

**REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ASSESSMENT FOR
HYDROELECTRIC DEVELOPMENTS ON THE
CHURCHILL, BURNTWOOD AND NELSON RIVER SYSTEMS (RCEA)**

**Prepared for
The Town of Leaf Rapids
by
Boothroyd & Associates
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1. Introduction

In its 2013 report on the Bipole III Project, the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) recommended that Manitoba Hydro, in cooperation with the Manitoba Government, conduct a regional cumulative effects assessment (RCEA) for all Manitoba Hydro projects and associated infrastructure in the Nelson River sub-watershed. This recommendation was accepted by Manitoba and Terms of Reference were agreed to in May 2014. Subsequently, the scope of the RCEA was expanded to include the Churchill, Burntwood and Nelson River systems.

The Terms of Reference require the final report to:

- “identify, describe and acknowledge the cumulative impacts of past Hydro developments; and
- describe the current state of the environment in areas affected by Manitoba Hydro’s system”.

Phase I and Phase II reports were completed by December 2015. An integrated summary report was also prepared. These three reports are collectively referred to as the RCEA report. Due to the considerable public interest in the RCEA, it was decided that a public outreach program be implemented to supplement the findings of the Phase II report. The CEC made funding available to affected communities for the purpose of reviewing the RCEA report, to provide input on the report’s accuracy in presenting past and current effects and community perspectives and concerns, and to identify any additional information relevant to the assessment.

The Town of Leaf Rapids (the Town) applied for and received funding from the CEC for this purpose. The Town retained Boothroyd & Associates to:

- review the Phase I report, Phase II report and integrated summary report to determine the extent to which they address the issues of concern to the Town and its residents;
- conduct interviews with Town residents to collect information on how the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) affected their interests and opportunities; and
- prepare a report on the findings for submission to the CEC.

After these tasks were begun, the CEC held a one-day workshop on June 15, 2017 with the Working Group established as part of the RCEA review. Although the workshop was not open to the general public, the CEC made available the PowerPoint slides displayed by the various

presenters during the workshop and a transcript of the presentations. This material was also reviewed by Boothroyd & Associates.

2. The Phase I and Phase II Reports

2.1 Report Organization

The Phase I report was divided into five parts:

- Part I: Introduction and Approach
This part includes the Terms of Reference for the RCEA, scope and general methodology.
- Part II: History of Hydroelectric Development in the Region of Interest
- Part III: People
This part summarizes the socioeconomic effects of hydroelectric development and various settlement agreements.
- Part IV: Physical Environment
This part describes key changes to the physical environment resulting from hydroelectric development including changes to the water regime, ice regime, erosion and sedimentation, and area flooded.
- Part V: Water and Land
This part summarizes studies conducted on the effects of hydroelectric development on water and land. It also describes the rationale used to select a preliminary list of the key aquatic (water) and terrestrial (land) Regional Study Components (RSCs) that were assessed during the RCEA. The RSCs selected for “water” were: water quality, fish populations, Lake Sturgeon, fish quality (including mercury and taste, texture and palatability), and marine mammals (whales, seals, and polar bears). For “land”, the RSCs were: terrestrial habitat, intactness, colonial waterbirds, forest birds, waterfowl, aquatic furbearers, terrestrial furbearers, moose, and caribou.

The Phase II report was divided into six parts:

- Part I: Introduction and Approach
This part includes the Terms of Reference for the RCEA, scope and general methodology.
- Part II: History of Hydroelectric Development in the Region of Interest
- Part III: People

This part summarizes the socioeconomic effects of hydroelectric development and various settlement agreements.

- Part IV: Physical Environment

This part describes key changes to the physical environment resulting from hydroelectric development including changes to the water regime, ice regime, erosion and sedimentation, area flooded and the terrestrial landscape.

- Part V: Water

This part provides a detailed description of changes to the aquatic environment based on a series of RSCs. The RSCs were: water quality, fish populations, Lake Sturgeon, mercury in fish, fish quality, seals and beluga whales.

- Part VI: Land

This part provides a detailed description of changes to the terrestrial environment based on a series of RSCs. The RSCs were: terrestrial habitat, intactness, colonial waterbirds, waterfowl, aquatic furbearers, moose, caribou and polar bear.

2.2 Region of Interest

In the Phase I report, Map 1-1 shows the Region of Interest (ROI) for the RCEA. The western edge of the ROI is defined by the boundaries of the Southern Indian lake RTL and the Nelson House RMA and includes the Town of Leaf Rapids. Table 3-1 includes the Town in the list of communities within the ROI. However, on page 3.2-3 of the Phase II report, the Town is missing from the list of communities within the ROI provided in Table 3.2.1-1. The following explanation is provided for the removal of the Town from this list:

“Further and more detailed mapping has determined that Leaf Rapids is geographically located outside of the RCEA ROI. As well, hydroelectric development within the RCEA ROI has not altered Churchill River flows or water levels to an extent that would create discernible effects at Leaf Rapids or negatively impact residents’ use of the river. For the purpose of this Phase II Report, Leaf Rapids is included in the Regional Profile (Chapter 3.3) because of its proximity to the RCEA ROI, and because a large portion of community residents are Members of OPCN and NCN. A summary is not provided for Leaf Rapids in Chapter 3.5 because it is located outside of the RCEA ROI, and because the community is not discernibly affected by hydroelectric development” (underline added).

In section 3 of this report, it will be shown that the statements underlined above are not accurate and that the Town residents' use of the Churchill River and the community itself has been negatively impacted by hydroelectric development.

2.3 Backwater Effect

On page 3-5 of the Phase I report (section 3.2.1), it states:

“Pickereel Narrows is excluded from this study because it is located outside the Region of Interest, is not affected by LWR and is only minimally and infrequently affected by the CRD. The average post-CRD levels on Granville Lake are comparable to pre-CRD levels, with the exception of higher-flow events on the upper Churchill River which are not affected by CRD”.

The footnote on page 3-5 states:

“The maximum post-CRD backwater effect at the outlet of Granville Lake (downstream of Pickereel Narrows) is 0.23 m (0.8 ft). The backwater effects diminish as you move upstream of the outlet of Granville Lake and are largest during low flow conditions on the upper Churchill River along with high Southern Indian Lake levels which occur infrequently (a backwater effect greater than 0.1 m (0.3 ft) has occurred less than 10 percent of the time). The backwater effect diminishes as Upper Churchill River flows increase and Southern Indian Lake levels decrease”.

Appendix 4.3B to the Phase II report provides additional information on the backwater effect:

“The water level regime of Granville Lake is very similar to that upstream except in this case the analysis tends to show a small backwater effect due to the impoundment of Southern Indian Lake and the Churchill River Diversion.” ... “The estimated backwater on Granville Lake varies from no backwater to a maximum of approximately 0.50 m with a median backwater of 0.2 meters. This agrees reasonably well with previous studies (Duncan, Bowring, Raban, McKay, etc) that estimate a range of effect from 0.0 to 0.30 metres backwater, using various methodologies. The magnitude of the calculated backwater effect is within the range of error of the previous studies and not appreciably greater than the standard expected accuracy of the predictive models”.

2.4 Effects of the CRD on the Interests of the Town and its Residents

Details on the effects of the CRD are contained mostly in the Phase II report. Based on the information collected during the interviews with Town residents, the reach of the Churchill River from Leaf Rapids to the outlet of Opachuanau Lake is of interest to residents of the Town. The following sections contain information provided in the Phase II report that pertains to this reach.

2.4.1 Erosion and Sedimentation

According to page 4.4-60 of the Phase II report, the CRD caused the level of Southern Indian Lake (SIL) to increase by about 2.7 m (9 ft). Opachuanau Lake is connected to the southwestern end of SIL and, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the level of Opachuanau Lake increased by about the same amount. Although no information is provided in the Phase II report on erosion in Opachuanau Lake specifically, the report describes the substantial erosion that occurred in SIL. Erosion has been greatest in the northern portion of SIL which is characterized by extensive lacustrine silt and clay deposits and local granular deposits. In contrast, with the exception of South Bay, the southern portion of SIL is dominated by bedrock-controlled shorelines and erosion is less severe. However, much of Opachuanau Lake shoreline is soft and silty (Leslie Baker, pers. comm.) and, therefore, the extent of the erosion here is likely similar to the northern portion of SIL.

Little information on sedimentation in Opachuanau Lake is provided in the Phase II report. The report states that sediment contribution from eroding shorelines is more than the natural sediment loadings brought in by the Churchill River. Before the CRD, the Churchill River was the main source of suspended sediments to SIL and deposited its load of silt and sand shortly after entering the lake.

2.4.2 Water Quality

The Phase II report states that dissolved oxygen levels were generally unaffected in Opachuanau Lake and SIL despite flooding and subsequent decomposition of terrestrial organic materials caused by the CRD. The report also states that, in general, water quality in the two lakes is currently suitable for the protection of aquatic life.

2.4.3 Fish Community

The Phase II report included information on the fish community in Opachuanau Lake.

In 1972 (pre-CRD), the mean total catch per unit effort (CPUE) was 94 fish/100 m/24 hr while during the 2008-2013 post-CRD period, the CPUE had dropped to 63 fish/100 m/24 hr. However, CPUE values for Lake Whitefish showed a slight increase from 1972 (4.0 fish/100 m/24 h) to 2011 (5.9 fish/100 m/24 hr). The following nine species were caught in index gill nets during studies of fish populations: Burbot, Cisco, Longnose Sucker, Northern Pike, Sauger, Yellow Perch, Lake Whitefish, Walleye and White Sucker. Immediately before the CRD, White Sucker dominated the catch at Opachuanau Lake. Historically, the proportion of Lake Whitefish in the catch has been low. Goldeye have been reported in the commercial catch from Opachuanau Lake.

Before the CRD, Opachuanau Lake had a lucrative Walleye fishery with production ranging from 33,000 to 47,000 kg annually. After the CRD, large decreases in catch were experienced. As in SIL, decreases were likely the result of flooding and redistribution of fish populations. Average annual catches of the three quota species (Northern Pike, Lake Whitefish and Walleye) from 1997 to 2014 was less than 5,000 kg total, an approximately seven to nine-fold decrease from pre-CRD levels, of which Walleye comprised about 43%. Walleye continue to be the most valuable component of the fishery on this lake, particularly with Lake Whitefish being downgraded from continental to cutter in 2001.

The results of test netting using standard gang index gill nets show a decreasing trend in the Walleye population of the lake from pre-CRD to post-CRD. Prior to the CRD, CPUE was 19 fish/100 m/24 hr while more recently (post-CRD) the CPUE was only 4 fish/100 m/ 24 hr.

Before the CRD, tributaries to SIL and Opachuanau Lake were identified as spawning habitat for Walleye. The majority of the spawning occurred at the first rapids above SIL and Opachuanau Lake (i.e. Leaf Rapids), habitat that would be flooded by the CRD.

Lake Whitefish are not a particularly important component of the Opachuanau Lake commercial fishery, averaging less than 2,000 kg/year and less than 50% of the quota species harvest since 1997. Recent data indicates a CPUE from index gill nets of only 5 fish/100 m/ 24 hr. Concerns have been expressed regarding CRD-related effects of winter drawdown and sedimentation on Lake Whitefish eggs.

Work conducted in the late 1970s/early 1980s found that sedimentation of Lake Whitefish spawning beds during the period of egg incubation was occurring in SIL, and that observed levels of sedimentation were sufficient to cause decreased egg survival. Repetition of the previous study during 2011/2012 found similar rates of sedimentation, suggesting that in at least some areas of the lake sedimentation may still be affecting egg survival.

2.4.4 Lake Sturgeon

The report provided the following information on Lake Sturgeon habitat preferences:

“Lake Sturgeon spawn during spring and move to spawning sites after ice breakup when water temperatures are between 8°C and 10°C. Overwintering areas are generally located in slower moving reaches of rivers or lakes. Therefore, spring spawning movements are generally in an upstream direction from areas of low water velocity and low gradient, to areas of high water velocity and high gradient. Spawning locations are generally found at the base of rapids, falls or hydroelectric stations, features that provide high water velocities that may prevent upstream movement”.

The Phase II report states that there is almost no scientific information on Lake Sturgeon in the reach of the Churchill River from Leaf Rapids to the natural outlet of SIL at Missi Falls “as this area (both historically and currently) is not known to support a Lake Sturgeon population”. It also states that this reach “is currently not known to support a Lake Sturgeon population and historical use can only be inferred from populations that occurred upstream and downstream” of the reach. The report concludes that “habitat changes resulting from CRD likely did not affect Lake Sturgeon in SIL or [the reach between Leaf Rapids and the outlet of Opachuanau Lake] as they were either not present or existed at low abundances prior to hydroelectric development”.

2.4.5 Waterfowl

The Phase II report does not provide any information on waterfowl in Opachuanau Lake or on the Churchill River between Leaf Rapids and Opachuanau Lake.

The report included some general information on the effects of the CRD on waterfowl:

- *“Habitat loss was largely a result of increased water levels on some major river systems”*
- *“As water levels increased in the river systems due to the diversion or retention of water from hydroelectric development, existing marsh habitat along the shore zone and in*

offshore areas was inundated and lost due to increased water levels (which prevented the growth of marsh plant species) and erosion”.

2.4.6 Aquatic Furbearers

The Phase II report states that population data for beaver after the CRD do not exist for the area that includes SIL and Opachuanau Lake. However, the report indicates that South Indian Lake residents have described the effects on aquatic mammals in flooded traplines, including flooding of beaver and muskrat houses, as well as inundated marshes. Residents identified a reduction in the number of furbearers, particularly aquatic furbearers, due to water level fluctuations on SIL.

The Phase II report includes the following general statements about the effects of the CRD on beaver populations:

“Water regime alterations (flooding and drawdown) can potentially result in increased beaver mortality from freeze-outs and entrance exposure during winter; however, this has not been documented in scientific literature. Fluctuations in water levels can lead to changes to riparian habitats and terrestrial shoreline vegetation species, altering or degrading beaver habitat. Increases in water flow due to water regulation could potentially result in the washing away of feed piles in strong current during fall; however, there is no specific literature or research regarding this issue”.

“For the most part, the effects reported relate to affected waterways resulting from the construction of dams and the diversion of water, resulting in flooding or dewatering, and unnatural annual water level fluctuations. Overall, there was a loss of habitat and decreased productivity for aquatic furbearers because of the flooding and increased water flows resulting from the construction of dams and diversion of the Churchill River. The decline was also attributed to the loss of shoreline habitat because of flooding, erosion and the accumulation of large amounts of debris”.

The report summarized effects of the CRD on beaver populations:

- *“Flooding, water fluctuations and dewatering are potential physical factors that could affect shorelines and riparian areas, resulting in beaver habitat degradation.*

- *Water regime alterations (e.g., flooding and drawdown) can potentially result in increased beaver mortality from freeze-outs and entrance exposure during winter; however, this has not been documented in scientific literature.*
- *Fluctuations in water levels can lead to changes to riparian habitats and terrestrial shoreline vegetation species, altering or degrading beaver habitat.*
- *On-system flooding could have two effects: inundating previously suitable beaver habitat, as well as moving shorelines back into inland areas, some of which may become suitable habitat for beaver”.*

2.4.7 Moose

The Phase II report described the effects of flooding in SIL on moose habitat. It is likely that similar effects have occurred on moose habitat in the reach of the Churchill River downstream of Leaf Rapids and in Opachuanau Lake.

“The quality of moose habitat has declined dramatically on the shorelines of Southern Indian Lake, as a result of flooding and the operation of the CRD since full supply level was reached in 1976, and subsequently with the Augmented Flow Program. Flooding on Southern Indian Lake, including the flooding of forested areas adjacent to the lake, reduced the amount of high quality riparian habitat. In the process, flooding has permanently altered shoreline habitats which were previously used to a large extent by the local moose population. Water level regulation also resulted in the slumping of trees in forested peatlands that were adjacent to the water. These trees become shoreline debris in the lake. Over time, slumping has also increased erosion along shorelines, further changing riparian areas in ways that are unsuitable for moose.

“The flooding of Southern Indian Lake reduced the availability of aquatic vegetation preferred by moose. Shallow water areas that previously supported aquatic plant growth are no longer found on the lake due to the high water levels maintained by water regulation and due to continued erosion and sediment deposition. The impoundment of Southern Indian Lake not only changed the environmental growing conditions under which aquatic plants had previously thrived, it made any remaining aquatic plants inaccessible to moose, which tend to forage in shallow water. On-going effects include the continued melting and erosion of permafrost and peatlands. Finally, new shorelines do not appear to sustain the aquatic forage plants species preferred by moose due to shoreline soil composition and growing conditions than had occurred prior to the CRD.

“The flooding of forested areas on Southern Indian Lake resulted in the creation of debris, mainly comprised of dead trees which still litter shorelines almost 40 years post-impoundment. Shoreline tree debris is problematic to moose because it decreases accessibility of shoreline habitats, including islands on the lake, which play a beneficial role to moose cows during the calving and post-calving periods. While some clearing of a small portion of forested areas in the flooded area occurred in anticipation of flooding, the continued erosion of shoreline areas has since added to the level of shoreline debris”.

“The flooding of moose habitat on Southern Indian Lake has resulted in the loss of wetland as well as increased debris along shorelines. The flooding of habitat areas has resulted in reduced quantities of aquatic plants available to moose. Those areas where aquatic plants were previously available are now under water. Due to erosion of shoreline areas, trees which were formerly part of the shoreline are also now underwater and act as barriers to moose movement on and off of riparian areas and in accessing the lake. Levels of shoreline debris also impede the movements of moose onto islands. This is a particularly important consideration during the calving and rearing season as calves are less mobile and are further limited by shoreline debris.”

The Phase II report also contained information on the effects of the CRD on moose hunting at SIL. These statements would also apply to Opachuanau Lake and the reach of the Churchill River downstream of Leaf Rapids.

“Moose hunting on Southern Indian Lake was once associated with fishing activities, especially in late fall, and most moose were taken along the shoreline of the lake. Following the CRD, there was reduced moose harvest potential for residents of Southern Indian Lake. This was based on the flooding of shoreline areas destroying moose feeding areas and, as a result, reducing the number of moose occurring, visible, and accessible on shorelines that had been prime hunting areas. Currently, this problem of reduced moose availability for harvesters is not apparent on lakes located off-system from Southern Indian Lake and the Churchill River. Instead, these declines have been localized to shorelines around Southern Indian Lake”.

“Moose harvesting opportunities have decreased on Southern Indian Lake following hydroelectric development. This has occurred due to moose no longer using many shoreline areas where they were previously visible and accessible to harvesters. In addition, levels of shoreline debris impede harvester movements on and off of shoreline areas, as well as creating additional impediments to travel by motorboat and snowmobile”.

2.4.8 Connection to the Land

The Phase II report makes reference to the Cree concept of *mino pimatisiwin*. This concept is central to “wellness” and is related to being connected to the land. It is relevant to many of the Town’s residents who have Cree backgrounds. The following is extracted from the Phase II report:

“Described by Aboriginal Elders and scholars as ‘living the good life’, mino pimatisiwin revolves around seeking and achieving balance, and is expressed in the cultivation of relationships with all living things that are rooted in respect, caring, honesty, faith and sharing. Mino pimatisiwin (and balance or wellness) is inseparable from being able to hunt, pursue traditional activities, live well in the bush, eat the right foods, keep warm and provide for one self and others...this is above all a matter of quality of life”.

3. Information Collected During Interviews

The intent of this section is to provide information on environmental conditions, resources and resource use in the reach between Leaf Rapids and the outlet of Opachuanau Lake that is missing from the RCEA reports and that will increase the CEC’s understanding of the adverse effects of the CRD. This information was collected during interviews with Town residents. Appendix 1 contains a copy of the notes taken during those interviews. Because some of the interviewees lived parts of their lives in South Indian Lake, the notes include statements that describe conditions in SIL after the CRD. The following subsections contain information extracted from these notes pertaining to conditions between Leaf Rapids and the outlet of Opachuanau Lake.

3.1 Effects on the Physical Environment

- Erosion of the shoreline has occurred. On the river downstream of Leaf Rapids, some of the islands present in the early 1970s have gone. (Walter Halcrow)
- Trees along the shoreline have fallen into the lake. (Oscar Anderson)
- There’s a lot of debris in the water. (Walter Halcrow)
- Flooding of the physical Leaf Rapids has occurred. (Keith Anderson)
- Slush ice occurs in the winter making it difficult to travel (even dog teams have trouble). (Walter Halcrow)

- A safe ice trail was established the last two years but it's not safe. (Keith Anderson)

3.2 Effects on the Fish Community and Harvest

- Opachuanau Lake was the best area for Walleye. Leaf Rapids was probably the biggest spawning area for Walleye. (Leslie Baker)
- There used to be jumbo Lake Whitefish in the Churchill River below Leaf Rapids but they have disappeared. Lake Whitefish are still found in lower numbers but not the large ones. (Walter Halcrow)
- Commercially fishing from Leaf Rapids to Opachuanau Lake using 6 nets, you could get 1,800 pounds of Northern Pike. Now, with 60 nets, you are likely to get only a tub and a half (120 pounds). (Keith Anderson)
- Fished in Opachuanau Lake one year but fish populations were already dropping. (Mike Nateways)
- Fishing was not viable after the flooding occurred. (Dennis Anderson)
- It's tough trying to get tree debris out of fish nets. (Keith Anderson)
- Commercial fishermen complain about sticks in their nets. Nobody wants to work because it's too expensive now. (Walter Halcrow)

3.3 Effects on Lake Sturgeon and Harvest

- Lake Sturgeon were most numerous below Leaf Rapids before the CRD. Reports exist that indicate there used to be abundant Lake Sturgeon below Leaf Rapids. John Robert Baker (father) and Paul Bighetty (uncle) used to tell stories about how numerous Lake Sturgeon were below Leaf Rapids. (Leslie Baker)
- Bill Anderson caught his first Lake Sturgeon below Leaf Rapids. (Minnie Anderson)
- Before the CRD, sturgeon licenses extended from Twin Falls (on the Churchill River upstream of Granville Lake) to Missi Falls. In 1977, Leslie Baker had a sturgeon license from Twin Falls to Opachuanau Lake. Leslie and his late brother David Baker were the first ones to resume Lake Sturgeon fishing after the CRD. (Leslie Baker)
- Commercially fished for Lake Sturgeon for several years after the CRD and then his license was revoked. There was a 2,500 pound quota for Lake Sturgeon. Lake Sturgeon were caught between Leaf Rapids and Opachuanau Lake. They used to be plentiful. Keith Anderson used to catch Lake Sturgeon all the time for sustenance. Keith

Anderson's father would have 6 or 7 Lake Sturgeon tied up at his camp on the Rusty River and give them to people that came by. Sturgeon fishing became harder and harder. (Keith Anderson)

- Leslie Baker and William Anderson test netted for Lake Sturgeon below Leaf Rapids from June to September 2006. They lifted nets every second day but did not catch any Lake Sturgeon. (Leslie Baker)
- Tried sturgeon fishing for one year in the late 1970s/early 1980s and only caught one. Tried again in the 1990s but was not successful. (Walter Halcrow)

3.4 Effects on Waterfowl and Harvest

- Ducks are very few in numbers. There used to be lots of Mallards. You could go in a boat and shoot them easily. (Walter Halcrow)

3.5 Effects on Aquatic Furbearers and Harvest

- Oscar Anderson's trapline was situated on the northwest side of Opachuanau Lake. There were beaver houses along the shoreline of Opachuanau Lake. The water came up and flooded them out. The houses filled with water and they died. The next year, they built their houses higher but they got flooded out so the beaver left. The birch and poplar they used to build their houses got flooded out. (Oscar Anderson)
- You used to see muskrat pushups along the shoreline of the Churchill River. Muskrat food got flooded out so there was no food left. What they need to survive on is gone. (Oscar Anderson)
- Oscar Anderson's father used to get 2,000 muskrats in a season but now you would be lucky to get 100. (Oscar Anderson)
- Minnie Anderson's husband caught 2,000 muskrats one spring; after the flood, he didn't catch very many. (Minnie Anderson)
- One March before the CRD, Oscar Anderson caught 120 beaver. (Oscar Anderson)
- Keith Anderson's trapline extends from east of Hughes Lake to Opachuanau Lake and includes the Churchill River. When he trapped with his father, they would catch 1,800 to 2,400 muskrats in a spring. Now, you would be lucky to catch 20 or 30. (Keith Anderson)

- Access to Keith Anderson's trapline is poor due to weak ice conditions. He can't use half of his trapline due to high water levels. As a result, he is not able to obtain enough pelts in time for the fur auction before Christmas. (Keith Anderson)

3.6 Effects on Moose and Harvest

- There used to be lots of moose in the area. Moose are affected, their population is down. (Oscar Anderson)
- After the flooding, moose didn't come to the shoreline because of all the logs. You had to go inland to find the moose. (Mike Nateways)
- Moose hunting is not like it used to be; they are harder to find. (Minnie Anderson)

3.7 Effects on Connection to the Land

- Everything we needed was in the bush. This was our livelihood. (Oscar Anderson)
- We got disconnected from our resources. The attachment to the land has been broken. (Keith Anderson)
- A sense of belonging is missing. People are wandering around missing a piece of themselves because it was taken away from them. Our identity was washed away with the islands. (Brenda Anderson)

4. Summary of Findings

- 1) The CRD raised the level of Southern Indian Lake by about 2.7 m (9 ft). As a result, water levels in Opachuanau Lake and in the reach of the Churchill River between Leaf Rapids and Opachuanau Lake have also increased.
- 2) Increased water levels have resulted in erosion of shorelines and have increased the amount of sediment in the water and turbidity. As a result of the shoreline erosion, trees have fallen into the water and created debris.
- 3) The CRD has adversely affected fish habitat in Opachuanau Lake and fish harvesting. Commercial fishermen have experienced fouling of nets with woody debris.
- 4) Lake Sturgeon used to be plentiful below Leaf Rapids. After water levels increased, Lake Sturgeon disappeared from the area.

- 5) Increased water levels adversely affected shoreline waterfowl habitat and waterfowl harvest.
- 6) Increased water levels adversely affected aquatic furbearers. Food supplies along the shoreline were removed and furbearers were displaced. Harvesting became more difficult and declined.
- 7) Shoreline moose habitat was adversely affected by increased water levels. Moose were displaced inland from the shorelines and became harder to harvest.
- 8) Connection to the land of Town residents has been adversely affected.

APPENDIX 1

Notes on Interviews Conducted in Leaf Rapids and Thompson

May 23 – 24, July 25, August 28, 2017

Oscar Anderson (Leaf Rapids)¹

- He was born in South Indian Lake in 1939 (he is 78 years old)
- He trapped and fished with his dad (Bruce)
- He lived in South Indian Lake for 69 years before moving to Leaf Rapids; he has lived in Leaf Rapids for 6 years
- His trapline was northwest of Opachuanau Lake
- His trapline is 87 years old; it's the oldest trapline in Manitoba
- He trapped beaver, marten, fox, wolf, wolverine and lynx (fine fur) in December
- "This was our livelihood"
- He also fished commercially in Southern Indian Lake (SIL) and Opachuanau Lake
- When he was 6 years old, he lived with a Norwegian trapper (Bert Reid) in Leaf Rapids before attending school in South Indian Lake
- When he was 7 or 8 years old, he learned how to drive a boat
- He started commercial fishing when he was 16; jumbo whitefish were 5¢ per pound, pickerel were 3¢ per pound
- When he was 17, he went out on the trapline for 3 months by himself and caught 128 beaver
- Before he was born, you could get \$1,500 for one fox
- He was in South Indian Lake when the flooding began
- "They've changed the severance line 6 times"
- "Hydro can do whatever they want to do"
- He worked at Missi Falls for 3 years driving a ferry
- There were beaver houses on the shoreline of Opachuanau Lake; the water came up and flooded them out – the houses filled with water and they died
- The next year, they built their houses higher but they still got flooded out so they left
- His dad used to get 2,000 muskrats in a season but now you would be lucky to get 100; all their food is gone
- You used to see muskrat pushups along the shoreline of the Churchill River
- One March, before the CRD, he caught 120 beaver
- But the birch and poplar they used to build their houses got flooded out
- Muskrat food got flooded so there was no food left
- What they need to survive on is gone
- There used to be lots of moose in the area
- Moose are affected, the moose population is down; their food is contaminated as a result of the flooding
- Trees along the shoreline have fallen into the lake

¹ location of present residence in parentheses

- His mother used to snare caribou right in the community, but when the floods came they took off; the same thing happened in Nelson House
- He was a member of the trappers' association
- When he attended negotiation meetings, Hydro President Bob Brennan told him he had to leave because he knew too much
- He participated in the surveying of the Hydro facilities before they were built so he knew what the plans were all along
- Hydro uses community people to do their work and take care of their s---
- He lost his dock in South Indian Lake – all the styrofoam came out all over the place
- Because he made a fuss, Hydro supplied 80 docks in 2 weeks
- Right after the flooding started, the water changed colour
- They used to take fish out of SIL using a Bombardier
- Pickerel and whitefish were very plentiful in SIL; pickerel in the spring and whitefish in the fall
- You used to see 500 fish in one net
- One of his grandfathers was from York Factory, the other was from Sweden
- His dad was born in Sweden and married a native lady in South Indian Lake
- His dad worked at the Herb Lake mine
- He went to Wabowden by train and then by canoe along the Rat River
- "Everything we needed was in the bush"
- Under the South Indian Lake agreement, members received \$1,000 each
- "The \$25 million agreement should have been \$75 million"

Dennis Anderson (Leaf Rapids)

- He was supposed to be included in the displaced residents claim but he got omitted
- Hydro appointed a lawyer to represent them
- Payouts of \$5,000 were offered but he declined to accept
- The biggest reason he left South Indian Lake is because the fish stocks became depleted after the flooding and he had to do something else
- Before the flooding he did well fishing with his dad and brother
- He works as a geotech for large firms such as Stantec
- His son in law works for Hydro
- In 1972, he moved to Leaf Rapids with his parents; his dad started working at the Ruttan Mine
- His dad got his house and then quit his job at the mine
- But he still fished and trapped even though he had a job
- He took over his dad's trapline with his brother Keith
- Fishing and trapping were not viable after the flooding occurred so he went to work at various jobs

Keith Anderson (Leaf Rapids)

- There were close to 500 people represented on the displaced residents claim

- Everyone was a NCN band member initially
- OPCN people were rejected because they didn't fall under the NFA
- He was born in 1959; he is 58 years old
- His family lived in the Rusty River area; they had camps right along the river
- His grandfather had a camp on Opachuanau Lake
- He grew up fishing all over SIL; he lived in South Indian Lake at the time
- They would leave the community in October and come back in December; then they would be at their fish camps from January to April
- In April they would be on the trapline and then go fishing in the summer
- A lot of family members had jobs but they would come back to the land
- He went to residential school from age 5 to 14
- From age 14 onwards, his life has been in the bush
- He quit school at age 15
- He lived full time at Rusty River; he has a house in Leaf Rapids as well
- He built a cabin in 1985 but lived in tent camps before that
- When he trapped with his dad, they would catch 1,800 to 2,400 muskrats in a spring
- Right now, you would be lucky to get 20 to 30
- His trapline stretches from east of Hughes Lake to Opachuanau Lake and includes the Churchill River
- The past 2 years, a safe ice trail was established but it's not safe
- He can't use half of his trapline due to high water levels
- Trapping for beaver starts October 1
- Access to his trapline is poor due to weak ice conditions; he doesn't have enough furs to sell by the time the fur auction takes place just before Christmas
- Before the CRD, the SIL fishery was a million dollar business; total annual quota was 200,000 pounds (all species)
- You used to be able to catch 20 to 40 tubs of fish every day all summer using 15 to 20 nets
- After the flooding, you needed 45 nets to fill 10 to 12 tubs per day
- The daily catch of 2,000 to 3,000 pounds reduced to 600 to 1,000 pounds
- They started raising the lake around 1974; the fishery declined almost immediately
- Nets were ruined, camping grounds were ruined, cabins were underwater
- He got pretty disheartened
- His mother lived in the area since age 19; she's 78 now
- She lived in Wabowden before that
- His dad was born and raised in South Indian Lake
- From time to time, he would acquire equipment no one else had; he ended up getting cutting contracts, work on the nursing station; he worked as a guide
- "Hydro just waits for people to die off"
- "They haven't properly compensated anyone for loss of equipment"
- Non-native immigrants who lived in South Indian Lake didn't get anything because they weren't native

- When they shut the water off at Missi, there were lots of sturgeon stranded on the river downstream
- They point their fingers at Aboriginal people and blame the depletion of fish stocks on overharvesting
- But it doesn't make sense – if 100 people go fishing on a weekend and catch 6 walleye, that's only 12 pounds per person or 1,200 pounds over a weekend
- The fish resource was highly self-managed before Natural Resources came along
- Governments tried to copy what the native people did; "we taught Natural Resources what they know"
- "We've been scientists for thousands of years"
- He used to catch sturgeon all the time for sustenance
- He commercially fished for sturgeon for several years after the CRD and then his license was revoked
- There was a 2,500 pound quota for sturgeon; at \$6.00 per pound, that's an income of \$15,000
- Now he's stuck with expensive sturgeon harvesting gear
- He asked Natural Resources for documentation on his licenses but they won't give it to him
- "How can the hatchery at Grand Rapids replace sturgeon fishing?"
- They released walleye hatchlings at Rusty River
- He has lived out in the bush all his life
- Hydro said it was all going to be back to normal in 30 years but it isn't
- He has had to adapt to the adverse effects on his livelihood, sustenance, commercial fishing and trapping
- It's not getting any better, it's getting worse
- He still wants to continue his lifestyle but it's getting harder
- He would like to grow old gracefully
- With the Wuskwatim partnership, they were supposed to settle outstanding claims but they never did
- The water levels have been breached; every time they have been exceeded, they say it's an act of God
- "They have impacted our resources; they've made my livelihood three times harder"
- There have been emotional impacts and people have passed on; "it's cultural genocide"
- "We got disconnected from our resources; the attachment to the land has been broken"
- He appreciates the value of the bush
- "Other people are dictating what our values are"
- "The land is hurting, I'm hurting and I'm getting older"
- "It's very disrespectful the way people have been treated and dealt with"
- He has lived in the bush and has learned patience; he knows how to play the waiting game
- He always gives people the benefit of the doubt

- He has worked with kids for 28 years; he has taught them how to pick medicines, how to set traps
- He has donated his time to local fishing clubs teaching people how to fish commercially
- “Most environmentalists get bought out working for Hydro”
- He spent 2 terms on the Town of Leaf Rapids council
- Hydro missed acknowledging the contribution of the women
- “They were our lifeline – they neglected the women, their contribution”
- A lot of women lifted nets, gathered berries, trapped small game
- His mom taught him how to skin muskrat
- He commercially fished from Opachuanau Lake to the Leaf Rapids fish plant
- At one time, with 6 nets you could get 1,800 pounds of northern pike
- Now, with 60 nets, you are likely to get only a tub and a half (120 pounds)
- He used to fish at the south end of Opachuanau Lake (Midwest Bay)
- Graveyards near the shoreline ended up in the lake
- Four or five years ago, there was a burn through the area; the peat moss burned and graves were exposed and washed away
- Some graves look like a pile of rocks, others have a head stone and foot stone
- At Wuskwatim, two burial sites were exposed with a backhoe
- Adaptability is important, not getting stuck in a rut
- To be a part of the land, you have to adapt and move forward
- When animals are not plentiful, you trap somewhere else
- When he killed a moose, he would share it with his family
- He is allergic to beef and chicken so he only eats wild meat
- “There’s a lot of destruction: Hydro should clean it up”
- “It’s tough trying to get tree debris out of fish nets”
- There were lots of diesel fuel drums buried and there’s contamination
- He saw diesel drums buried all over at Missi Falls
- There are drums on his trapline still leaking
- “We hunt for our elders – that’s their food”
- Before the CRD, there was no welfare, no diabetes, no alcohol at South Indian Lake
- Sturgeon were caught between Leaf Rapids and Opachuanau Lake; “they used to be plentiful”
- “You could run a hook off the dock and catch a sturgeon just like that”
- Sturgeon fishing became harder and harder
- His dad would have 6 or 7 sturgeon tied up at his camp and give them to people that went by
- Flooding of Leaf Rapids occurred
- Caribou used to come into South Indian Lake but not anymore
- Barrenground caribou used to come from Barrington Lake down through Opachuanau Lake and into the Rat Lake area

Tippy Kilsbey (Leaf Rapids)

- Born in 1951, he grew up in Sudbury until 1974
- He came to Leaf Rapids to work at the mine
- They flooded SIL over 8 feet; islands washed away
- You have to watch the amount of fish you eat due to mercury
- They opened up cottage lots in the late 1980s
- There are 13 to 15 cabins in Cabin Bay (Spider Bay)
- This year is an interesting year – the water level is up at least 5 feet
- All the docks have been torn out by ice in the spring
- There have been no docks for 5 years
- His cabin is safe
- He commercially fished with William Anderson and Keith Anderson
- At Leaf Falls, there's a 6-foot drop; on the other side of the island, there's a series of rapids
- He didn't experience any problems with nets when he fished
- Keith Anderson has a cabin on the creek running out of Rusty Lake
- There's runoff from the Ruttan Mine
- Trapping is like a game with the animals

Walter Halcrow (Leaf Rapids)

- He was born in 1944 (now 72 years of age) in Cross Lake and raised there
- He got married in 1971; he has been married for 46 years
- Yesterday marked 37 years of sobriety
- He left Cross Lake in 1974 to work at the Ruttan Mine for 28 years
- The mine opened in 1971 and started operating in 1972
- He worked in the open pit
- Sherritt Gordon was the original owner and sold it to HudBay
- He lived off the land a little
- His dad was a domestic and commercial fisherman, trapper and hunter
- As a boy, he didn't do much trapping
- He went to Winnipeg to attend residential school
- His two younger brothers went to the residential school in Cross Lake
- The oldest brother was 61 when he first revealed his residential school story
- This winter, they had so much snow – the most snow he's seen in 70 years
- A lot of people were stranded for a week in their homes
- He has fished domestically in Granville Lake and below Leaf Rapids
- He also has a cabin in Scotland Lake – he catches pickerel and jackfish but no whitefish
- He has to go on the river to catch whitefish
- He tried sturgeon fishing for one year in the late 1970s or early 1980s
- He caught one big sturgeon (94 pounds) – someone had it mounted
- Since then, he didn't catch any sturgeon
- He tried again in the 1990s but was not successful

- Whitefish populations have gone down
- There used to be jumbo whitefish in the river downstream of the rapids but they have disappeared
- You still find whitefish but not the big ones you used to see
- Ducks are very few in numbers – there used to be lots of mallards
- You could go in a boat and shoot them easily
- There's so much debris in the water
- He heard commercial fishermen complaining about sticks in their nets
- The number of fishermen has gone down as well
- He talked to Keith Anderson; nobody wants to work because it's so expensive now
- The bigger outfits can still fish
- There's erosion along the shoreline
- He saw islands when he first came to the area
- A lot of islands in SIL have disappeared – washed away, eroded away
- Even on the river downstream of Leaf Rapids some of those islands have gone too
- Owners of the marina have put a lot of rock down to prevent erosion
- There is slush ice in the winter; you can't travel – even the dog teams have trouble
- He does a little moose hunting near his cabin but he didn't get one this year
- He usually goes barrenground caribou hunting up north (Lac Brochet or Tadoule Lake)

Mike Nateways (Leaf Rapids)

- He was born in Sandy Bay, SK in 1945 (now 72 years of age)
- His wife is from South Indian Lake; he moved to South Indian Lake in the late 1960s to marry his wife
- His wife died 25 years ago
- The lake was new to him; the first year he went commercial fishing as a helper
- The second year he got his own license shortly before the flooding started
- SIL was really good for pickerel but it all disappeared after they raised the lake
- The main species in the lake was whitefish
- He used to catch 22 to 26 tubs each day and be done by 3:30 pm
- He commercially fished for about 10 years before and after the flooding
- He fished Opachuanau Lake one year but fish populations were already dropping
- After the lake came up, it was muddy all summer long due to erosion
- It was clear in the spring when the ice left but then the wind started to blow and the lake got muddy
- After the flood, he was lucky to get 6 tubs per day
- It's hard on the back pulling out the nets and having to reset them
- They had to put more work in but catch less fish – they had to work until 9:00 pm
- After 10 years of commercial fishing, he got a job with the Province working on the ferry at South Bay – he wasn't making any money fishing
- The price of everything went up – equipment, nets, boats – but the catch was going down

- He had a fish camp in Jumbo Bay – it was named after the jumbo whitefish you used to be able to catch
- Jumbo whitefish became less and less
- His neighbor used to be able to catch 24 tubs per day
- A big boat used to travel from Leaf Rapids to Loon Narrows to pick up fish and deliver gas, tubs and ice
- He wasn't making enough money fishing to buy new equipment
- He worked on the ferry for 14 years and retired at 65 years of age
- In 2010, he moved to Leaf Rapids
- He did some sport fishing upstream of the rapids; he didn't go below the rapids to fish
- He didn't do any trapping – all the traplines were taken
- Before the flooding, he took time out from fishing to hunt moose in the fall
- After the flooding, moose didn't come to the shoreline because of all the logs – you had to go inland to find the moose
- He remembers the meetings with Manitoba Hydro in the community
- They said that after 25 years it would be back to normal, but it didn't happen
- His cabin at Jumbo Bay was quite far from the lake but it got closer and closer due to erosion of the shoreline
- He had to keep repairing his roof because trees kept falling on it as the shoreline receded
- He built his second cabin on rock in a different part of Jumbo Bay where there was no erosion; he still has the cabin
- One time he stayed over the weekend at Opachuanau Lake to look after everyone's nets while they went to party in South Indian Lake and Leaf Rapids – he kept all the fish
- After the flooding, the pickerel fishing spot was gone – the fish must have left
- The whitefish are still there to some extent
- There's not much nice to say about SIL after the flood – the whole lake changed
- He remembers when Manitoba Hydro came to negotiate
- Elders told Hydro they were going to destroy the fishery
- "We would get a hydro bill every month – but how do you pay it when the fishery is destroyed?"
- His wife's granny got a new Hydro house so they moved in with her; his wife inherited the house
- When his family got bigger, he rented another house and then bought a house
- He lived in three different houses in South Indian Lake
- They built a store and school on the other side of the narrows so they had to move
- The community negotiated with Manitoba Hydro but used the wrong lawyer; the lawyer was from The Pas and asked for \$18 million – he wanted his money as soon as possible
- After the paperwork was done and the agreement was signed, Hydro said they would have settled for twice that amount
- The community never had to negotiate before
- The MMF came to the community and offered to help but they were turned away

- The community made some bad mistakes
- The settlement amount was low because South Indian Lake wasn't a reserve even though people had come from Nelson House
- They came to South Indian Lake because there was a HBC store there and they didn't want to keep travelling
- Before they moved to South Indian Lake, they would go there to fish and then go back to Nelson House, go there to trap and then go back
- After the store was built in South Indian Lake, they didn't have to travel
- "Those were the good ol' days when men were made of steel and boats were made of wood"
- He was a member of Peter Ballantyne at Pelican Narrows and then transferred to OPCN when the First Nation came to be

Brenda Anderson (Leaf Rapids)

- She was born in 1966 (now age 51) in The Pas but raised in South Indian Lake
- She was living in South Indian Lake when negotiations were taking place
- Her dad was Willie Dysart
- Two men came to talk to her dad – they talked about new houses with running water
- At that time, her family's house had no running water and her grandfather's house had no running water
- "Manitoba Hydro already knew they were going to burn our house and move us to the new community"
- She remembers being excited – she would have her own bedroom and running water
- They moved the community in 1972/73
- Her family moved to South Indian Lake for the fishing – it was a million dollar industry
- It was the biggest whitefish industry in Canada with jumbo whitefish
- Her grandfather Charlie Dysart started the community
- Her granny (Charlie's wife) died early at 64
- When the flooding started she (Brenda) was about 8 years old
- She would hear her dad and uncle talking and hear the sadness in their voices because they knew the lake would never be the same
- She remembers the clear water, the sandy beaches, the beautiful rocky shorelines
- When her son was about 8, she took him to where her house used to be in South Indian Lake
- She pointed to the rock where she learned how to swim
- Her son asked her where the rock was; she realized it was underwater and it broke her heart – "all my childhood memories are underwater"
- "Kids are always in the water, but now they can't do that in Southern Indian Lake"
- You can't see the bottom of the lake anywhere in Southern Indian Lake – "it's all muddy, it's disgusting"
- When mercury was discovered in the fish, they were heartbroken
- They were promised a better life – there would be twice as many fish, jobs for everyone

- “They took so much away from us, from our children and their children; our grandchildren will never see it the way it was”
- The whole community used to have beach parties, fish fries, swimming with their families
- Now there are logs, dead trees, islands that have disappeared
- The islands were calving areas for moose and bulls would be there in the summertime
- A sense of belonging is missing – people are wandering about missing a piece of themselves because it was taken away from them
- It’s the connection to the land
- “We would get medicine from mother earth”
- Her granny used to take them picking medicines – there are about 50 kinds of medicine plants e.g. wild tea, ginger root, sap from birch, poplar, tamarack, willow, jack pine, Saskatoon bushes, black currant, red currant
- “There were medicines for every disease known to mankind”
- “Lichen on the rock provided medicine for stomach problems”
- There was no welfare in South Indian Lake before Hydro came – people worked hard
- “Our identity washed away with the islands”
- The islands were nesting grounds for seagulls, geese, sandpipers
- Her granny used to make pies from “big berry” (like a little pumpkin); she hasn’t seen them since she was a little girl
- Their language is gone; her son understands very little
- She knows in her heart SIL will never be the same
- Her dad drowned in the lake – her brother Roger, Adam and Charlie all drowned lifting nets
- At a certain time of the year, they would pack up and head out to fish camps for the summer – Camp 3, Camp 10, Loon Narrows, Missi Falls
- She tells her kids to get an education so they can fight
- She lived in Granville Lake for 16 years – she fell in love with Granville Lake because it reminded her of SIL
- People in Granville Lake used to have a connection between each other; now they are far apart
- The people who moved away, they have no sense of belonging, they don’t come back
- “There must be a lot of people who had strokes or heart attacks”
- She lost two brothers through massive heart attacks
- Blood clots are very common in South Indian Lake and people having bypass surgery
- “I find myself broken – nothing will ever heal that pain”
- It’s hard for her to tell her son what SIL used to be like
- Some fish in the lake have cysts
- “I caught a pickerel – it looked like a dolphin; I opened its mouth and it looked like an alien”
- NCN brought Hydro into Leaf Rapids – “they made all these guarantees”
- “We lost big time; there’s no way it will ever be the same”

- “All the lies they lived through, all the hurt”
- Hydro bills are huge; power is sold to the US
- Her dad had a trapline at Big Sand Point
- “People wander around lost – no one wants to do anything; they’re hurt, they’re broken”
- “They’ve lost hope, lost faith in anything they were told”
- Except for her dad, they never found her other relatives that drowned in the lake
- She wants to go back to South Indian Lake and build a new house on the site of her original house (it was on high ground)
- She’s thought about writing a book – it would be called “All My Memories Are Underwater”

Leslie Baker (Leaf Rapids)

- He was born in Nelson House in 1957 (now 60 years of age)
- His family lived on a 40-acre piece of land called Baker’s Point
- He went to school in Nelson House from age 6 to Grade 7 then went to Thompson for Grades 8 and 9
- He has been a trapline holder since he was 17
- From 1979 to 1983, he had a commercial fishing license from the outlet of Opachuanau Lake to Twin Falls (above Granville Lake)
- He doesn’t know why the license was cancelled
- Fred Dumas saw sturgeon washed up on the shore like logs below Missi Falls
- Some sturgeon were below Twin Falls but more were in Allen Lake
- Most of the sturgeon were below Leaf Rapids
- In 1977, he had a sturgeon license from Twin Falls to Opachuanau Lake
- In 1980, the sturgeon license was from Twin falls to Leaf Rapids
- Before the CRD, sturgeon licenses extended from Twin Falls to Missi Falls
- He and his brother David were the first ones to go back into sturgeon fishing after the CRD
- Around 1987, there were no more sturgeon licenses
- He never got compensated for loss of sturgeon whereas Cross Lake and Wabowden fishermen got compensated
- Before the CRD, sturgeon were most numerous below Leaf Rapids
- His dad John Robert Baker and uncle Paul Bighetty told stories of how numerous the sturgeon were below Leaf Rapids
- When he was Headman of Granville Lake, he sat on the board established to oversee fisheries
- He found reports on sturgeon that stated there were abundant sturgeon below Leaf Rapids
- Michael Anderson was on that board
- Leslie was asked to test net for sturgeon below Leaf Rapids with William Anderson

- From June to September in 2006, they lifted nets every second day and never caught one sturgeon
- Keith Anderson and John Baker fished from Leaf Rapids to Opachuanau Lake in the 1980s under a sturgeon license
- Leaf Rapids was probably the biggest spawning area for pickerel; they would move upstream into Granville Lake afterwards
- In the early 1970s, Leslie was a helper for his late brother John
- They would fill 16 tubs of walleye using 8 nets in the Pickerel Narrows area of Granville Lake
- Today, using 80 nets, you would be lucky to fill 5 tubs
- “The reduction in pickerel catch is linked to the effects of the CRD on Leaf Rapids”
- Keith Anderson has a commercial fishing license downstream of Leaf Rapids
- Opachuanau Lake was the best area for walleye
- The house he lived in on Baker’s Point was burned down by Hydro
- His dad received \$3,000 for the house considered to be a trapper’s cabin
- People used to take a traditional trip from Nelson House to Granville Lake
- He made the trip in 1969 when he was 12; he was the last one to do it
- The Notigi Control Structure was built on the Rat River where there was a set of three rapids (“long rapids”)
- They would catch walleye with fishing rods in Wapisu Lake
- A year or so later (~1971), a coffer dam went in
- They started working on Missi falls around 1969
- No one has made a claim yet for fish losses below Missi Falls
- People stopped making fish oil; then diabetes started appearing, high blood pressure, strokes, blood clots
- Everything from the fish was thrown into a pot to make fish oil
- Kids used to play in the shallow water with the little fish – algae eaters and crayfish

Betla Daniels (Thompson)

- She was born in South Indian Lake in 1946 (71 years of age)
- She lived in South Indian Lake until she was 9 years old
- She was raised in boarding schools in Clearwater Lake near The Pas until age 14
- She escaped from school and ended up in Wabowden; her uncle paid her air fare to South Indian Lake
- She got married in South Indian Lake to Allen Charles Daniels of Peguis but they split and she moved to Leaf Rapids in 1973
- She lived in Leaf Rapids from 1973 to 2013
- She moved to Thompson in 2013
- She was diagnosed with sugar diabetes and needed to be close to a hospital and doctor
- In 1972, the Churchill River at Leaf Rapids was normal
- She commercially fished with her boys for 5 years (they were 12, 13 and 14 at the time)
- They caught mostly whitefish and pickerel, then suckers and jackfish

- Didn't see many jumbo whitefish in the lake
- She worked as a community health worker in South Indian Lake in the late 1960s
- When the flooding came, they were told they couldn't fish anywhere in the channel at South Indian Lake; then she moved to Leaf Rapids
- "There's no more fishing because the lake is polluted"
- She doesn't feel good about it – "you wouldn't feel good if it was your community"
- Hydro came and wanted people to burn down their houses
- It was a good life – everything was clean; moose, ducks and geese were all good but now you can't hunt them

Dorothy Baker Dewitt (Thompson)

- She was born in 1942 (74 years of age now) at Suwannee Lake under a tree while picking berries
- She is Leslie Baker's sister
- She was raised in Granville Lake and Nelson House when she was young
- She had to walk to school – it was very cold in the wintertime
- She lived on a 40-acre plot of land in Nelson House (Baker's Point)
- Her dad commercially fished at Suwannee Lake
- When she was 15 years old, she got married in Lynn Lake
- She lived there for a couple of years and then moved to Suwannee Lake and Granville Lake
- After she split from her husband, she moved to Thompson
- She left Thompson in 1981 and moved to Calgary; she met her common law husband there
- She stayed in about Calgary 34 years and moved back to Thompson when her partner passed away last October
- There was a portage between Suwannee Lake and Granville Lake
- At Suwannee Lake, they caught whitefish and jackfish
- Her dad fished in Granville Lake too – caught whitefish, jackfish and pickerel
- Her dad had cabins on the islands in Granville Lake
- At Baker's Point, there were two big houses; both belonged to her dad
- There are only three of them left in the family; she has a sister in Winnipeg

David Merasty (Leaf Rapids)

- He was born in Brochet in 1943 (present age 73) and raised there
- He left Brochet in the 1960s to work at the Agassiz Mine in Lynn Lake
- He also worked for Underwood McLellan; they had a camp outside Leaf Rapids which David looked after
- He carried out surveying with Underwood McLellan for Manitoba Hydro before the CRD
- He worked for Provincial Highways for 3 years in Lynn Lake
- He got a job with the Town of Leaf Rapids and then at the Ruttan Mine where he worked for 30 years

- He used to commercially fish in Reindeer Lake
- When he worked at the Ruttan Mine, he used to fish for food for his dogs at various inland lakes and on the Churchill River
- He didn't have a lot of time to fish due to his long shifts
- He didn't commercially fish on the Churchill River
- He used to trap as a helper to Bill Anderson; his trapline extended from the highway to Rusty River
- He trapped on his days off; he caught mostly lynx and mink; he didn't trap along the Churchill River
- He lost his boat this spring; his grandson used the boat last fall and pulled it up on the shore of the Churchill River; this year's flood took it away
- Gordon Bighetty, who fishes for food, told him he couldn't catch any fish this year
- He did some moose hunting, mostly near his cabin at Baldy Lake (about 60 km from Lynn Lake) close to Reindeer Lake
- He worked on the cleanup of the Ruttan Mine

Minnie Anderson (Leaf Rapids)

- She was born in 1939 (present age 78) in Wabowden
- She moved to South Indian Lake in 1957
- She also lived in Leaf Rapids for a period of time
- After her husband Bill died in 1981, she went back to South Indian Lake and worked in the nursing station for 18 years
- Later on, she gave her house to her daughter and moved back to Leaf Rapids where she is now
- She was in South Indian Lake when Hydro first came to the community to begin the CRD
- Women in the community would go out to the fish camps in the summer to help out their husbands
- She and her husband had a fish camp at Sturgeon Narrows near Missi Falls
- They had another camp on Rusty River on their trapline
- Her husband and her boys were top fishermen and trappers
- Before the flooding, drinking water could be taken right out of SIL but after the flood the water was awful
- The water used to be so clear you could see the fish
- After the flood, you could see the change in the colour of SIL from the air
- There used to be a lot of fish in SIL but it wasn't the same after the flood
- After the flood, there was a lot of debris that would get caught in the nets; sometimes the nets would be destroyed
- The debris would destroy the props and lower parts of boat motors
- There were trees in the water, things were dying; there was debris all over the place
- People had to be careful in their boats due to all the sticks and trees in the water
- Before the flood, there used to be a lot of muskrats on their trapline which covered a large area both sides of the Churchill River

- They would catch mostly muskrat and beaver as well as mink and lynx
- She used to strip the furs off muskrats and dry them out
- Sometimes her husband would catch so many she would say, "Stop, don't catch any more"
- One spring, she remembers her husband catching 2,000 muskrats
- After the flood, he didn't catch very many; to this day there aren't many to be caught
- When you go out in a boat, it looks so different
- Hydro changes the levels up and down; it's really hard on people when that happens
- Sometimes the shoreline is flooded, sometimes it's dry
- Hydro put people through a lot
- Mother Nature put everything out there for us and Hydro destroyed it
- All the changes were hard on families
- She had to tell the children not to swim in the lake because of all the things in the water
- Her husband used to catch sturgeon
- She had never seen sturgeon before he caught his first one; he caught it in the Leaf Rapids area
- He caught it in a regular net and it destroyed the net
- After that, he caught some more but you don't see them anymore
- People haven't seen sturgeon for a long time
- Her husband tried commercial fishing after the flood; a lot of debris would end up in the nets, sometimes they would be destroyed
- Moose hunting is not like it used to be; they are harder to find
- Before the flood, you could see them along the shoreline when you traveled by boat but you don't see them there anymore because the water is into the trees