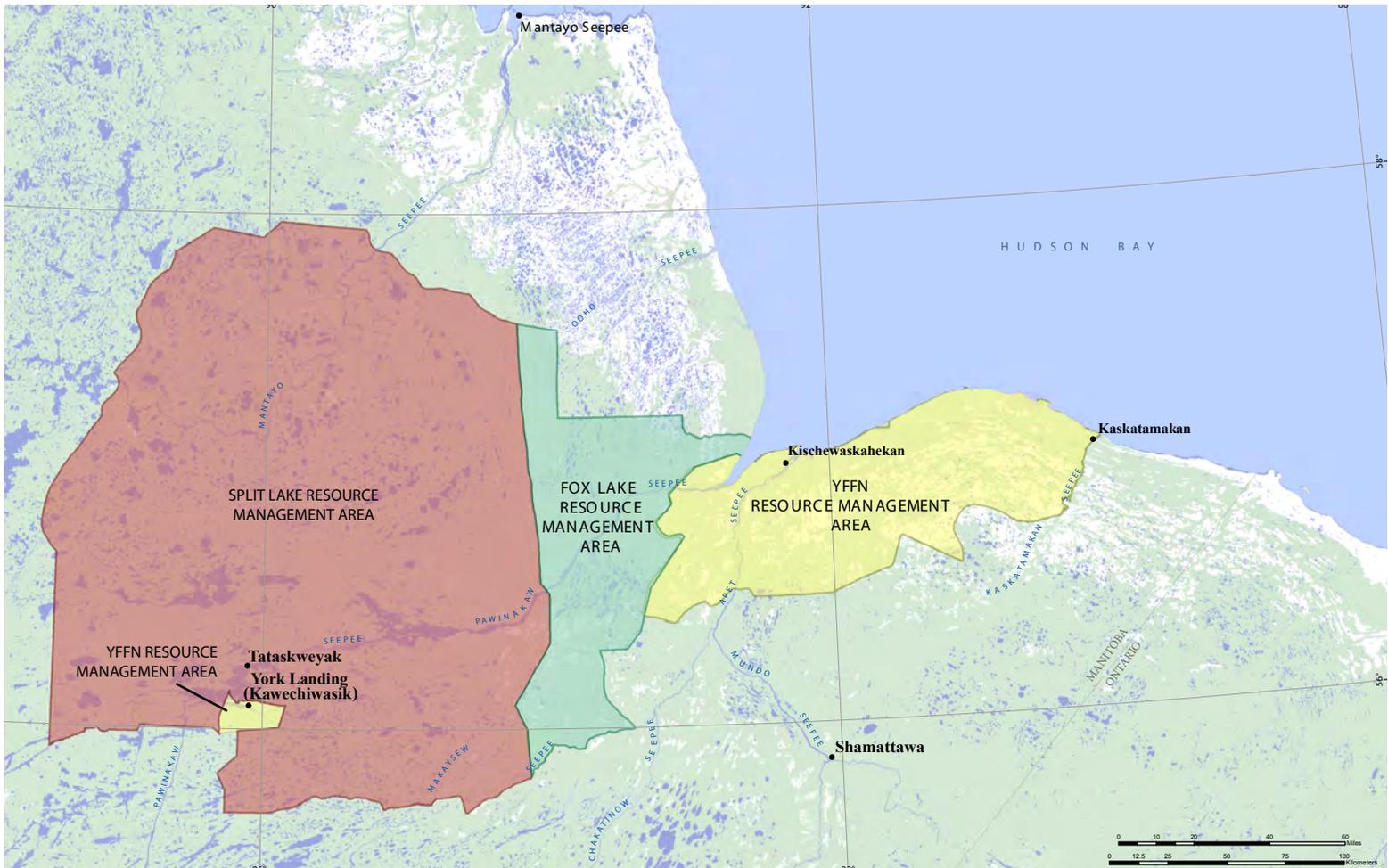
 ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH MARY NEEPIN, 2006

- Mary: I worry about the youth. I often wonder what is going on with them. Sometimes I see young boys, when I go to the store, just young boys about this size and they are drunk.
- Mary: They must be drinking because they are drunk. It was never like this with the youth a long time ago. It was a peaceful life. That's how we were raised. There's so much change today. Our parents raised us and we listened. We lived with them and moved to different places until it was time for us to live our own lives. There was always wild game. We all lived on this. We never purchased food from a store. We always had country food: fish, caribou meat, which people hunted for, ptarmigans, rabbits. We never bought food from a store. A person hunted if they wanted to eat. The food was never wasted everything was eaten or used. That's what we did.

 ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH MARY SAUNDERS

- Mary: You've probably seen this yourself that some things shown on TV are not good.
- Lillian: Yes.
- Mary: There's swearing and other things.
- Lillian: Yes.
- Mary: The children listen to this and they copy what they see. That's partly why this is happening. They learn from the TV. There are so many things that the youth have access to today. Nothing, like this, was available a long time ago. Nothing, it was peaceful back then.
- Lillian: Yes. Also the youth can't speak to their grandparents because they can't speak Cree and the grandparents don't understand English. All the children speak English.





Current Resource Management Area Boundaries

Our Resource Management Areas (RMAs) only partly resembles our traditional territory...

HYDRO-ELECTRIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE NORTHERN FLOOD AGREEMENT (NFA)

In 1958, only a year after we arrived in York Landing (Kawechiwasiq), Manitoba Hydro began construction of the Kelsey Generating Station. Our members were not consulted about the project, although it was built just kilometres from our new community and would change the waters and environment around us. In the 1970's, the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) and Churchill River Diversion (CRD) proceeded, again without any prior consultation with Cree communities and without any environmental assessment and licensing. The Kettle Generating Station was completed downstream of York Landing (Kawechiwasiq) in 1974, followed by the Long Spruce Generating Station in 1979 and the Limestone Generating Station in 1990.



We describe the impacts of these projects in detail in the next chapter, as they continue to sadden and affect our members.

 DOUGLAS CHAPMAN

“When we first moved to York Landing, everything was here for us, a good place to hunt, fish, and trap muskrat and beaver. The hunting used to be good but there is a significant difference today. The grass along the shoreline, the dry willows: they used to be fresh and they are not anymore. Hydro is not given the right to control the land – our land. Not many of us here today have seen what it was like when we first moved to Kawechiwasik. Hydro has already done a lot of damage to our community. Does Manitoba Hydro realize or see what they have done to our livelihood?”

In response to on-going hydro-electric development in our lands, we joined with the other affected First Nations to form the Northern Flood Committee (NFC) and negotiate the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA). The NFA was signed in 1977, by Canada, Manitoba Hydro, the Province of Manitoba, and the five NFC communities. In 1995, we concluded the YFFN NFA Comprehensive Implementation Agreement with Canada, Manitoba Hydro, and the Province of Manitoba. These two agreements, while making important provisions for compensation for adverse effects from hydro-electric development and requiring Manitoba Hydro to consult with us prior to new development, are complex agreements that are not well understood in our community. We have needed to have ongoing legal advice to apply their provisions in our interests.

As noted earlier, these agreements have helped to identify us as ‘flood communities’ to outsiders, blurring where we come from and who we are as a community. The 1995 Comprehensive Implementation Agreement also formalized Resource Management Areas (RMAs) and confirmed a role for YFFN in land-use planning and resource management. However, our RMA only partly resembles our traditional territory (see map on page 44-45) and our historically negotiated York Registered Trapline Section (see map on page 50). To this day, these RMAs have acquired a level of meaning that often leads to confusion between the creation of additional resource management rights and our historical relationship, rights, and responsibilities to the land.





Kelsey Generating Station.

Colonialism: refers to the historic period during which Europeans expanded throughout the world, including our traditional territory, and imposed their form of economics, politics, religion, language and culture on our people.

Neocolonialism: refers to the present time period and the new, more subtle ways that governments, corporations, and other organizations sometimes, but not always, continue to impose their system of economics, politics, religion, language and culture on our people.

REFLECTIONS ON COLONIALISM AND NEOCOLONIALISM

“Lots of times I sit and think about a long time ago. What I remember and saw. How people survived and what they did to survive. Today things are so different. Its a lot easier for people today. This is what we were told a long time ago and we remember this. We were told that in the future things were going to be different; there would be changes. I see a bit of this today. We were also told that some day the Indian culture and way of life will be forgotten. There will be changes; things will happen differently. We were told in the past not to lose our way of life, our heritage, to practice it always. Not to lose touch with our culture. We were also told, when we first started going to meetings down south, that the white men were trying to change the Indians, trying to get them to live the way they do. But it’s not going to be like that, at least not soon. Maybe way in the future. Today, there are still a lot of Indians hanging onto their way of life, their culture. It’s different in the north than in the south. In the south, its easier to live the way the white men do.”¹²

Our First Nation has been subject to successive forms and practices of colonialism since the 17th century. Europeans



St. John's Church at York Landing.

¹² Richard Beardy as quoted in: Beardy, F. and R. Coutts. (1996) Voices from the Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory. McGill - Queen's University Press.





York Landing (Kawechiwasiik), Manitoba, late 1990's.

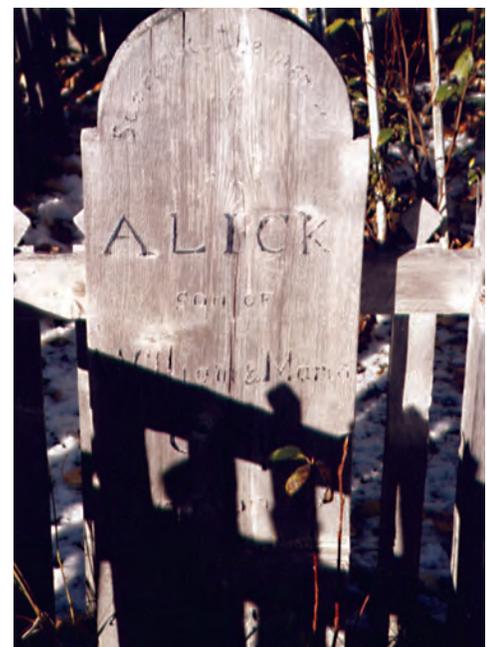
and their descendents have imposed their culture, economy, government and religion on us from the outside. We have been profoundly changed and hurt as a people and culture. Yet, we have somehow survived and been able to adapt sufficiently to keep who we are as a people - to protect our core values and culture. We became an important part of the fur trade and the operation of York Factory post. We joined the Anglican Church and the church became an important part of our community life in York Factory. We signed Treaty 5 in 1910 and succeeding annual treaty days were marked with memorable feasting and community dances by our ancestors and a good relationship with the RCMP.

We have somehow survived and been able to adapt sufficiently to keep who we are as a people

We adapted once again to our forced relocation to York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) in 1957, building an attractive community with little of the promised support from Indian Affairs, attempting to re-establish our use of the land around us. Hydro-electric development then began in 1957 when the construction of the Kelsey Generating Station began, followed by the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) and Churchill River Diversion (CRD) of the late 1970's. Kettle, Long Spruce, and Limestone were built between 1974 and 1990. In the following chapter, we will explain more about the profound environmental changes that hydro-electric development has brought to the water and land.

 JOHNNY SAUNDERS

“Our people have been cumulatively impacted. Over the last 60 years, we have been impacted by our dislocation from York Factory, residential schools, and hydro-development. These impacts have built upon each other and continue today.”



Grave at York Factory.



Our perspective on hydro-electric development is that it has been a destructive, exploitive form of neocolonialism, imposed from outside on our lands and community. In the past, we have not even been consulted let alone had an opportunity to participate in the planning and assessment of past hydro-electric development. The benefits and opportunities of hydro-electric development have escaped our community, while we have been at the heart of the environmental impacts and cumulative changes to the lands and waters, which deeply affect our way of life. The Keeyask Project will still create substantial and inevitable environmental impacts. We know this from our experience with past hydro-electric development.

 JOHNNY SAUNDERS

“Our Aboriginal and Treaty rights are very important to our community and are protected under the Constitution of Canada – Section 35. Our rights have been impacted by past projects here in the north. Even development in the south affects us because we are downstream. We will be impacted by future development.”

 WAYNE REDHEAD

“Keeyask and Hydro development are emotional issues because they have, and will continue to change our way of life and who we are as a Cree people.”

 JIMMY A. BEARDY

“It’s another form of assimilation. It makes us more dependant on money and destroys what was our ‘money’ - the caribou and resources that were our way of life.”

 ROY REDHEAD

“Hydro is playing the same colonial role that the residential school system played in the past. I see Hydro as just another way to destroy our way of life and erode our traditional knowledge. Hydro needs to be taught that the way of life that is being destroyed was our way of surviving.”

Some of our community members continue to consider Keeyask as another form of neocolonialism. However, the Keeyask Project is fundamentally different from past hydro-electric projects in terms of our role in the development and the potential benefits and opportunities to our community. As we have explained, we



have become a partner in the Keeyask Project to take an active role in determining our community's future by influencing how the Project is developed and managed as well as trying to create benefits for our current and future generations.

"The people of York Landing have seen many changes over the years and yet they have maintained their proud cultural traditions adapting to major disruptions such as relocation, the loss of their traditional lands, and the impacts of major hydro-electric projects. Today, the people of York Factory First Nation are preparing for the future by re-establishing their connection with the land, and becoming more self-reliant again."¹³

This hopeful statement was made over a decade ago and it remains true today. In these pages we have stated why we have joined the Partnership. We believe the only way we can succeed, and the Partnership can succeed, is to hold onto and apply our core values, teachings (kiskinohamakehwina) and traditional knowledge (ininiwi-kiskénihtamowin) of our Elders to the Keeyask Project. This is crucial if we are to continue to adapt, maintain our identity and achieve positive outcomes in the Keeyask Partnership.

¹³ Fast, H. and D. Saunders. (1996) From Kischewaskahekan to York Landing: A Land Use History of York Factory First Nation.







*"Water is the
foundation
of life"*
- Wayne Redhead



Isaac Beardy's Cabin.

CHANGE AND DAMAGE TO THE WATER, LAND AND PEOPLE

Hydro-electric development on the Nelson River system has affected our land, our families and each of us as individuals. The water, land and the people have been fundamentally damaged by hydro-electric development. The changes began with the water:

☞ WAYNE REDHEAD

"Water is the foundation of life. Our ancestors knew this, and it still is."

☞ MARTINA SAUNDERS

"Water gives life. This is where we come from in our mothers' womb. It gives life to the plants and animals. We can't live without water."

☞ WAYNE REDHEAD

"I had a dream about Askiy and my body. This dream was more like a vision. In this dream, I saw Askiy and all the water that runs through and over her body. The water was running over the land by rivers and waterways. I also saw my body with the blood that runs through the veins and vessels. I came to see that if blockages were formed in my vessels, the flow of blood would be restricted throughout my body. I would surely die if I allowed this to happen. I also saw the rivers being blocked by dams and restricting the free flow of the waters. I understood that if this was to continue, that Askiy would surely die as we know it to be. We are



connected to Askiy and Askiy is connected to us. We have to take care of our bodies just as Askiy is looking after herself and that we have to look after and respect her.”

We have described how our community was forced to leave our home at York Factory (Kischewaskahekan) and re-settle on the Aiken River at Split Lake. Many of us still have vivid memories of the land that we found at York Landing (Kawechiwasik), and the resources that were available at that time. It was only a year later, in 1958, when we discovered that Manitoba Hydro had begun construction of the Kelsey Generating Station only a few kilometres upstream from our newly assigned home. At that same time, Manitoba Hydro and the Province of Manitoba had funded studies to explore the possibility of converting Lake Winnipeg into a water storage reservoir and directing the Churchill River, feeding a series of generating stations along the Nelson River. Manitoba Hydro proceeded to develop the Kettle station, complete the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) and Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) projects, build Long Spruce and Limestone and most recently, to develop Wuskwatim.

As this development has advanced, we have struggled to adapt to ongoing changes in the land, water and environment around us. With the Kelsey development, we experienced changes in our water, in the stability of ice, and in the numbers of numa'o (sturgeon) and other fish in Split Lake. The LWR and the CRD changed the water levels on Split Lake, flooding the Aiken River, eroding shorelines, and causing considerable changes to our new territory. Even when the Kettle station was developed, well downstream of our community, our Elders witnessed subtle changes in Split Lake and the Aiken River. The land has never adjusted to these disruptions, nor have we adjusted entirely. The cumulative physical, and cultural effects of past development continue to reverberate along the Nelson River system. As hydro-electric development now proceeds towards Keeyask, Conawapa and the Bipole projects, we find ourselves living in an ever more compromised and uncertain natural environment – one changed forever and still adapting to the effects of past development.

In the following pages, we will try to explain some of the changes that we have experienced. Although we talk about them one at a time, it is important to understand that to us – in the world as our Elders have taught us to know and understand it – all of these pieces are connected.

We have struggled to adapt to ongoing changes in the land



We expect Keeyask to add to the changes



Connor Merrick

☞ FLORA BEARDY

"We were taught to respect everything. Even the littlest insect, you're not supposed to hurt because it's there for a reason. I remember we got in big trouble once as kids when we tied a piece of string around a bulldog [horsefly] to watch it fly on the string. Oh, my mother gave us a LONG talking to. She never used to yell at us, but when you got a talking to, you knew you'd done something wrong! My grandmother sat us down and she explained to us that every little thing is there for a reason. It has a spirit, and it's there for a reason. Everything is connected, so you don't hurt even one little thing. It's not right, because you'll be messing with nature."

When we explain that every part of nature is connected, we are referring to a web of relationships: relationships amongst people; relationships between people and the land; and relationships amongst the various living, non-living, and spiritual beings that make up the universe. We include ourselves in that web of relationships. The changes that we describe below - that have taken place in the water and land - have also occurred in us. As individuals, families, and as a community, all of us have found ourselves shaken, and gradually changing along with the land.

☞ DONNA SAUNDERS

"Hydro development affects me. I'm going through the changes along with the change [in the land]."

☞ WAYNE REDHEAD

"When I'm sitting out there [on the land] I feel a connection to everything around me, at times I still feel lonely. I think that feeling comes from the destruction of Askiy that's happening around us."

When our members talk about Keeyask, we don't see this project as any different from the changes brought by the overall Churchill/Nelson/Burntwood hydro-electric program. We see Keeyask as a continuation of a larger development project. We are not confident that the exact effects of a new development can be predicted, but we expect Keeyask to add to the changes that we have already experienced - to further destabilize our increasingly compromised environment.

☞ EVELYN BEARDY

"The environment is already in rough shape. With two more projects coming, what will be there after?"



 DOREEN SAUNDERS

“Have they done anything with Conawapa yet? We’re surrounded on three sides by dams. I had a dream that my grandchild was on the road. There was a big gust of wind, so I went outside and saw a tidal wave coming from all three sides. I thought about it later and I think this dream represents the future if this [Keeyask] goes ahead.”

“The water turbidity gets particularly bad in the spring time following break-up”
- Donna Saunders

WATER – THE QUALITY OF WATER AFFECTS EVERYTHING

As we explained above, the changes begin with the water:

 EDWIN BEARDY

“When I first moved to York Landing in 1969, we used to haul water from the shore. We used to drink from a cup from the river.”



Phillip Beardy

Today, no one drinks the water directly from the Aiken River, Split Lake or the Nelson River.

Since hydro-electric development began, the quality of the water near York Landing (Kawechiwasiq) has been steadily declining. Elders remember changes in the water as far back as 1968.



Madeline Wastesicoot

The water is at it's worst in the late winter and early spring, when it becomes cloudy, and coloured.

 DONNA SAUNDERS

“The turbidity of the water on Split Lake and around York Landing has been much greater since Kelsey and CRD. But the water turbidity gets particularly bad in the spring time following break-up.”

 EMILY KEMATCH

“I don’t bother to wash my whites when the water is discoloured. I wash them when the water is less discoloured.”

Our water now requires a treatment facility, but even our treated water often has a strong colour, odour and an unpleasant taste. It is subject to frequent boil water advisories. There are problems



CHURCHILL RIVER DIVERSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

In 1976, Manitoba Hydro initiated the Churchill River Diversion (CRD), which directed a major portion of the Churchill River's flow through the Rat and Burntwood Rivers into the Nelson River. This river flow diversion increases the hydroelectric potential on the Burntwood and Nelson Rivers while significantly reducing the flow along the Churchill River. In York Landing (Kawechiwasik), our members experienced and continue to experience, the effects of these water regime changes. We talk about our experiences throughout this chapter. In Churchill, York Factory members have also observed and experienced many visible environmental changes, including changes to the quality of the water, fish and wildlife of the Churchill River.

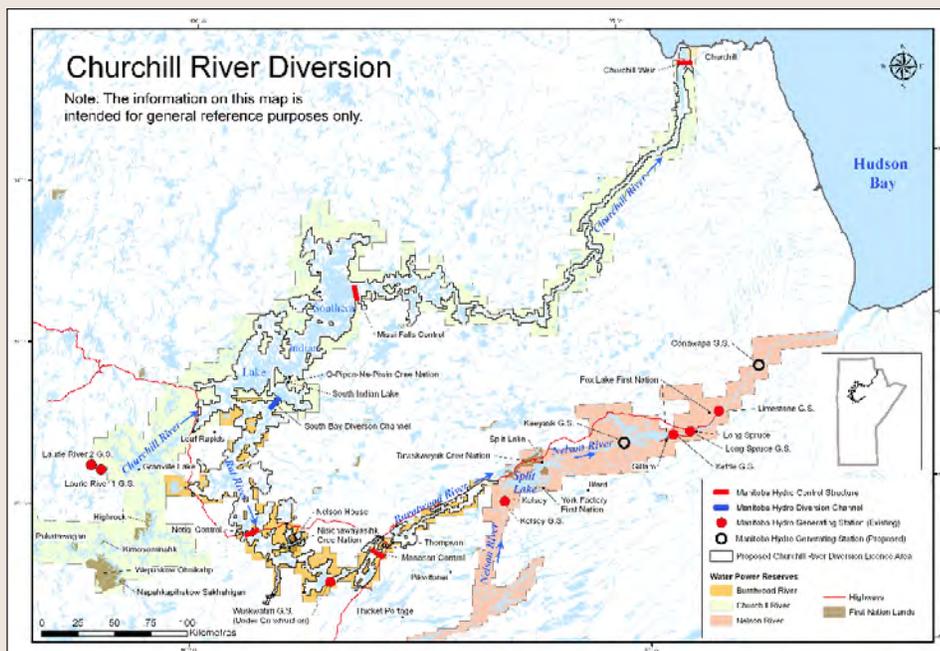


Photo: Government of Manitoba (http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/licensing/pdf/crd_map_web.pdf)



The water quality of the Churchill River has declined significantly over the years with changes in colour and smell. The water level is consistently and significantly lower which has impacted our travel, recreational and harvesting activities on the river. With significantly lower water levels, fish have disappeared where they used to be plentiful. When fish are caught, YFFN members have noticed a deterioration in the quality and taste of the fish. Even the quality and taste of geese harvested along the river has become worse.

 DOROTHY MORAND

"The Churchill River Diversion was in the 1970's. Today we see the impacts: The fish are not as good. They are soft and the colours vary from yellow, brown and green. Fish were plentiful before. Today people set nets and don't catch anything. The water is not clear. It's dirty and it smells."

 LISA ANN SPENCE

"We used to fish in the area where the bridge is now. We can't fish there anymore. Also, the bridge looks unsafe. We don't travel on it."

 FLORA BEARDY

"I left Churchill in 1996 and already the water, on the river, was dirty. We would hit rocks because we couldn't see them. This never happened when the water was clear. We used the Churchill River a lot when we lived there."





Children at Goose Camp, Cheryl Flett (right).

with our treatment facility and our water intake, but the root cause of our problems is the quality of the raw water itself.

 YVONNE BEARDY

“When I moved to York in ‘83 I had a full set of teeth and no cavities, but as the years passed my teeth started to break down. I had to see a dentist. Each time I went I needed to have a filling or have a tooth extracted. I had always brushed my teeth regularly. I had asked the dentist as to why and it was from the water being so hard on my teeth. The chemicals in the water”

As children, many of us swam in the lake at community beaches. Today we discourage our children from swimming because of the effects that the water has on their skin.

 TED BLAND

“When I was a kid, the water was nice enough to swim in. Now you can tell the difference: kids can’t go swimming because they get sores on their bodies. A lot of them complain about itchy skin.”

 THERESA BEARDY

“My first trip into York was in 1984. I can remember going by boat. The water was green and had that fresh water smell. The next time I would go back to York was when I started my life there with my husband, in 2000. There was a big difference in the appearance and quality of the water. It was now so dirty and cloudy. Swimming was something that was not fun anymore because of how the water looked and smelled - how it made our skin and hair feel. Now, in 2011, I don’t even let my children swim in the water.”

 EMILY KEMATCH

"Our children now have eczema, skin problems, asthma. Even some of our Elders have asthma. We never had these problems at York Factory. This was mentioned to me by my mother, Maria Saunders."

The children have skin rashes, eczema and sores. Their skin is dry and itchy after being in the water. We notice similar problems from bathing in the community.

Of course, it is not just us who are affected by these changes in the water. The fish, birds, plants and animals have been similarly affected by the changes that hydro-electric development has caused in the water.

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"The quality of water affects everything."

 LOUISA CONSTANT

"In the old stories I have heard, I have always concentrated on the water. The water is able to clean itself with its natural minerals. But now it takes longer. This is what I mean about listening to our old stories. For example, medicines might be brought back in clean water. Knowing about the ecosystem, knowing any time there is a disruption; we know that the relationships will be affected. We know from our experience with Kelsey and other dams. But those stories are there to help us reconnect to the land and waters."

 LATISHA ANAKA (AGE 14)

"I'd like to see the land as our ancestors did. More trees, cleaner water, sandy beaches. I want to be able to go down to the lake and take a dip, that'd be nice."

 YFFN YOUTH

"I hope York Landing is [a] bigger town in the future. I hope there will be more houses, stores, motels and people. I hope the water will become clean and clear."

"The quality of water affects everything."
- Eric Saunders



Darcy Wastesicoot

FISH AND FISHING

There is no doubt that the fish and fishing conditions near our community have been damaged by hydro-electric development.





Snaring Pickerel at Aiken River portage.

*"I don't like the taste of fish. It's watery, tasteless."
- Roddy Ouskan*

There are fewer fish in Split Lake and the Aiken River today than there were before hydro-electric development. The fish have moved away from the shorelines into deeper water and numa'o (sturgeon) that used to be harvested easily in Split Lake are now harder to find. Commercial fishing has become impossible, not only because of the decline in numbers of fish, but also because our nets become clogged and ruined by green slime in the water.

The fish that we do catch are no longer healthy like they were in the past. We are finding fish with tumors and growths on them. Many of us destroy these fish because they are not natural. The Elders have told us that there is something wrong with the spirits of these fish. Some see them as omens.

 DOROTHY REDHEAD

"We used to drink that water for a long time after we got there [to York Landing]. Late 60's, about 1967, 68, 69, the water levels started changing. The fish started being no good after the 70's and 80's, the fish are suddenly no good. They started looking different. They have sores first on their body, we didn't eat those ones. On their flesh, there was bugs on there, after 1980. Just like a pimple when you have a big one, that's what it looks like on their bodies, on the flesh. They started to look like that the first time the fish started to look ugly."

The taste and texture of the fish has changed. The flesh is soft and mushy now, and the fish taste watery. We also understand that there is increased mercury in the fish as a result of damming the water and flooding land. Although mercury is not something that we can measure, we know that the fish are not healthy.



Many of our members will no longer eat fish from Split Lake.

 RODDY OUSKAN

"I don't like fish from Split Lake, maybe some pickerel. I don't like the taste of fish. It's watery, tasteless. In whitefish it is most noticeable. It's been noticed in pickerel too. Lots of people feel that way. Older people feel that way - the ones who remember what they used to taste like. There is a bad texture - not what it should be."



 YFFN YOUTH

"I feel that it is not fair for me and the people in my area to build a new dam because it's [going to] affect the fish around my town and that is not fair."



 ISAAC BEARDY

"I've seen lots of fish that are deformed. There was one jackfish with the top part of its mouth gone. It must have died, how could it eat? I've seen fish floating, dead. I've seen fish with cuts on them, from the turbines, especially the big fish. Some fish were cut to pieces. Jeremy, Howard and Franklin were with me."

Some members now travel to other lakes to fish away from the effects of hydro-electric development. This travel is expensive, and prevents many of us from being able to harvest fish for our families.

 TED BLAND

"Families got together, on the beach, or fishing at Ripple River. It was good and healthy for them to get together. They'd enjoy the weather, visit, and bond with each other. Now we have to go farther away and the fishing isn't as good. It doesn't work as well now - getting together like that."

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

"I was talking with some other women in the community about the diabetes in the community. We had this idea of going to the portage for the pickerel run. We were thinking about our health and how much better it could be to eat fish. We had wanted to go out during the pickerel run, but we didn't make it out there because it was too much trouble to get the bikes and everything else we needed."



SAKAHEGAN NUMA'O (LAKE STURGEON)



Stanley Spence

*"It is necessary
to take care of
this fish"*
- Obediah Wastesicoot

Numa'o is an important fish to our community. Since moving to York Landing (Kawechiwisik), we have witnessed the decline in the number of numa'o in the Split Lake area. Many of our younger members have never had the privilege of seeing this ancient fish, even though some of our community members have harvested numa'o around the York Landing (Kawechiwisik) area and continue to harvest in the Lower Nelson region.

 GILBERT BEARDY

"I have noticed that long ago the sturgeon were much bigger. We used to lie beside them on the shores. Now the lake is so deep and the current is moving fast. They moved on to where the channel used to be. We can't set nets where we used to fish. If you do set a net, all you get is algae. Once I had to cut my net in half because it was too heavy with algae. I can't set nets there anymore."

 ISAAC BEARDY

"There are plenty of sturgeon where there is fast current on the Nelson River. You get one here and there by my cabin. If I really want a lot of sturgeon I go towards Conawapa. There are lots there. At Jackfish Island I caught three sturgeon. With these dams going up there is going to be no sturgeon. Sturgeon used to taste good a long time ago. Now they taste funny. They look so white now. This isn't normal."

 OBEDIAH WASTESICOOT

"Sturgeon don't grow that fast like other fish. That's why it is necessary to take care of this fish. Many community members don't know the specific effects it experiences because of its slow growth. More studies need to be done to make sure the sturgeon will survive."

We live in York Landing (Kawechiwisik) and maintain a strong relationship with our traditional territory on the coast. For that reason, it is very important to our community that the numa'o on the entire Nelson River as well as the Hayes River be watched closely. We need to maintain the health and well-being of the numa'o and our relationship with this special species of fish.





John Saunders Jr.

BIRDS, ANIMALS AND PLANTS

The changes to the water have affected every living thing. There are fewer geese and almost no ducks in our area now because the shoreline habitat that they use has been flooded and eroded.

 WAYNE REDHEAD

"Spots I've hunted before for ducks – there's no shoreline left for birds, or places to set up a hunting blind."

There are fewer gulls on the lake and the small islands where they nested are now under water. In the past, we would see muskrat push-ups all over the Pukituhokansik Sipi¹⁹ and the Aiken River. Today there are almost none. With beaver, the story is the same.

 DOUGLAS CHAPMAN

"I have seen a lot of changes in the animals and waterfowl. A long time ago, there were many. The changes have happened recently. There are still animals, but now you have to look for them. If you don't, then you won't find them. Rabbit tastes different. Fish tastes different. Animals taste different. Now we just eat fast foods and canned foods. Maybe that is why we have a lot of diabetics now."

"There's no shoreline left for birds"
- Wayne Redhead



Moose

¹⁹ This is the local word used to refer to the Mistuska River



Caribou have been affected by past hydro-electric development

ATTIK (CARIBOU)

Before our relocation to York Landing (Kawechiwasiik), we hunted caribou all year round at the Hudson Bay Coast. However, the spring and fall caribou migrations were particularly important moments for caribou hunting. In the last 10 years, we have harvested caribou near York Landing (Kawechiwasiik), but for many years before that, we did not see them in our area. We have observed both the Woodland Caribou and Pen Island Caribou in our area. These caribou are visibly distinct animals in terms of body size, colour, and antler shape.

☞ EMILY KEMATCH

"When the caribou came back, the Elders said that the caribou had left for 30 years until they learned how to adapt to this territory; mainly to the impacts of the flooding of the land and the environment."

☞ YVONNE BEARDY

"I moved to York Landing in 1983, but I didn't hear about there being caribou being in the area until 1990. I think that when the caribou started coming through York Landing they were migrating through York Landing."

☞ ISAAC BEARDY

"There are no caribou in York Factory. We couldn't find any there. But they come here [York Landing] right into the community. There have been plenty. One time, Lorraine was coming to the house and she said, "Look at the dogs." But they were caribou. We all had a good laugh."

☞ GILBERT BEARDY

"The caribou are just coming back to York Landing. High water is a problem. The caribou drown from crossing the Nelson River. Their migration is altered from Hydro dams and changes to the current."

Caribou are important to our community and we are concerned for their wellbeing. They have been affected by past hydro-electric development and will be affected by the Keeyask Project. For our community, caribou are more than a food source. They are also as part of our traditions, culture and identity. We use various parts of the caribou such as the antlers, bones, hide and sinew for clothing and handicrafts.



Hunting caribou at York Factory.



Isaiah Saunders showing kids how to skin a caribou.

Our culture is tied to the land, and we have had to adjust to these changes in the animals. There are fewer opportunities to harvest, and those who do go on the land have to travel farther than they did in the past. We find that fewer young people have the opportunity to go out, and establish their own connections with the land. We find ourselves sitting down less often as families to enjoy a meal of wild game.

 YFFN YOUTH

"I feel so sad this dam might flood York Landing and [the] animals."

 DOUGLAS CHAPMAN

"Hydro is responsible for everything that you see here. We moved here in 1957. There was plenty of wild food: fish, muskrat, beavers. There were plenty of them. Nowadays, you don't see them anymore. Hydro is responsible for these things going on... Hydro just wants to do whatever they want. They don't care about anyone else. Now we can't live off the land anymore. There are no animals or fish."

"I feel so sad this dam might flood York Landing and (the) animals."

- YFFN Youth



Wekās

TRAVEL (PIMOTAYHOWIN) – ICE AND WATER

Travel on the land is a constant part of life in York Landing (Kawechiwasik); travel safety is a constant concern.

We travel on the land, water and ice in order to harvest food, to camp, and to visit the places of our family memories. Without all-weather road access, we cross Split Lake by boat, ferry, skidoo, and winter ice road to get to our banks, groceries, families, and gatherings outside of the community. Manitoba Hydro's reversal of seasonal flows on the Nelson River, coupled with frequent fluctuations in water levels, has drastically increased the risks associated with traveling.

The Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) project reversed regular seasonal flows on the Nelson River system. Instead of flows peaking in spring, water levels are now highest in the winter (when the demand for electricity is greatest) and lowest in summer. In winter, increasing water levels create slush ice on winter roads and trails making them dangerous, and sometimes

"Hydro is responsible for everything that you see here."

- Douglas Chapman





Trees falling along shore.



Winter Road.



Debris on Split Lake.

impassible. Changing flows at the Kelsey station affect ice formation, leaving thin spots requiring travelers to be cautious.

In 1998, Archie Redhead fell through unstable ice with his skidoo. He was alone, but thankfully managed to rescue himself by pulling himself back onto the ice with a pick-axe.

In 1975, Obediah Wastesicoot lost his snowmobiling partner, Reggie Ponask, who fell through the ice. Obediah was unable to help as his friend drowned in the cold water.

☞ JOHNNY SAUNDERS

"A trail system was developed after this tragedy, but still required travel mostly on ice. Trail maintenance was non-existent once the trails were cut and they do not meet today's specs for snowmobiles. When the trails were cut the Elan or 12-horse snowmobile was used for transportation. The Elan had a 24" width and therefore trails developed were narrow. Today's snowmobiles are up to 42" wide and trails no longer meet a safe standard of travel. Skis often bounce off trees or get hung-up causing personal injury, damaged snowmobiles and gear."

☞ RODDY OUSKAN

"There are fluctuations close to the community, which causes unsafe ice. If the water goes up after the ice forms, water floods the areas along the shore."





York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) Shoreline.

In spring, water levels drop, leaving ice hanging at dangerous angles from scoured shorelines.

 AMELIA SAUNDERS

"Trapping is made difficult now because of the water levels."

In summer, water erodes shorelines, pulling away dead trees that pose a threat to boat and ferry navigation. Those who travel by boat have difficulty landing and launching because many of the traditional landing spots have eroded away and shorelines are littered with debris (despite annual shoreline clean-up efforts).

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"There's debris along the shoreline and it's hard to land a boat. You have to get out and haul logs away before you can get to shore...sometimes you can't even land your boat. They talk about shoreline clean up; it doesn't even work. It doesn't matter how many trees you clean up."

Boat drivers now have to learn how to navigate boulders, currents and other new hazards under ever changing water conditions. Prior to regulation, the Aiken River followed a clean, narrow channel into Split Lake. Increased water levels flooded the land adjacent to the river, making it much wider, but sufficiently shallow that it can only be navigated by a driver who remembers, or has memorized the route of the original channel.

"Sometimes you can't even land your boat."
- Eric Saunders



The original channel of the Aiken River - visible under low water conditions.



Pukituhokansik Sipi channel under low water conditions.





Bareass Beach, Present.

Increasingly unsafe travel conditions not only make it harder to engage in traditional harvesting activities, but make many of us nervous to travel outside of the community. The result is that fewer members go out harvesting, fewer provide healthy food for their families, fewer children are exposed to these traditional practices and there is an increasing sense of isolation in the community.

 DOREEN SAUNDERS

“The weather plays a big part in our isolation period. Sometimes we’re weathered out for 3-4 days. That affects our mail service, store supplies and freight.”

Changing ice and water conditions also affect our daily travel in and out of York Landing (Kawechiwasiik). It has increased our sense of isolation from economic centres that have taken on extreme importance over the last several decades. In particular, we travel to Thompson for medical services, grocery supplies and visiting family. Because we don't have an all-weather road or railway access, we rely on water and ice travel routes. During the spring break-up and fall freeze-up, we are increasingly restricted as the lake becomes impassable for up to 12 weeks a year. We also use air travel, but increasing costs make it difficult for most community members to fly in and out of York Landing (Kawechiwasiik). Needless to say, we are acutely aware of and influenced by changing environmental conditions and their influence on travel conditions.





Bareass Beach, Past, late 1980's.

SHORELINE EROSION, ACCESS AND COMMUNITY PLACES

Over the last several decades, changing water levels have eroded many shorelines near York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) that were not secured by bedrock. Although these 'soft' shorelines represent a minority of shores along Split Lake, to us, they have been the most important places around the lake. They have provided access points, landing points, camping spots and beaches for our community. The Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board predicted that shorelines would stabilize within 10 years of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) project. This was not the case. These important community places have continued to erode since that time. We have lost boat launches, beaches, camps and beautiful, scenic places. We now have just one beach, which has become rocky and is only accessible by boat.

 WAYNE REDHEAD

"The York Landing area used to be hospitable. I have a cabin now, but you have to worry about the shoreline. Isaac had to move his cabin back into the bush to get away from the flooding and erosion."

We have already discussed the problems that erosion causes for navigating, landing and launching boats. We are concerned

*Over the last
several decades,
changing water
levels have eroded
many shorelines
near York Landing
(Kawechiwasiik)*





Joe Ouskan's boat.

"I remember this one beach where my parents used to take us... it's not there anymore"

- Martina Saunders

about how the soil that falls into the water affects fish and other animals in the water. We have also lost many of the beaches and campsites that allowed us to come together as families. These places were key to our community health.

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

"I remember this one beach where my parents used to take us. I was standing in the water on the beach with my 'new' puppy. I threw my puppy in the water, I didn't know it couldn't swim and it almost drowned. My brother and sister came running past me to grab it out of the water. My parents made me go sit on the rocks so I could be away from the water. I was lying beside my puppy and it was making this 'funny' noise. I remember having this feeling of serenity because me and my puppy were being kept safe. This is one of the fond memories that I have of spending time with my family. I was on the ferry a few weeks ago and I was looking towards that beach and you know, it's not there anymore. This place is not there anymore."

 KIMBERLY DANIELS

"I remember as a child swimming, fishing, boating. We would go to this beach we called bareass beach. The water was so nice and clear. You could see the bottom. It's sad that my children won't see anything like that near our home community. It's just a story now. So if this dam comes in will our fishing be a story too? My children, will they be able to go down the bank to fish near their home?"



Our memories – even our identities – are tied to these places on the land. The land around us, from York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) to York Factory, Owl River and the Kaskattama River, is populated with our memories. We have memories tied to places where our relatives were born, where we camped as families, buried loved ones, and shared experiences with them. When these places erode away, or become inaccessible, it becomes harder for us to keep our memories. We not only forget to pass these stories to our own children, but have nowhere to take the next generation to build strong memories of their own.

 EVELYN BEARDY

“Our youth are not as interested in the traditional ways because the older generations don’t take them out on the land as often as before, probably because the water is spoiled, fish are not good and the hunting and trapping are so congested.”

 NELLIE REDHEAD

“I’ve seen changes in the water and ice. Break-up and freeze-up are much different now. At freeze-up, the lake used to freeze naturally from shore to shore. Everyone went down to skate on the ice once it was safe. It was a happy time. Everyone spent time down at the lake. It was our playground. You saw shoreline, sand, rocks; it was nice. Today when you walk down to the lake, it’s just mud. And getting to the boat is difficult. One summer we didn’t even go to Split Lake because it was unsafe to land there. It was all eroded away.”

KEEYASK EFFECTS: PREDICTIONS, SKEPTICISM AND UNCERTAINTY

Many of the changes that we have described are ongoing. They began with changes in the flow of the water and have passed along through the fish, animals, birds, shorelines and our community. Ours is an environment continually changing and adapting in response to more and more developments. As we have discussed, we see Keeyask as the next step in ongoing hydro-electric development in our territory. We have experienced the cumulative changes caused by numerous past



ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The Ferry Landing

In 2003, water levels on Split Lake became so low that the ferry could not access the ferry landing in the community. A new landing site had to be developed west of the community to accommodate low water levels.

A year later, in 2004, the water became so high that it covered the ferry landing in the community. Trucks had to drive through the water to get into York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) from the ferry. Then, in 2011, we experienced historically high water levels that covered the shores of our community and Split Lake for the entire summer. In the coming years we expect to see more instances of high water levels on Split Lake and around York Landing (Kawechiwasiik).

Pukituhokansik Sipi

Fluctuating water levels on Split Lake regularly influence the Pukituhokansik Sipi where our members have cabins, set fishing



Ferry landing under high water.



Ferry landing under high water.



Pukituhokansik Sipi Under Low Conditions.



Pukituhokansik Sipi Under High Conditions.



nets, pick berries, walk, canoe, and hunt waterfowl, moose and caribou. The vegetation and habitat in the river have been changed, cabins have had to be moved back from the shore and access has been disrupted by changing water levels.

Sandy Beach

In the late 1950's, through the 60's and early 70's, there was a beach on the west side of the community that was called 'Sandy Beach'. It was a beautiful sandy beach where we used to go swimming and playing. We had a lot of fun down there. After the Lake Winnipeg Regulation project, water levels came up, covering much of the beach and eroding the banks behind the sand. Today, high water conditions continue to erode the shoreline, and low water conditions expose the now-mucky ground that used to be 'Sandy Beach'. The youth of today no longer have the enjoyment that we used to have there.



Sandy Beach, low water.



Sandy Beach, high water.



Mucky ground at Sandy Beach.





Split Lake, Manitoba.

developments, and are, sadly, confident that Keeyask will add incrementally more to the damage already caused.

In our consultations and negotiations with Manitoba Hydro, we have been told that the changes to Split Lake or the Aiken River caused by Keeyask will be negligible. The studies predict no flooding upstream of the outlet of Clark Lake under open water conditions and no changes to the ice cover on Split Lake. They predict no further degradation of water quality near York Landing (Kawechiwasiik), and only minimal, if any, effects on fish and animals near our community.

These predictions give us little to no comfort.

Since we were relocated to York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) in 1957, we have had more than 50 years of dealings with Manitoba Hydro. In our experience, the implications of hydro-electric development projects have not been communicated to us accurately, and scientific predictions - though they have often claimed certainty and objectivity - have not always been correct. In fact, the predictions and technical modeling associated with past hydro-electric development, such as Kelsey, the CRD, and LWR, have appeared excessively confident and even arrogant at times.

Because of our past experience we continue to be skeptical of the predictions of the potential effects related to the Keeyask Project. To us, the water, the land, the people, and the animals, throughout the river system, are so tightly interconnected that



we cannot confidently predict all that will happen as Keeyask is built. However, Manitoba Hydro has come a long way in acknowledging the uncertainty in making predictions and the difficulties in assuming complete objectivity.

In many cases, Manitoba Hydro has come to understand our skepticism about the predicted effects of the Keeyask Project. As many of our community members point out, we strongly believe that the effects of the project will go beyond the predicted 'hydraulic zone of influence' and beyond the study areas defined in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

 WAYNE REDHEAD

"We are borrowing from future generations here... I can't just look at one project and how it affects us. I have to look at the whole, from Lake Winnipeg, right down to the bay. Hydro development has had an effect on everything from the smallest plants to animals and people. It's far-reaching. Hydro says it's isolated – I don't believe that. It's far-reaching. It's devastating. We've changed as a people. It has changed our whole way of life and who we are as a people. There are other factors, but Hydro alone is huge."

 OBEDIAH WASTESICOOT

"Hydro says that we won't be impacted. I don't believe it."

 JASMINE WASTESICOOT

"It's sad to know that another dam is going to be built and knowing already that the current dams are destroying the water and the land slowly."

 MIRANDA MOOSE, GRADE 8

"[The] Keeyask project scare[s] me because it can flood our lakes and take water away and hurts animals and the environment can be destroyed."

 DOUGLAS CHAPMAN

"If Keeyask happens, it's going to get worse... We the Elders expect more flooding. Hydro is lying. The flooding will be all over. Water will come back up the rivers. The whole thing will be flooded (points to the map at Clark Lake and Split Lake). The community too will be flooded. The Elders don't believe what Hydro is saying."

 CATHERINE BEARDY

"I heard my 12 year-old son ask, "if Keeyask goes ahead, will we be

Because of our past experience we continue to be skeptical of the predictions of the potential effects

"The Elders expect more flooding"
- Douglas Chapman



flooded?” He had heard that. The kids talk about these things – about what will happen in the future.”

Since early in the planning process, it has been clear that our perspectives on the effects of the project differ from those of the scientific experts who have prepared the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As Cree people, we have our own way of knowing, our own experts, and our own understanding of a highly complex, and interconnected world. Despite Manitoba Hydro’s scientific predictions, we remain concerned that Keeyask will continue to degrade our territory:

- We are concerned that water quality at York Landing (Kawechiwasic) will be made worse by the Keeyask Project;
- We anticipate that the numbers and quality of fish and wildlife will be reduced further by Keeyask;
- We fear that ice and open water travel conditions will become more treacherous; and
- We are saddened that more of our important community places will continue to be lost.

As a partner in the Keeyask Project, we have insisted that our perspectives, values, and knowledge be respected and given equal weight. Our negotiating team has made efforts to reflect some of these perspectives and knowledge in Adverse Effects Agreement (AEA) and the environmental impact assessment process. While we still feel that many of the details need to be worked out with our partners, we acknowledge that our perspectives and knowledge have been brought into some parts of the EIS. As we will explain in the following chapters, our traditional knowledge, in the form of meaningful involvement of our community Elders, resource users and youth, will be important to the success of the Partnership’s plans for construction, mitigation, monitoring and on-going management - for the life of the Keeyask Project.



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The Way Forward





Roy Redhead and Wayne Redhead

THE KEYYASK PARTNERSHIP

KEYYASK WE CHAY WA KAN TO WIN

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Arthur Beardy

Since 2001, we have been discussing a possible partnership for the Keeyask Generation Project with Manitoba Hydro, Tataskweyak Cree Nation (TCN), War Lake Cree Nation (WLCN) and Fox Lake Cree Nation (FLCN). In May 2009 our Chief and Council signed the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA) and the Keeyask Adverse Effects Agreement, paving the way for our equity partnership in the Project. We are required to invest our own money in the Project, with a minimum financial contribution of \$2,500,000 up to a maximum \$5,000,000. If we invest the maximum amount we will own 5 % of the Keeyask Project, or lesser proportions, if we invest lesser amounts down to the minimum required amount. This will entitle us to a seat on the Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership Board, a share of potential revenues from power sales; a share in construction jobs; a target of 36 operational jobs in the ongoing operations of Manitoba Hydro; and an opportunity to participate in direct negotiated contracts for catering at the Keeyask Project camps, security at the construction camps, and retention and support services for project employees. Also, as an equity partner, we will have a limited ongoing role in the governance, environmental monitoring and management of Keeyask as outlined in the JKDA.





From left to right: Tamara Beardy, Evelyn Beardy, Roy Redhead, Wayne Redhead, Eric Saunders and Art Hoole.

Elsewhere in this report, we have described the socio-economic conditions in our community and the threats to our Cree culture. Elsewhere in the overall Keeyask Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) documentation, there are data that illustrate the high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, low family income levels and public health issues including high rates of diabetes and tuberculosis in our community. Given these conditions our members chose to support Chief and Council signing the JKDA to pursue the potential benefits for our current and future generations, to sustain and achieve respect for our Cree culture, and have a voice in this partnership. As we have explained, however, our decision to become a co-proponent was not easy and was filled with mixed emotions. We consider it important to highlight the steps that led us to signing the JKDA, our Adverse Effects Agreement with Manitoba Hydro and some of the realities of our community mandate to participate in Keeyask.

A PARTNERSHIP TO BE PROVEN

Early on, in 2002, we signed a process agreement with Manitoba Hydro that provided funding to recruit staff and professional consultants to support our negotiations for the Keeyask hydro-electric development. Also, we negotiated a contribution agreement with Manitoba Hydro in 2004 to support our own community-based environmental studies to further inform



BALLOT

JOINT KEYYASK DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

As a voter of the York Factory First Nation:

DO YOU SUPPORT THE CHIEF AND COUNCIL OF YORK FACTORY FIRST NATION
SIGNING THE PROPOSED JOINT KEYYASK DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT?

YES

NO

Ballot for the YFFN referendum on the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement, March 26, 2009.



From left to right: Johnny Saunders, Obediah Wastesicoot, Archie Redhead, Johnson Saunders and Gordon Wastesicoot.



Johnson Saunders and Elizabeth Ryle at the JKDA polling station in Churchill, Manitoba.

our consideration of the Keeyask Project. Throughout these activities, our successive Chiefs and Councils took a neutral position regarding whether or not YFFN would participate in Keeyask. This was a different approach than that taken by TCN and WLCN, who signed an Agreement in Principle (AIP) for Keeyask in 2000 with Manitoba Hydro, and formed the Cree Nations Partners (CNP) to negotiate the JKDA.

From 2002 to 2008 we participated with Manitoba Hydro, TCN, WLFN and FLCN in the negotiation and drafting of the JKDA. YFFN also participated with the partners in various multi-party committees and working groups responsible for considering specific aspects of the Project (e.g., the Keeyask Project Description Committee). By 2008 the JKDA had been finalized.

Our community conducted a ratification process and referendum, just like each of the other Keeyask Cree Nation communities to determine whether YFFN members supported the Chief and Council in signing the JKDA. Our ratification process began with information meetings in 2008. In total, we conducted five rounds of information meetings in York Landing (Kawechiwasic), Thompson, Churchill and Winnipeg. Then we held a final round of community information meetings in early March 2009.

During this process, our Future Development staff had the huge task of informing our community members of this extremely complicated document, which is hundreds of pages in length and written in technical and legal language. We prepared several



clearly communicate content and meaning of the JKDA and AEA.

 DONNA SAUNDERS

“With this partnership it was an opportunity for York Factory to have a say in whether we were partners or not. We weighed our options and had consultation meetings for years with the community. We had consultation meetings with our own people and sometimes we would bring in Manitoba Hydro to answer our questions in York Landing. Also, we have consultants that help us.”

 AMELIA SAUNDERS

“I was involved in the JKDA [Joint Keeyask Development Agreement] voting process. We informed our people and they had several months to decide. I don’t think we were forced. A majority of people voted in favour of the JKDA and AEA [Adverse Effects Agreement].”

 TED BLAND

“Our people had to look at being a partner and owner in Keeyask as well and some of the revenues generated. A lot of people didn’t understand. It’s easy to hear what potentially might be coming to the community but to actually go through the whole process and to go through the piles and piles of material, it’s really quite difficult to grasp and understand. So after we went through all the negotiations it was time for us to explain exactly what was involved. We did our consultations for all our membership in four different communities. People had a lot of concerns. People had a lot of questions and we did our best to answer them.”

The JKDA recognizes the Keeyask Cree Nations (KCN), which includes ourselves, FLCN, TCN and WLCN. Manitoba Hydro determined that in the ratification vote for the JKDA, a KCN majority vote, based on band populations, would be required for the Keeyask Project to move forward. Since TCN’s population represents 60 percent of the KCN overall population, it represents a KCN majority on its own. TCN’s ratification vote occurred several months before the YFFN referendum. By voting in favour of their Chief and Council signing the JKDA, TCN ensured the required level of support among the Keeyask Cree Nations, as defined in the JKDA as the ‘KCN Majority’, before our vote took place. While TCN’s vote did not guarantee that Keeyask would be built, it meant that the Keeyask Project could proceed towards the preparation of the Keeyask EIS and application for environmental licenses.



Johnson Saunders, Roy Redhead, Martina Saunders, Bonnie Redhead



Eric Saunders, Gordon Wastesicoot, Elisa Redhead, Martina Saunders, Brad Regehr, Darryl Wastesicoot, and Johnny Saunders



Our referendum vote was held on March 26, 2009, with an advance poll on March 9, 2009. The referendum question asked each YFFN member if they would support Chief and Council in signing the JKDA - Yes or No - and the Keeyask Adverse Effects Agreement (AEA) - Yes or No.

Of 713 eligible voters on and off reserve, 261 members cast ballots (37%) which ensured the JKDA requirement that a minimum of one-third of our eligible membership vote. In total, 216 (83%) voted "Yes" for signing the JKDA. The Keeyask AEA was also voted upon, and 220 (84%) voted in favor of Chief and Council signing this agreement. Both the JKDA and the AEA required a simple majority of votes to support the signing of the agreements. We followed a democratic process to ratify the signing of the JKDA and the AEA and a strong majority of those who voted supported the agreements being signed.

As we have mentioned, our community's collective decision to sign the JKDA and become a partner in Keeyask was very difficult given the situation at the time, the conditions of the vote, and the different options in front of us. While some of our members voted with certainty, others voted with mixed feelings. It has always been very important to our community to acknowledge the deep moral dilemma that many of our members faced when voting on the JKDA and AEA.

Would we be able to come to terms with our role in the environmental impacts? Could we trust Manitoba Hydro and become their partner? What did the JKDA mean in terms of how the Partnership would actually be conducted? We didn't know what the Partnership would hold in store for our community.

Since that time, we have been significantly involved in the Keeyask Environmental Impact Assessment process through various working groups and workshops held in Winnipeg and Thompson, including the Aquatic Working Group, the Mammals Working Group, the Mercury and Human Health Working Group, the Environmental Studies Working Group, and the Split Lake Sedimentation and Erosion Working Group. We have also held many community meetings in York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) to continue to inform our members about the environmental, social, and cultural issues we continue to discuss with our partners.



Many of our members do not trust our major partner, Manitoba Hydro



Ten Shilling Creek.



Ten Shilling. Allison Saunders, Carl Constant and Trevor Saunders.



Ten Shilling cabins, 2009.

Despite the shaky past our community has had with Manitoba Hydro, and the highly technical nature of the negotiations, our community voted in good faith and with the hope of being at the table with the other partners and securing benefits for our future generations. We decided that we would see how a partnership with Manitoba Hydro and the other KCN communities would work. We have observed some good signs over the last years that our partners are making an attempt to improve our relationship and mend past wounds. However, we believe that the Keeyask Partnership still needs to be proven and requires ongoing attention and nurturing if it is to be sustained and strengthened as the Project moves through licensing to implementation.

THE STORY OF OUR ADVERSE EFFECTS AGREEMENT

Our experiences negotiating the Keeyask Adverse Effects Agreement (AEA) are worthy of sharing, since they illustrate why we remain conflicted and worried about our partnership in hydro-electric development and why many of our members do not trust our major partner, Manitoba Hydro.

We actively negotiated the AEA from late 2005 until the spring of 2008. Throughout this work with Manitoba Hydro we were doubtful and skeptical about Manitoba Hydro's predictions of adverse effects, consistently stating our concerns about effects on the water quality in our community at York Landing (Kawechiwasic), the water regime of Split Lake and the Aiken River, safe and reliable winter travel on Split Lake and the Aiken River, increased sedimentation and erosion on Split Lake and the Aiken River and further reductions in the abundance and health of fish and wildlife available to our people. We attempted to negotiate programs and compensation consistent with our experiences with hydro-electric development, the knowledge of our Elders and our uncertainties about future environmental changes. The signed AEA reflects our positions in several important ways:



- The opening clause of the Adverse Effects Agreement (AEA) preamble captures our essential perspective on adverse effects:

“York Factory has approached the consideration of adverse effects of the Keeyask Project holistically, with the Cree worldview that everything in the natural world is interconnected. York Factory’s perspective is that the natural world is ordered by relationships; relationships amongst people; relationships between people and “the land”; and relationships amongst the various living, non-living, and spiritual beings that make up the ‘universe’. York Factory’s experience with hydro-electric development is that this development has and will continue to fundamentally change these relationships, and in so doing, will produce adverse effects. The Keeyask Project will add to these changes in some ways that are foreseen and may add to these changes in other ways that are currently not foreseen.”

- We insisted that the AEA acknowledge that the agreement was negotiated and completed prior to the completion of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and included consideration of only those adverse effects that were foreseen during the period prior to completing the EIS.
- We insisted on offsetting programs to support resource access and use, environmental stewardship (Kanawaynichikaywin) and cultural sustainability, as well as residual compensation, YFFN program control and flexibility.
- We insisted that the AEA reflect a strong environmental monitoring commitment and our participation and application of traditional knowledge in the monitoring of Keeyask Adverse Effects.
- We required a Fundamental Operating Feature clause in the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA), reflected also in the AEA, that provides that the Keeyask Project Description and operations will not alter open water levels on Split Lake.
- We did not release Manitoba Hydro from any liability and claims for unknown and/or unforeseen Keeyask Adverse Effects.



We failed to achieve the Adverse Effects Agreement that we sought



Marion Beardy, Elizabeth Beardy, Modena Beardy, Madeline Ponask

- We protected our aboriginal and treaty rights under the agreement.

Ultimately, however, we are not happy with our AEA. In April 2008, we were given an ultimatum by Manitoba Hydro in terms of the aggregate value of the settlement proceeds to be provided under an AEA agreement by Manitoba Hydro. This was capped at \$8,500,000 and was presented to us as a 'take it or leave it' proposition. Manitoba Hydro would not conclude an AEA with us for any greater amount; but we needed to sign an AEA to retain our option to participate as a partner in Keeyask. This created a real dilemma for us.

Our AEA includes programs to provide replacements, substitutions or opportunities to offset unavoidable Keeyask adverse effects on our community and members. Our Resource Access and Use Program will help offset some of the potential effects on our resource harvesting and access due to Keeyask and enhance our relationship with our traditional territory at the Hudson Bay coast. The Environmental Stewardship Program is intended to provide our community with the means to undertake independent monitoring of potential environmental changes due to Keeyask if required. Finally, the Cultural Sustainability Program is meant to assist us in sustaining our cultural identity, language, and values in the context of Keeyask.

Nonetheless, the settlement amount was a significantly reduced sum from what both we and Manitoba Hydro had put forward in earlier negotiations. It would represent a significant reduction in proposed offsetting programs and forced us to drop altogether a proposed program for all-weather road access to our community, which we believed would offset future adverse affects such as unreliable, unsafe and expensive travel across the open waters and winter ice of Split Lake and the Aiken River, as well as assuring our workers more reliable future access to the Keeyask site.

This unilateral action by Manitoba Hydro, after nearly 3 years of negotiations, is a prime example of why many of our members have difficulty trusting the corporation. We were able to retain some flexibility in offsetting programs and residual compensation in our agreement, and ensured that our accountabilities under the agreement are to our own community,





Sweat Lodge, York Landing (Kawechiwasiq).

not to Manitoba Hydro. But, we failed to achieve the AEA that we sought and this failure was premised on the arbitrary authority asserted by Manitoba Hydro. To this day, we do not understand how Manitoba Hydro came to the position they did in the AEA negotiations. This was at complete odds with understandings and directions that we had thought were close to agreement in the negotiations.

☞ TED BLAND

"They basically said "take this or you're out of the whole deal". We'll never be comfortable. Our partnership will never be what a partnership is supposed to be like. So we'll never be comfortable because we feel like we were forced into it."

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

"I don't see anything like 'partnership'. It's just a word."

☞ EVELYN BEARDY

"But when we stop and think for the future generations, they need all that – they need to be able to be supplied with good jobs for their family, so I guess that is one good thing. But like someone said here, I don't trust Hydro."

In the end, we presented this agreement to our community along with the JKDA and, as we explained above, our community



Yvonne Beardy and Jaime Redhead





Low tide at York Factory.

acknowledge the challenges posed by our history, relationships and cultural differences. If the Partnership is to be sincere, we need to actively address these challenges:

- We need to make the Partnership work - to reconcile and build trust among the partners.
- We need to follow our cultural values - to come to terms with the damage that will be caused by the project and to fulfill our obligations as stewards of the land.
- We need to prepare our young people - to build the identity and values that will guide them in managing the project.

Acknowledge the challenges posed by our history, relationships and cultural differences

MAKING THE PARTNERSHIP WORK – RECONCILIATION

 WAYNE REDHEAD

“Kipekiskwaywinan (Our Voices) is part of a healing and reconciliation process. It’s like crying; it’s part of healing (it’s good to cry). This is a good thing for our people. Sure, it says a lot that is negative. It’s part of healing and reconciling. Other pieces of our healing and reconciliation process still need to be pinpointed.”





Riverbank in front of Silver Goose Lodge, Hayes River.

*Our members
need to feel that
Manitoba Hydro
respects our
First Nation*

☞ DONNA SAUNDERS

"They don't even know what we're talking about. We have to gather our voices together. They don't understand how we experience this. They don't take us seriously."

☞ ROY REDHEAD

"For us, it's being environmentally responsible. It's putting the integrity of the environment first. It's making sure we reconcile that."

☞ MARTINA SAUNDERS

"I worry they're taking us through this process and not really listening."

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

"I don't believe they'll use TK [Traditional Knowledge]. I've said all along in the past: Hydro will never listen to us. This [consultation] is just a courtesy that Hydro is doing."



Obediah Wastesicoot (left) and Ted Bland

These statements stem from more than 50 years of strained relations with Manitoba Hydro, reinforced even in negotiations for the Keeyask Project. We recognize that these long-standing sentiments will not change quickly, but feel that as partners, we must commit to reconcile our past interactions and work to build trust and respect between YFFN and Manitoba Hydro. In order to



build trust and respect, our members need to feel that Manitoba Hydro respects our First Nation, our values, and our concerns. Our people need to trust that they are not being managed or manipulated, but are meaningfully engaged as experts and stewards of our environment.

☞ WAYNE REDHEAD

“When we talk about partnership, I can’t help but think they’re using us like pawns. That they need to get our input and participation to get what they want – and that’s the river and the waterways.”

We believe that a commitment to on-going reconciliation is the first step to forming a strong partnership; building effective advisory committees; and developing innovative cross-cultural approaches to monitoring and project management.

☞ OBEDIAH WASTESICOOT

“I don’t know if the partnership will work. They’re talking about each other and not working as a team.”

Fox Lake Cree Nation (FLCN), Tataskweyak Cree Nation (TCN), and War Lake First Nation (WLFN) are all Cree communities, like York Factory. Many of us have cousins, grandparents, spouses and friends who are members of the other Keeyask Cree Nations. Our families and our traditional territories are intertwined, but our relations have been strained by the Keeyask negotiations.

☞ ROY REDHEAD

“From my perspective, Manitoba Hydro’s negotiation process for Keeyask has led to conflict between our First Nations. It creates division and mistrust amongst our Nations.”

While TCN and WLCN joined as the Cree Nation Partners to work together in the Keeyask negotiations, YFFN and FLCN both chose to negotiate separate roles in the Project, and separate Adverse Effects Agreements (AEAs). As a result, there have been numerous times over the last nine years that we have found ourselves at odds with the other First Nations, negotiating over shares of jobs in field studies, construction contracts or representation on Keeyask committees. The negotiations themselves have built tension between our First Nations that affect both our political and personal interactions.

“For us, it’s being environmentally responsible. It’s putting the integrity of the environment first. It’s making sure we reconcile that.”

- Roy Redhead



Manitoba Hydro - YFFN Meeting, York Landing (Kawechiwasik).



As ratified Keeyask partners, we now need to continue to make efforts and cooperate in moving beyond these political differences.

☞ OBEDIAH WASTESICOOT

"This partnership, I want to call it "one nation", so we are all the Keeyask Nations now – not the York Factory Band or the Split Lake Band. I have been thinking about 'partnership' and it's a very important word."

☞ YFFN MEMBER

"Partnership: we signed it, now we have to work together for it to work. We need this, not for us, but for the future generations."

We need to draw on our shared values and worldviews, and apply them to the project. We need to make the Partnership work.

FOLLOWING OUR VALUES – STEWARDSHIP

KANAWAYNICHIKAYWIN

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We are facing an ethical dilemma in becoming proponents of a resource development project.

☞ ERIC SAUNDERS

"Our ancestors have always been keepers of the land. Destruction was never part of it. Things have changed now and we have to change too – but we need to keep these teaching of the Elders."

As we have explained, our Elders taught us that every part of the land is living and has a spirit. Even rocks, places, and ancestors have spirits that are alive on the land. As humans, we are inextricably tied to all of the beings around us. We have been taught to show respect for every part of creation and to take care of the land. The term 'Ohcinewin' refers to our understanding that when people harm Askiy or another being, they face consequences. Simply, Ohcinewin means that we



Isaiah Saunders at Goose Camp.



Lateesha Redhead



must act respectfully towards everything in life; otherwise we will experience consequences such as disease, social disorder, disappearance of animals, or devastatingly bad fortune. These consequences can come back to our children or others around us. Our Elders speak about this and how they are expecting the consequences of past actions.

☞ TAMARA BEARDY

"My grandparents used to tell me and my sister, 'don't lose your traditional way of living. Don't forget where you came from.' My Grandpa Joseph would get us to sit down with him while he was skinning beavers, rabbits and when cutting up moose meat. I'm so thankful that he showed us these things."

☞ MARTINA SAUNDERS

"Hydro doesn't have respect or appreciation for what we say about our cultural values - it's just a process for them, they aren't respecting it. Hydro needs to understand where York Factory First Nation came from, where we are now, and where we are going."

☞ NELLIE REDHEAD

"We should remember what our grandfathers taught us and keep up with those teachings – don't push these lessons aside."

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

"We have to go back to our values and forget about this money. We have to go back and teach our children the way it was."

By positioning ourselves as proponents of a development project, we run the risk of compromising our fundamental values, of corrupting our relationships with the land, and becoming destroyers, rather than keepers of the environment.

☞ ROY REDHEAD

"I've fasted on this question and I've decided to go forward and to ask forgiveness for our role in the destruction."

We have been working with our partners to develop and manage the Project in accordance with our Cree values and worldview. As a First Nation, and as a partnership, we need to make a strong commitment to stewardship and to maintaining our relationships with the land. Our actions, monitoring, and management need to incorporate all of the knowledge that is available –



Marion Beardy cooking a beaver tail.

"I have been thinking about 'partnership' and it's a very important word."

- Obediah Wastesicoot



We cannot sit back and support development in our land without reconciling ourselves with our actions

both Western and Traditional – and must be rooted in Cree concepts of respectful relationships with the land. It will not be enough to incorporate Cree knowledge into scientifically-based management programs.

 WAYNE REDHEAD

“Now that we’re headed for partnership, I feel that I need to change my way of thinking, but I still need to keep my position as a keeper of the land... I want all of the science and all of the information. I don’t want to be bullied into pushing this project through.”

We cannot sit back and support development in our land without reconciling ourselves with our actions, witnessing and monitoring changes, giving thanks for gifts from the land, making decisions, and managing the effects that we have created. This is an obligation that the Partnership needs to adopt. At present, we have initiated discussion as to how these Cree principles might be implemented through partnership ceremonies as well as scientific and traditional knowledge monitoring programs. These are crucial aspects of the environmental protection program that will allow our Elders, resource users, and youth to be engaged as stewards or keepers (okanawaynichikaywuk) of the land.

PREPARING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE – IDENTITY

We must maintain our traditions, connection to the land, and cultural identity.

Our future generations are one of the main reasons we have decided to become partners in the Keeyask Project. We must maintain our future generations, their involvement in the Keeyask Project, and the different benefits and opportunities that will become available to them as key objectives as we move forward in partnership.

 ANNETTE ELLS

“It is for the future of my children and grandchildren that I voted “Yes” for the jobs that will be available, etc. This is my own opinion: I don’t want my grandchildren to say “Grandma voted no for our future.” Even though we are small, we still want to be heard and respected.”



☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

"I'm hoping for our children and even the teenagers to grab onto training opportunities. There was a golden opportunity to take advantage of training leading up to the construction of Keeyask. They could sharpen their skills and use the tools you were taught with Keeyask. That's one thing I really like and thought would be really good for our people: the education, the training, the programs. Like what we got out of it with the cross-cultural training and retention and catering [Direct Negotiated Contracts]."

☞ RHIANNON BEARDY (AGE 13)

"I want cleaner water, want the animals to live, for Hydro to do more training, want to be able to go swimming – that includes my children. I don't want them getting sick."

☞ WENDY SAUNDERS

"Well I actually got accepted to Brandon University and I postponed it until next year. I'm working for CFS to date right now. I got accepted to Indigenous Health and Human Services degree program with that I'm planning to work, I'd like to work with future development and retention support of our trainees in our area. I know Keeyask will start in less than 7 years time. By then I should be done. That's what I'm planning."

But it is essential that our future generations remember who they are in terms of their culture, language, and values. As we move forward and prepare our young people, we must maintain our traditions, connection to the land, and cultural identity. For this reason, we included the Cultural Sustainability Program in our AEA to create opportunities for our future generations to understand what it means to be Cree. This is a very important part of reconciling our participation in the Keeyask Project.

☞ JOE SINCLAIR

"I can see Keeyask creating jobs, but kids need to know tradition – that there's more out there than just jobs...Our kids will have to live in two worlds – Western and Traditional. If there is some way that we could do this with Keeyask, let's grab it by the horns and get at it."

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

"What I'd like to see come from this... I'd like our children to learn our values, our way of life, and how we respect Mother Earth. Sweat lodges, for example – they should try to learn what we get out of it."

"Kids need to know tradition - that there's more out there than just jobs..."

- Joe Sinclair



Hailey Beardy (above), Donald Saunders and Archie Redhead playing music for children at Goose Camp.



Christmas Pageant at George Saunders Memorial School.





Kids preparing Labrador Tea

☞ WAYNE REDHEAD

"We are making a decision to be part of a development that our children will not be able to undo. They will inherit this project and our land with this project in it."

☞ RODDY OUSKAN

"I am really concerned for our future generation. Yes, there is promise of jobs with Keeyask, but I am skeptical of these job opportunities for our youth and future generations. I have seen how difficult it has been for our members with Kelsey, Limestone, and Wuskwatim."

☞ EVELYN BEARDY

"We need the tools to help youth understand what will happen and the tools to help them deal with it."

☞ ERIC SAUNDERS

"Things have changed now, and we have to change too, but we need to keep these teachings of the Elders – maintain them because lots has already been lost. I want to see Cree taught at a very young age. Teach them to take care of the land...respect the water. It's about respecting what's there because we need it for our youth. Our youth need to learn safety and survival. Safety issues such as learning to work with tides, being able to identify shallow areas and rocks, securing boats and equipment, how to set traps, bait them, and where to set them. These are the kind of things that I want our youth to learn. They have to learn respect and how to take care of the land."

Preparing our young people for this project will certainly include training them as trades people, managers and environmental

"They have to learn respect and how to take care of the land."

- Eric Saunders



monitors. Some of our younger members have already been able to take advantage of training opportunities through the Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative. But more importantly, our children need to understand who they are as Cree people. They need to continue to learn about their culture, their history and their fundamental connection and responsibility to the land. Our children need to understand why we have chosen to take part in this project, and they must have the ethical foundation to manage the Keeyask Project - to be stewards of the land - in accordance with Cree values.





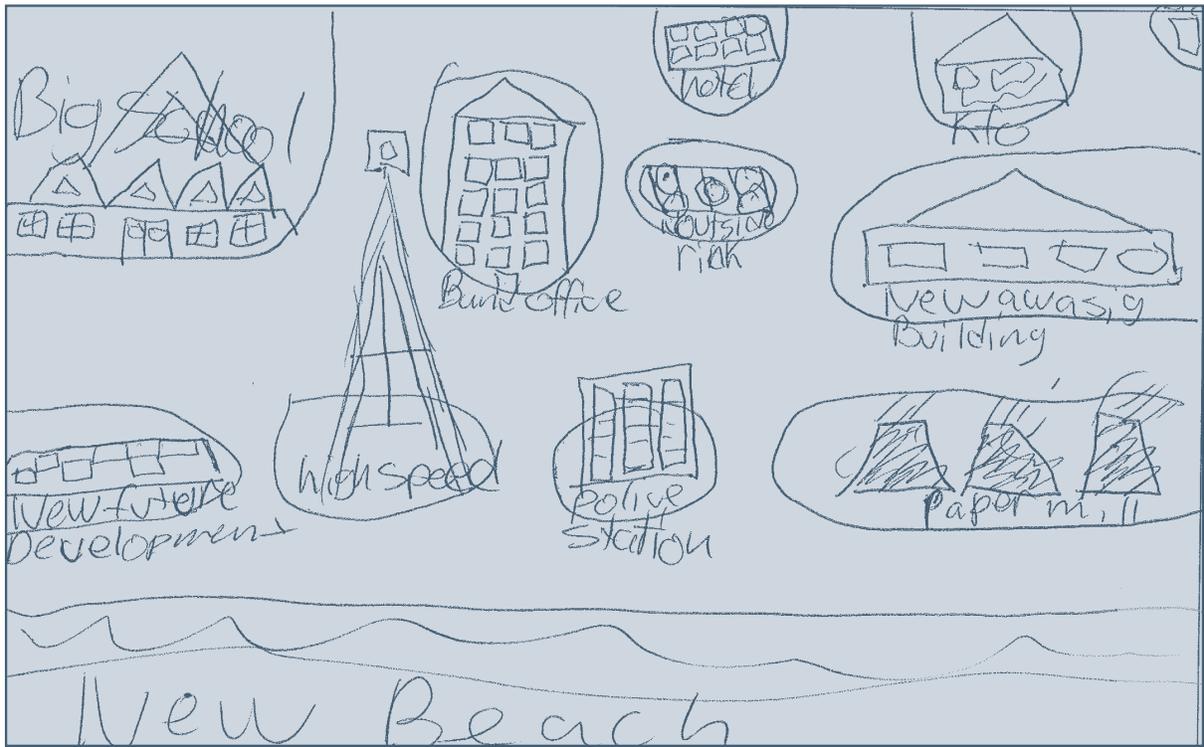
Ashley Beardy, Grade 4

Our wishes for the



Miranda Moose, Grade 8





Nicholas Beardy, Grade 8

future of York Landing



Dylan O., Grade 8







New cabins at Ten Shilling Creek, 2009.



Isaiah Saunders



Obediah Wastesicoot and Thompson Beardy at Ten Shilling cabins, 2009.

OUR HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS

KIPAKOSAYNIMOWINANA

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So, in 2012, we find ourselves here: co-proponents of a major hydro-electric development standing alongside Manitoba Hydro, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, and Fox Lake Cree Nation in applying for environmental licenses for the Keyask Project that at once excites us, saddens us, scares us, yet offers hope for the future of our community.

 YVONNE BEARDY

“I am both excited and scared for our First Nations. With Hydro and First Nations [partnering] it creates employment for us. It provides training for our First Nation. It provides for families. But the water quality needs to be better. There is a loss of quality in fish taste. There are deformed fish. Sturgeon populations have declined. The migration of caribou [might be affected].”



Through this document, we have explained how we came to be in this position, and how we feel at this point in our community history. We have explained how the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) appeared in our territory in the 17th century, how we have been relocated, sent to residential schools, suffered the effects of past hydro-electric projects, lost much of our language and cultural practices, and struggled through the Keeyask negotiations. Our community has been repeatedly destabilized by traumas that have been imposed on us from the outside. We have struggled to adapt to the changes, one after another, and many of our members are exhausted. They have lost hope for the future and are resigned to believe that Manitoba Hydro and the government will do what they like with us and our land; that Keeyask will be just another blow from the outside world; that there is nothing that we can do about it.

 ROY REDHEAD

"It's a hurtful experience because we're part of the partnership. We have to find courage – the strength to move forward. I think we're up to that."

At the same time, there are many of us who still see ourselves as a strong Cree community – adaptive, resilient, and physically and spiritually connected to Askiy. Our members still choose to live in York Landing (Kawechiwasik) and come together for traditional dances, goose camps, and feasts, and return to our territory at York Factory (Kischewaskahekan) as often as we can. We respect the teachings of our ancestors and look for ways to apply them in the modern world.

Although our members were faced with a difficult decision, we voted and decided that we will not stand by and watch another development project occur in our land without trying to influence it. We have chosen to become a partner, and have a voice in the Keeyask Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), governance and management of this project. Our hope is that it will allow us to take control of our destiny; that it will help us to find roles for our members as contractors, workers, managers, and environmental stewards; that it will offer a first step away from resignation, towards self-determination.



Dillon Saunders



Caroline Miller

We have chosen to become a partner, and have a voice





Children at Goose Camp.



Delbert Saunders



Hailey Beardy and Clarissa Saunders

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

"I want future generations to know how this decision was made. We decided to be in this partnership so we could have a say in what goes on in some of the negotiations rather than not be a part of it at all. What I want most is something for the future. If there was nothing for the future, I couldn't live with myself today."

 DONNA SAUNDERS

"We are the future of the community. The negotiations are new to us and we're learning how Manitoba Hydro does business. We're learning how to stand up for ourselves and have a voice. We're not going to sit back and let the dam be built without us. We decided to become a partner to make sure we have a voice in Keeyask. And we will continue to educate our people and give them opportunities in business development. This is a new way like self-government. We're working towards that and it's still new to us. We will never lose our culture. It's still in us and it will always be in us, passed down from generation to generation."

 TED BLAND

"These changes are coming. The best we can do is prepare ourselves."

We are cautiously optimistic that Keeyask will provide an opportunity to shape our own future. Through a sincere partnership, we can begin to heal, to apply our knowledge, to maintain our traditions, to develop our community and provide opportunities and benefits for our future generations. The



Freda Saunders at Goose Camp.

alternative - of further changes in the land, more development that is beyond our control, and an increasing despair among our members - is simply not acceptable.

 DONALD SAUNDERS

"We are adaptable. Our parents, grand parents, people from York Factory, were adaptable. They felt a change and saw a change. They adapted to that and we have to adapt too."

As we take our first hesitant steps with the Keeyask Partnership, we wonder what the future will hold for our children and grandchildren:

- Can Keeyask be fundamentally different than the hydro-electric developments of the past?
- Can we be truly respected, and have our voices heard as the Project proceeds?
- Can we come to terms with taking part in this further destruction of the land?
- Can we mend relationships and begin to build trust with our business partners?



Wayne Wavey



Flora Beardy and Johnson Saunders



Keeyask partners can, together, take on the responsibility of reconciling our part as co-proponents in damaging Askiy.



Logan Beardy, (above). Goose Camp.

- Can we build a sense of hope and self-determination in our community?
- Can we be the environmental stewards that Munito means for us to be?

We believe that there are encouraging signs, but achieving the potential of the Keeyask Project will require a great deal of work, both in our community and with our partners.

The Keeyask partners can, together, take on the responsibility of reconciling our part as co-proponents in damaging Askiy. We need to do this as a partnership, not just as a single community. By implementing our values and traditional knowledge and maintaining our cultural, social, environmental and economic goals over the life of the Project, we can build a sense of hope and self-determination in our community.

The Keeyask Project can continue to incorporate our values, and give equal importance to traditional knowledge through meaningful participation of our community Elders, representatives, youth, and resource users at various “levels” of partnership activities. It is through this process that our Cree values, teachings and traditional knowledge will be incorporated and applied to the construction and operation of Keeyask.

Our participation in follow-up, monitoring, and adaptive management is important to us to continue to avoid, mitigate and offset adverse environmental effects for the life of the Project. Participation of community Elders, representatives, youth and resource users in regular environmental monitoring and management will also play an important role in strengthening relationships with our partners.

While our historic differences can never be erased, the Keeyask Partnership can foster relationships that seek to reconcile those differences between partners, while building trust and communication through the meaningful participation and engagement of each partner.



RECONCILING OUR EFFECTS ON THE LAND

From our perspective, there will inevitably be substantial adverse environmental impacts despite good planning, research, design, assessment, monitoring and mitigation. Through the Keeyask working groups, we have been involved in considering mitigation measures for a wide variety of impacts on the waters, lands, plants, animals, fish, and ourselves. But from a Cree perspective, it is important to acknowledge even the smallest environmental impact even if it has been formally mitigated. As co-proponents, we are accountable to Askiy, Munito, and our future generations for our part in creating these environmental impacts.

We have explained that our culture focuses on respect; respect for ourselves, respect for each other, and respect for Askiy. We have been taught that we were placed here by Munito to care for Askiy. Destruction is not a part of our culture. We respect the concept of Ohcinewin, so it has been very important for our community to consider how we will reconcile ourselves and our actions as partners in the Keeyask dam.

 TED BLAND

"As aboriginal people we have this term called ohcinewin. If you do something to harm an animal, anything, anybody, it's going to come back to you. So, our elders and our people were asking, 'what are we going to do? We're going to be harming the environment. How do we make peace, not only with ourselves but with the environment and the Creator? How do we balance that out?' Having ceremonies, having feasts, and giving thanks. The church plays a big role in that process too. It's not only a traditional way—it comes in different ways so people can feel their peace with what's happening."

 FLORA BEARDY

"The laws of Munito need to be followed. If you cut down a tree, you need to make peace with Askiy."

 WAYNE REDHEAD

"We have to do ceremonies to give thanks and ask forgiveness for our sins, and our sins are having these effects on the land."

"We have to do ceremonies to give thanks and ask forgiveness."

- Wayne Redhead



Elizabeth Beardy, Doreen Saunders, Nancy Williams



*Our Cree language
is very important
to us*



Josephine Neepin, Isabel Beardy, Connie Ouskan, Roberta Harper, Freda Wastesicoot, Myrna Marcellais, Pam Monroe and Dana Wastesicoot

Reconciliation with these effects must be an important focus for Cree mitigation measures. Some of our community members will need to reconcile themselves on a personal level, or through community programming, but the Partnership will also need to demonstrate efforts to come to terms with the inevitable impacts of the Project on Askiy. We have initiated preliminary discussion with our partners about how ceremonies might provide opportunities to assist our community and the other KCN in beginning to come to terms with the inevitable impacts of the Project.

ENSURING A ROLE FOR CREE LANGUAGE, VALUES, AND KNOWLEDGE

Our First Nation and the other Keeyask Cree Nations have worked to incorporate our worldview, values, traditional knowledge and language into the Keeyask Environmental Impact Statement. With few clear precedents, this process has been a challenge and a learning experience for all of us. As the Keeyask Project proceeds, we want to continue to work with our partners, building cross-cultural understanding and finding new ways to draw on the knowledge of our past and present generations. The Keeyask Partnership is an opportunity to bring prominence to our worldview, values, traditional knowledge and language, both within our communities and in Manitoba.

Our Cree language is very important to us even though it is used much less today than it used to be. By continuing to use the Cree language in project documents, by facilitating its use in meetings, and encouraging its use during the construction and operations of the Keeyask Project, we will be helping to bring the Cree language back to its rightful place in our lives and Canada's multicultural environment.

We are thankful for the opportunity to speak with honesty about our history, worldview, values, concerns, traditional knowledge,



hopes and expectations in this volume. However, we cannot simply talk and represent these values in words. The Keeyask Partnership must act according to our Cree values, teachings, and traditional knowledge. For this reason, development and implementation of the Environmental Protection Program and monitoring plans will be most important to our community.

The Keeyask Partnership will provide long-term, annual operational funding for environmental monitoring and adaptive management. Just as there have been shared management structures and working groups to prepare the EIS - such as the Aquatics Working Group, the Mammals Working Group, and the Mercury and Human Health Working Group - there is a need for ongoing monitoring and management arrangements with full participation by all the partners.

We have recently started to discuss details related to the function of the Monitoring Advisory Committee (MAC) and an Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring program, including monitoring contracts with each of the KCN. These are intended to function as formal mechanisms through which to incorporate and apply our worldview, values and traditional knowledge in the on-going monitoring, mitigation and adaptive management of the Keeyask Project. The MAC and monitoring programs might also provide forums in which to build understanding between our respective worldviews, to improve communication, and to develop a greater appreciation for each other's knowledge. These are important steps in building trust amongst our partners. YFFN will make every effort to make these forums effective in the years ahead.

 FLORA BEARDY

"The communities all have the same values. These need to be part of the agreement and part of the work we do."

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"You know, we want to work together. We want to work as four Cree Nations. I think we've come a long way on that because we've had meetings and we've talked about critical stuff, like our culture. And we're trying to define things here now and I think a lot of stuff came out here that I wasn't aware of either from the other communities and that's how we learn. We learn from each other. We listen to these presenters. You know, we can go a long ways with that. And the ideas are basically the



Marion Beardy at Ten Shilling.



Learning Institute Graduation,
York Factory Youth.





Wayne and Nellie Redhead

We envision our community's participation to be broader and more meaningful

same, it just needs to be put together and come up with something that everyone can live with. I think that's what's important. I know some people have different beliefs. We can't all put it together, because you have to come up with something that will work for everybody."

ENSURING ROLES FOR OUR ELDERS, YOUTH, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We will be involved on the Board of Directors of the Keeyask Partnership and on committees that will advise the Board about environmental monitoring, employment and construction. We envision our community's participation to be broader and more meaningful than having only one or two representatives on committees such as the Monitoring Advisory Committee.

We would like to see our Elders, youth, and resource users take part in regular field trips and workshops to examine the effects of the Project. We are talking with our partners about ways to continue to engage Elders, resource users and youth in the Keeyask Project through mechanisms such as the Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring program.

Our Elders can assist the Project by providing guidance, oversight and traditional knowledge in places such as the Monitoring Advisory Committee and technical and traditional knowledge monitoring programs. They can help to remind us about our past, about our values and beliefs, and help us find ways to apply this knowledge as we move forward.

By holding partnership meetings in York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) and by taking our members, particularly youth, to the Project site, we can connect our community to the Keeyask Project. Our members have appreciated the meetings and workshops that the Partnership has held in York Landing and Thompson to discuss potential impacts and mitigation measures. For this reason, we see these types of meetings as an important way of moving forward in the Keeyask Partnership.



 TAMARA BEARDY

“We always talk about the Elders’ knowledge, but we need to use that – even when we report to the DFO [Department of Fisheries and Oceans] and regulators. If we’re going to do this properly, we need to use the Elders’ knowledge. They need to be involved at the beginning, the middle, and the end – all the way through the work, or it’s not meaningful.”

 NELLIE REDHEAD

“It is important to hear our Elders share stories that are part of our own teachings. It’s always nice to hear stories shared by Elders. That’s one way of learning.”

We have also initiated discussions with our partners about ways to connect and involve our youth in Keeyask environmental monitoring activities. We believe the traditional knowledge monitoring program should involve various elements such as cultural, language, and environmental learning opportunities, and should bring youth and Elders together to participate in regular field trips to the Keeyask Project area – or other hydro-electric projects such as Wuskwatim. These programs would be opportunities for our youth to observe and learn about environmental change, monitoring and management. Programs such as these would expose our youth to the Keeyask Project, generate education and training opportunities, and continue to increase employment access and opportunities in environmental fields.

As we have explained in previous chapters, there are some provisions for such measures in our Adverse Effects Agreement (AEA). These include our Cultural Sustainability Program and Environmental Stewardship Program. Those programs will, in part, help us adapt to the environmental and cultural changes caused by Keeyask and help us to sustain relationships with Askiy.

While each community has its own programs, we believe it is important for the partners to work together to build and strengthen the Partnership through joint programs, such as environmental monitoring, which engage our community Elders, youth, community representatives, and resource users. The Partnership could complement our AEA programs by providing opportunities to expose our younger members to environmental fields, teach about stewardship for Askiy, and maintain our cultural and spiritual values.



Dorothy Redhead and Marion Beardy

Our Elders can assist the Project by providing guidance, oversight and traditional knowledge



 TED BLAND

“We need acceptance of what has happened and what is happening... and we need to move forward to prepare for the future...We have this agreement now and have to do something with it. No, I don’t want a bleak future. I believe there can be change if we really want to do it.”

As partners, we must work together to ensure that young people from all our communities benefit from education, training, and employment opportunities, including employment opportunities with the Keeyask Project, the Keeyask Partnership and Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro’s commitment in the JKDA to fill 36 operational jobs over the next 20 years is a good opportunity for our members and future generations. Realizing this commitment has been a challenge, and operational jobs are often considered as labour and trade jobs, but we are hopeful that our members will gain more jobs in a greater diversity of operational positions such as technical, professional and management jobs as well as in the trades.

The Hydro Northern Training Employment Initiative has also provided education and training opportunities to our members in the Keeyask and Wuskwatim Projects. However, the Advisory Group on Employment will need to keep a careful eye on the success of our members gaining employment with Keeyask as the Partnership moves forward. Greater on-the-job support, training opportunities and retention support are also very important for our community members. In this regard, YFFN and FLCN are currently negotiating a Direct Negotiated Contract to provide employee retention and support services to workers at Keeyask.

MOVING FORWARD IN PARTNERSHIP

As we have explained, our experience and relationship with Manitoba Hydro goes back more than 50 years. We cannot change the past, and cannot ignore the collective memory of our community. However, becoming partners in the Keeyask Project has provided an opportunity to work together and build a better relationship. It will take time to build trust between our



community and Manitoba Hydro, but it is an important direction for us to take.

 ERIC SAUNDERS

"To make things right, you got to start listening and start doing things properly."

 TED BLAND

"They're making more of an effort to have a relationship. They understand that in order for us to be partners we need to improve our relationship. So they are making a bigger effort to come into the community and contribute in different ways."



Isaiah Saunders, Mary Saunders and Madeline Wastesicoot

Manitoba Hydro and YFFN have acknowledged that we need to build a more positive relationship. In 2011, we formed the Manitoba Hydro - YFFN Coordinating Committee as a regular forum to discuss and build relations. This is a promising sign. It provides an opportunity to develop a stronger bi-lateral relationship with Manitoba Hydro, and establishes a forum to discuss issues that cause us concern.

The Keeyask Partnership will continue to require attention in terms of building more positive multi-lateral relationships. Partnership events and activities that occur outside the typical scope of business and environmental planning and management will be extremely beneficial to improving communication, understanding, trust, respect and partnership relations.

We expect that the Keeyask partners will continue learning to work together and share knowledge with one another about Askiy over the long term. The environmental licenses and the Environmental Protection Program will play the largest role in determining how the Partnership proceeds in its mitigation, monitoring, research, management, and reconciliation activities. However, YFFN does not view obtaining an environmental license as the end of environmental stewardship and responsibility. Rather we view the licenses as providing a framework for long-term, intergenerational co-management of valuable natural resources - resources that will provide sustainable benefits for our communities, Manitoba Hydro and indeed, all Manitobans.

This is our homeland. We have been here for a very long time - much longer than Manitoba Hydro, the Province of Manitoba,



"It's time to move forward. We've been stuck too long."
- Emily Kematch

and Canada have existed. We are part of Askiy. What we do to Askiy affects us deeply. For this reason, we have approached the Keeyask Project and Partnership with caution (ayakohmisewin). As partners in the Keeyask Project, we take our role very seriously and hold ourselves and the Keeyask Partnership to a very high standard.

As we move forward with our Keeyask partners, Manitoba Hydro, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, and Fox Lake Cree Nation, we will keep striving to ensure that the Partnership is the best it can be. We are hopeful and determined to use the Keeyask Project to empower our community, to maintain who we are as Cree people, and to create a better future for our youth and future generations.

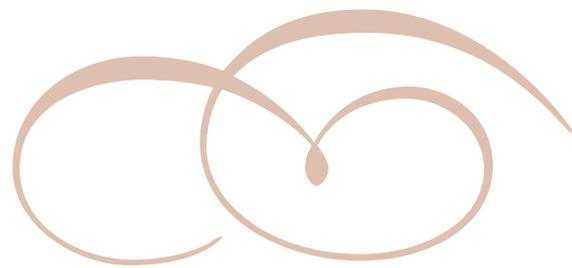
 MARTINA SAUNDERS

"That's another reason why we wanted to be a part of this. It would help with our reconciliation with the adverse effects of the hydro development. We want to be able to be a part of restoring that relationship with Manitoba Hydro. We want to see that relationship grow, especially for the young people who are going to inherit this project and we're setting out the path for them. That's why it's really important for us to be a part of this because we want Hydro to know who we are as York Factory First Nation. We want them to know where we came from and where we're going. I hope that we're going to continue to move forward together and when it's time for the young people to work with Manitoba Hydro they know where they stand with this project and as York Factory First Nation."

 EMILY KEMATCH

"It's time. It's time to move forward. We've been stuck too long."







Edwin Neepin



Salome and George Beardy



Evelyn Beardy and Russel Beardy



Square Dancers at 'Voices from York Factory Book Signing. Keith Saunders, Cecilia Keeper, Evan Chapman, Vincent Ross, Rene Redhead and Tanya Morris.



Canada Day Celebration



Janice Ouskan, Tara Beardy, Alexi Contois and Bailey Saunders



Obediah Wastesicoot and Family.



Flora Beardy, Mary Saunders, Donald Saunders, Amelia Saunders, Sam Saunders, Victoria Robinson, Lisa Ryle and Jim Thomas.



Phyllis Contois, wearing a vest stitched by Dorothy Redhead and Marion Beardy.



Simon and Modena Beardy



Elizabeth and Thomas Beardy



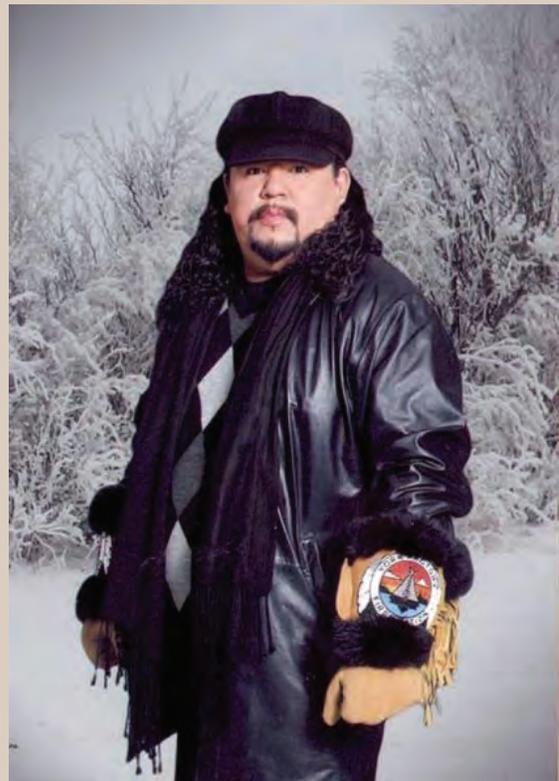
Boat at "Welcome Inn" cabin.



Bradley and Darcy Wastesicoot



Cleaning trout at Ten Shilling Camp. Left to right: Darcy Wastesicoot, Obediah Wastesicoot and Delbert Saunders.



Jeffrey Beardy



Chief Ted Bland, Thompson Beardy, Horace Saunders and Douglas Chapman. Background: Lillian Saunders.



Mary Saunders, Marion Beardy, Thompson Beardy, Archie Redhead, Sarah Beardy, Isaiah Saunders and Horace Saunders (front).



Marion and Thompson Beardy