

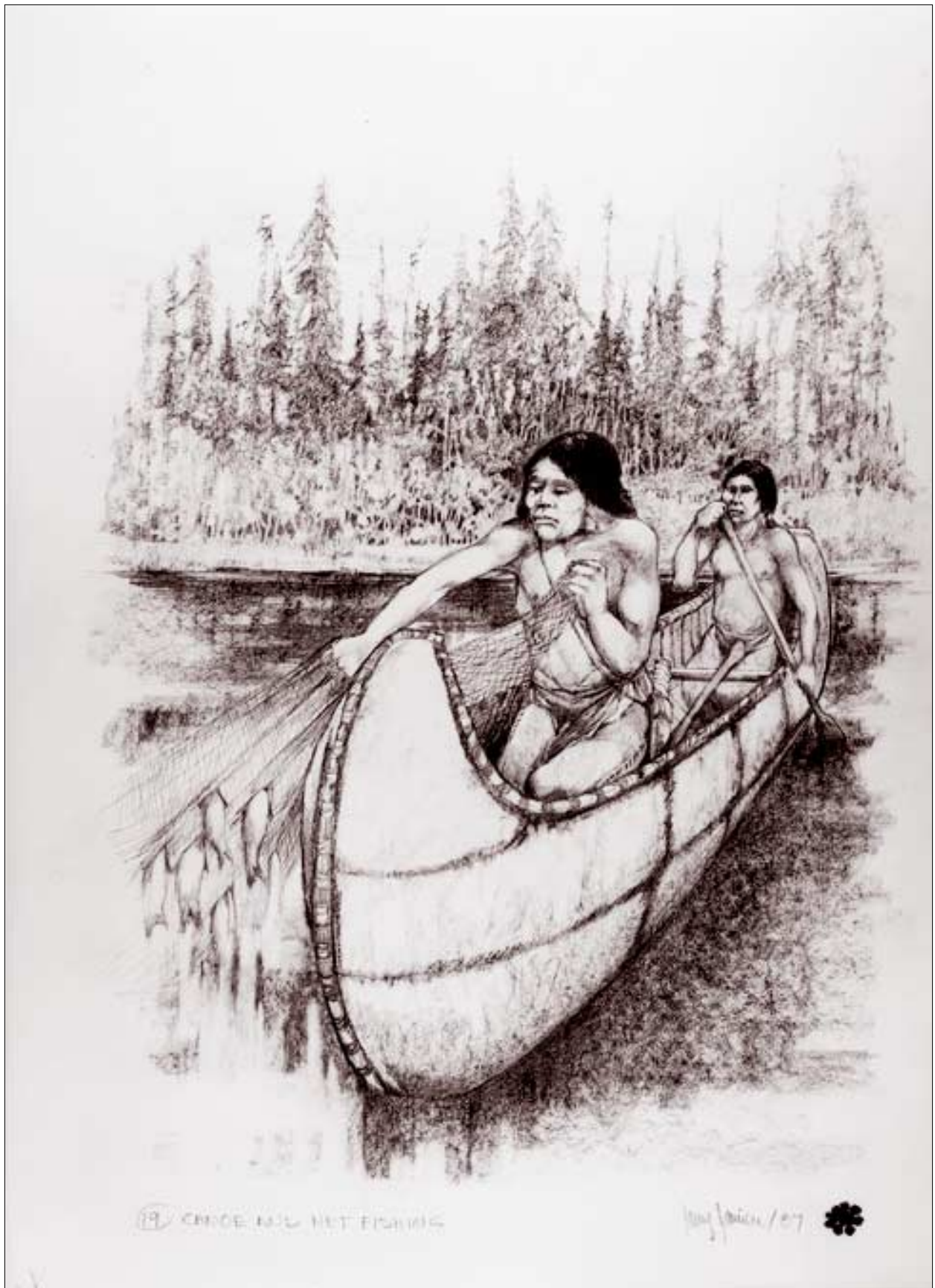
# SPLIT LAKE CREE FIRST NATION



## Analysis of Change

Split Lake Cree Post Project  
Environmental Review

VOLUME ONE:  
August 1996



*Traditional fishing using hand-woven nets and birch bark canoes.*

**T**HIS DOCUMENT is one of a series of studies being used in the planning of hydroelectric development on the Birthday/Gull reach of the Nelson River. It forms part of the Post Project Environmental Review as described in Article 2.8.3(b) of the 1992 Split Lake Cree NFA Implementation Agreement. Manitoba Hydro provided the funding and technical equipment required for the development of this study, as part of its responsibilities under the 1992 Agreement. By mutual agreement, Split Lake Cree First Nation has taken lead responsibility for the production of the paper, with periodic review and comment by Manitoba Hydro representatives.



*Dedicated to the memory of  
Elder Samuel Garson,  
Split Lake Cree.*

THE STUDY is largely based on interviews conducted in the Cree language with Split Lake Cree Elders and adults, in which testimony was provided about many important developments in the life of the people. Video tapes of these interviews are

available at the Tataskweyak Trust Secretariat Office in Split Lake.

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#### NOTICE TO READER

*The views and interpretations in this report are exclusively those of the Split Lake Cree. While Manitoba Hydro funded this report and contributed photographs and maps, the Corporation does not necessarily agree with, nor is it bound by all of the historical interpretations contained in it.*

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*Boys at the beach, Split Lake. 1929.*

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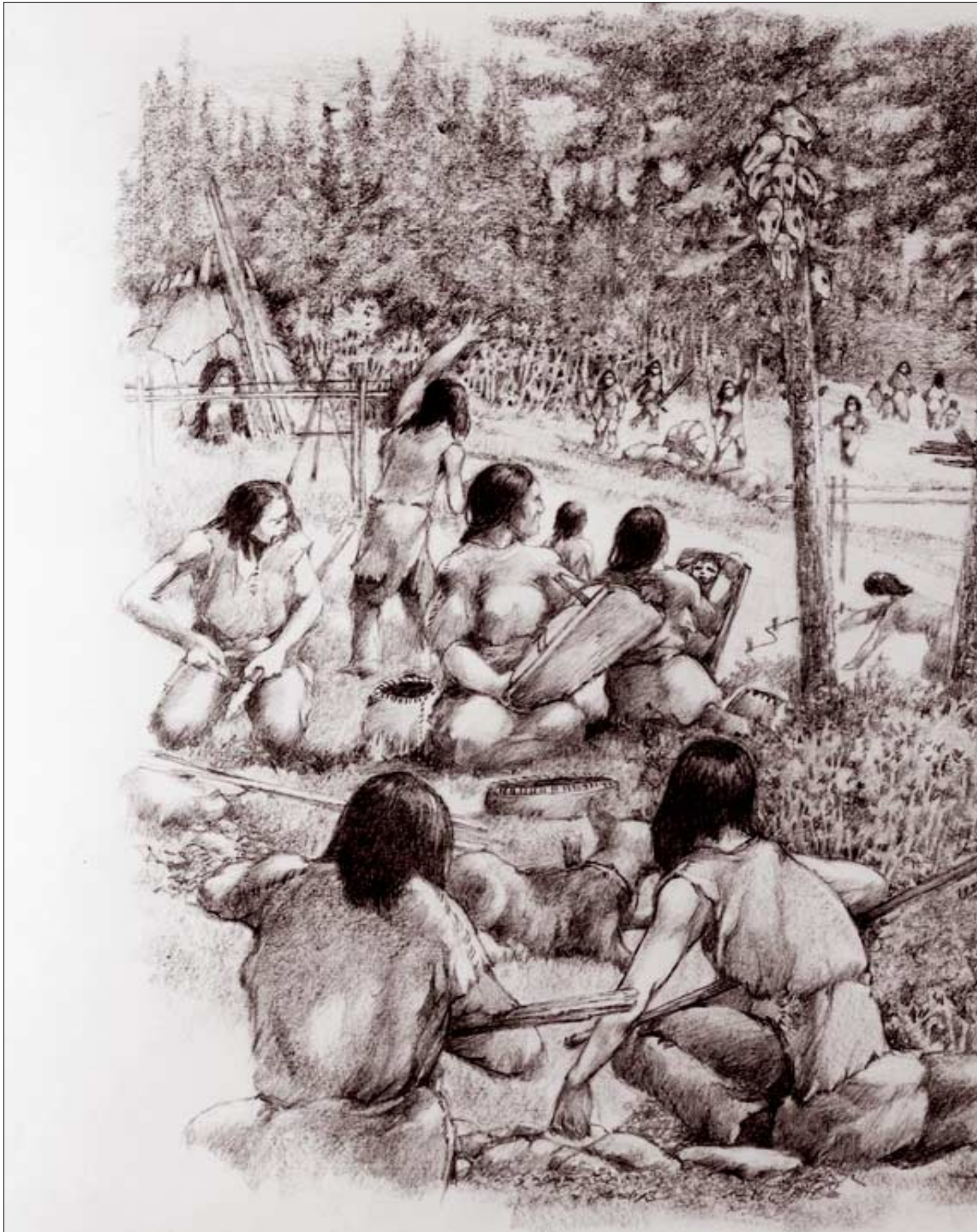
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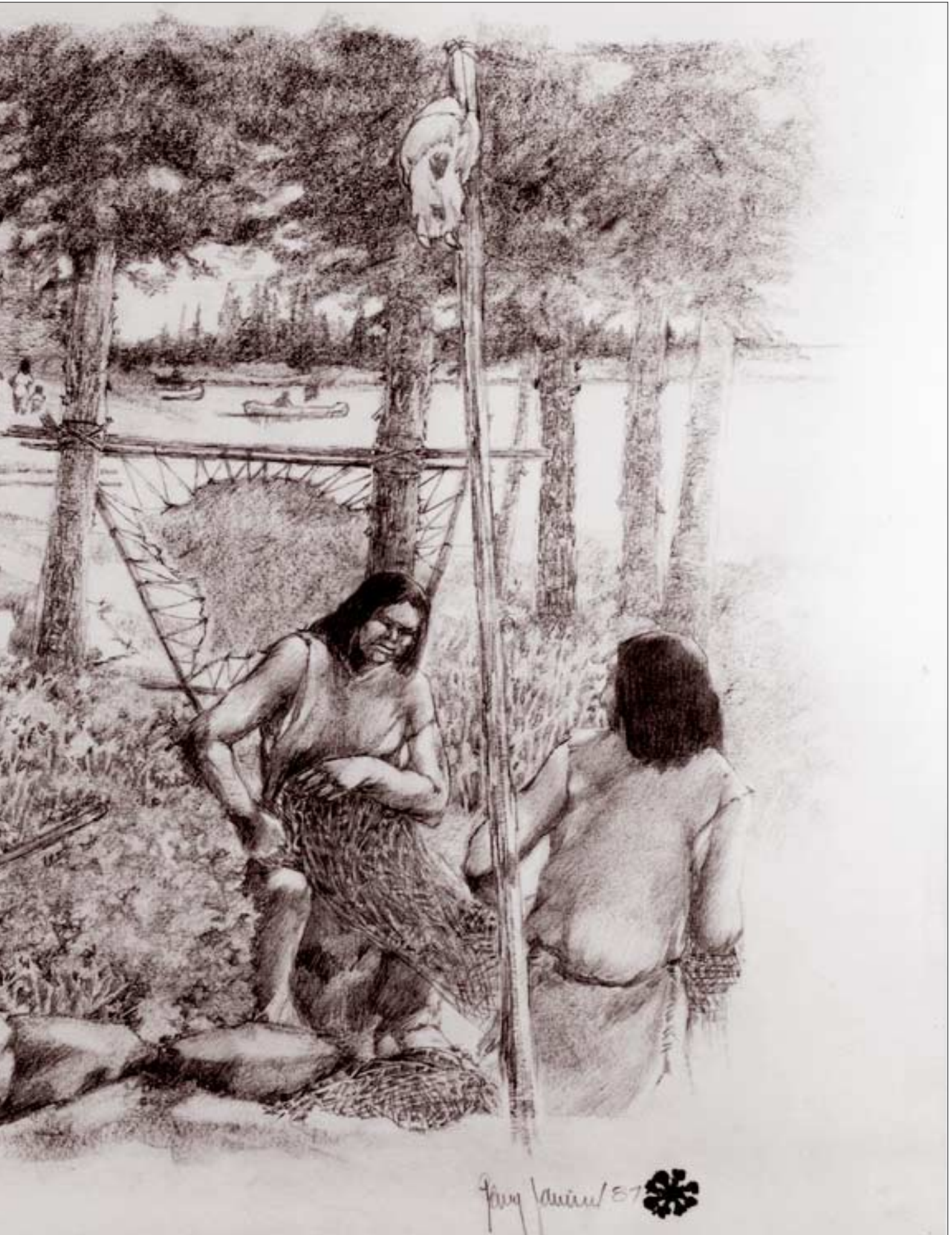
A large number of people provided valuable insights about the contents of this analysis of change, and the Split Lake Cree regret any oversight in acknowledging their contributions.


†(deceased 1995)



9. CREE HUNTING AND FISHING CAMP





King James / 87 

**T**HE SPLIT LAKE CREE representatives on the Birthday/Gull Joint Study Group suggested that a people's account of their history should be prepared. The initial idea was to consider developments since the start of hydroelectric development in the mid-1950s. Manitoba Hydro supported the concept. Consultants to the Study Group were asked to prepare a workplan for the incorporation of such a study into the Post Project Environmental Review process. At the initial meeting on January 10, 1995, the Study Group agreed to proceed with a study that identified and analyzed the changes that had affected the Split Lake Cree since the start of hydroelectric development in the study area.

At that time it was proposed that the analysis be broken down into ten year time frames, beginning in the 1940s and 1950s. Recognizing that hydroelectric development was not the only agent of change that had affected the Split Lake Cree over the period, it was agreed that other interrelated factors would also be considered. These included trapping and fishing changes, the emergence of the wage economy, population movement and growth, community characteristics, diet/health, transportation, education, social issues, and other outside development pressures. An initial list of major community changes was provided by Elders at the January 1995 meeting. This list was later used as the basis for two questionnaire survey instruments, one for Elders and another for adults.

An interview team of Split Lake Cree personnel was trained in interview techniques. Manitoba Hydro provided audio and video tape equipment and a television set, in order to document and view the interviews. In total, 30 Elders and 15 adults were interviewed and about 100 hours of interviews were taped, most of them in the Cree language. Two to three people were involved in each interview and each of the sessions lasted about three hours. Initially, a long questionnaire was used to guide the interviews. However, this proved too cumbersome so the interview team abandoned it in favour of a more flexible, thematic approach. This contributed to a freer flow of information while maintaining some structure in the interview process. Interview team members transcribed several of the interview sessions into English and these became the raw data upon which this document was based. In addition, the interview team met with the consultants after the interviews to ensure the writers had a complete picture of the information collected.



*Albert Garson catching trout at Waskaiowaka Lake.*

Additional complementary research was carried out by members of the Study Group and by the consultants to the Post Project Environmental Review process. Statistical information was obtained from a variety of sources, including the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources and Statistics Canada. Community profile information was compiled for surrounding communities such as York Landing and Ilford. Information from Split Lake community plans was also used and incorporated. Given the intention to focus and report on the experience and knowledge of the people, no thorough review was conducted of the primary archival sources or secondary literature. A complete history of the Split Lake

Cree would require a marrying together of the present oral testimony, more interviews and materials from other written sources.

After the material in this document was initially presented to the Chief and Council in June 1995, they requested that information from the treaty signing time and earlier be included in the study. This was accomplished by undertaking some additional research into historical documents and by going back to the interview team for additional Split Lake Cree historical information. Old photographs for the document were provided from a variety of sources, mainly Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro, as well as a former teacher who spent time in Split Lake in 1929 – 1930.

As various drafts of the *Analysis of Change* report were prepared, they were reviewed by members of the Split Lake Cree interview team and the Study Group. Helpful comments and feedback were received and many changes made as a result.

**T**HIS DOCUMENT describes part of the historical experience of the Split Lake Cree. It identifies and analyses key changes in the First Nation's history, noting factors that have caused such changes, particularly the impacts resulting from hydroelectric development. It provides an overview of the Cree presence in northern Manitoba from pre-European times up to the present. However, the study's focus is on the 20TH century, describing traditional life before 1920, followed by an account of the development of the community within relevant eras, with special emphasis on the years after 1940.

The purpose of this study is to identify and understand the major changes in the First Nation's growth and evolution, based directly on the people's experience. Many of the subjects covered here in a general way are deserving of their own detailed historical analyses, considering both the oral and written records. This analysis of change has drawn upon existing studies, reports and other documents and upon consultation with certain knowledgeable individuals who have clarified particular matters. However, its most important source has been detailed interviews with Split Lake Cree Elders and adults.



*Treaty party. Indian agent and guides. Split Lake 1927.*

### Background

By far the most significant development that irreversibly changed the way of life of many of the Cree of northern Manitoba, including the Split Lake Cree, was the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion (LWR-CRD) hydroelectric project. The area it impacted is the permanent tribal homeland of the Cree, consisting of a significant portion of Manitoba below the tundra in the boreal forest region. The First Nations most affected were Split Lake, Nelson House, Cross Lake, Norway House and York Factory.

Concerned about what was happening to their lands and waters the five First Nations began to meet together in the early 1970s. Split Lake Cree leaders and Elders quickly became major supporters and proponents of the idea of working together to oppose Manitoba Hydro in an effort to stop the project. Split Lake Cree, more than any other of the First Nations, had already suffered from its adverse effects. The people had seen its impacts on their traditional lands and waters, above and below the Kelsey generating station. Split Lake Cree leaders urged the other four First Nations to

join them in trying to stop the project, in order to avoid further such consequences.<sup>1</sup> To this end, the five First Nations established the Northern Flood Committee in 1974.

## **Northern Flood Agreement**

Despite their best efforts, the First Nations were not able to stop the Manitoba Hydro project. Nevertheless, the Northern Flood Committee fought to have its concerns heard and was able to convince Canada to support it in negotiating additional land rights and compensation for the impacts of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion upon the lands, lives, and livelihood of its member First Nations. Using the James Bay Agreement as a precedent, it negotiated the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) with Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. This agreement, the first in the history of northern Manitoba in which Cree First Nations had the ability to represent themselves independently, was signed in December 1977 and ratified by all parties in 1978. For the Cree people, the NFA had two purposes: to compensate them for the adverse effects of the Hydro project; and to assist in the development of a viable and sustainable livelihood in their traditional homeland.

With regard to Split Lake specifically, the NFA granted Manitoba Hydro an easement for the storage of water on reserve lands below approximate elevation 559 feet above sea level and contiguous to Split Lake. Furthermore, Hydro was obligated, to the extent possible, to control the flow of water so as not to exceed elevation 556 feet above sea level on Split Lake.

## **Implementation**

However, once the NFA was signed, its effective implementation became a matter of dispute, with the other parties interpreting in the narrowest way its broad contractual undertakings. Although greatly disappointed by this turn of events, the five First Nations took up the struggle to get it implemented. It was not until an arbitrator was appointed in 1980, and claims began to be filed, that some real prospect of serious implementation appeared. Progress was, nevertheless, painfully slow, and by 1986 the NFA First Nations had decided to pursue a more vigorous and comprehensive approach to getting the agreement implemented.

In 1988, prior to any acceptance of the global process proposed by the First Nations, Split Lake Cree were informed that Manitoba Hydro wished to negotiate an upward adjustment of the on-reserve setback line to accommodate potential hydroelectric development of the reach on the Nelson River between Birthday and Gull Rapids, 40 to 60 kilometres downstream of the community. This announcement about potential future flooding produced a profound level of anxiety throughout the community, which was still shaken by the continuing, uncompensated adverse effects of past hydroelectric development, particularly the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion.

Manitoba Hydro projects had already flooded Split Lake Cree waterways and lands, including campsites, hunting grounds and traditional use areas, had interfered with transportation, adversely impacted wildlife and fish habitat and populations, and negatively affected the traditional way of life. In addition, it was evident that Birthday/Gull project planning had been initiated without any consultation with the First Nation. Community leaders and members had little understanding of the potential impacts of the possible development. The people were also determined that future stages of hydroelectric development would not occur until full compensation had been received in the form of the comprehensive implementation of the NFA. Fortunately, in response to First Nation concerns, Hydro called off the proposed negotiations at that time.

Showing patience and skill, the NFA First Nations, represented by the Northern Flood Committee, gradually succeeded in moving discussions with the other parties into full-scale negotiations. By 1989, the other parties – Canada, Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro – had agreed to try to negotiate an agreement for an implementation mechanism for the NFA and by the spring of 1990 had agreed on a Proposed Basis of Settlement of Outstanding Claims and Obligations. Initially, this was accepted by four of the five Northern Flood Committee members. The summer of 1990 was spent trying to work out an accommodation with Norway House First Nation, which did not find the proposed basis of settlement acceptable. However, agreement was not possible and at a meeting on August 28, 1990, three of the five NFA First Nations, with Cross Lake abstaining, decided to put the implementation negotiations on hold.

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1990, Split Lake Cree First Nation held several workshops with its membership, for information, communication and direction. The direction was clear – to get on with the next phase in trying to work out an implementation agreement based on the proposed basis of settlement. As a result, Split Lake Cree Chief and Council indicated to their Northern Flood Committee partners that they had a mandate from their people to proceed with the negotiation of a comprehensive implementation agreement, and that they did not have the authority to do otherwise. At that time the other four First Nations voted to cut their ties with Split Lake Cree First Nation. At a later date, in April 1991, they attempted, by resolution, to formally oust Split Lake Cree First Nation from the Northern Flood Committee. On principle, this position was never

accepted by Split Lake Cree First Nation.

In September 1990, Split Lake Cree First Nation began negotiating the implementation of the Northern Flood Agreement with the other parties. A precondition placed on these negotiations was the understanding that the eventual implementation agreement would do nothing to harm the position of the other First Nation signatories of the NFA. Negotiations continued from November 1990 until May 1992. The very challenging work undertaken during that period by Split Lake Cree, both internally and with the other parties, resulted in a comprehensive agreement, which was ratified by the Split Lake Cree membership in the spring of 1992. The final signing took place on June 24, 1992.

The negotiation of the 1992 NFA Implementation Agreement by Split Lake Cree First Nation was a pioneering step in the implementation of the Northern Flood Agreement. It demonstrated the determination of the people to get fair compensation for the adverse effects of the Hydro project upon their lands, lives, and livelihood, as promised in the 1977 NFA. It was the culmination of a 15 year long struggle by the Split Lake Cree and also marked a path which the other NFA First Nations have since followed.

The agreement provided Split Lake Cree First Nation with \$47,370,000 over a period of time, approximately 37,600 acres of new reserve lands, and 2,800 acres of titled lands. This was in addition to the \$16,260,000 paid to the Split Lake Cree by Canada, Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro between 1975 and 1992. In return, the First Nation waived all past, present and future claims and outstanding NFA provisions, except for some very specific Hydro-related liabilities.

More details on the agreement are included in Appendix 2.

## **Joint Study Group**

Since October 1992, Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro, represented by the Joint Study Group, have together been conducting a study program to facilitate planning associated with the Birthday/Gull hydroelectric full development option, which could have the effect of altering the water regime agreed to in the NFA and the 1992 Implementation Agreement. Both parties identified three areas of study which will assist in each side's understanding of the impacts of any future construction of dams and generating stations. The three areas are: a Split Lake Community Planning and Impact Study, completed in November 1994, which assessed Split Lake's community development requirements both with and without impacts from Birthday/Gull; a Post Project Environmental Review which is currently underway; and a Birthday/Gull Resource Impact Study.

## **Environmental Review**

The Post Project Environmental Review is a requirement of Section 2.8 of the 1992 NFA Implementation Agreement, which sets out the resolution process governing deviations from the Split Lake water regime and any amendment to Hydro flooding easements. As part of the resolution process to amend the easements, paragraph (b) of subsection 2.8.3 requires Manitoba Hydro to implement, cooperatively with Split Lake Cree First Nation, a review of the existing environment in the Split Lake resource area. Specifically, the paragraph requires Manitoba Hydro, "at its own expense and with the cooperation of Split Lake Cree", to:

*implement... a review of the*

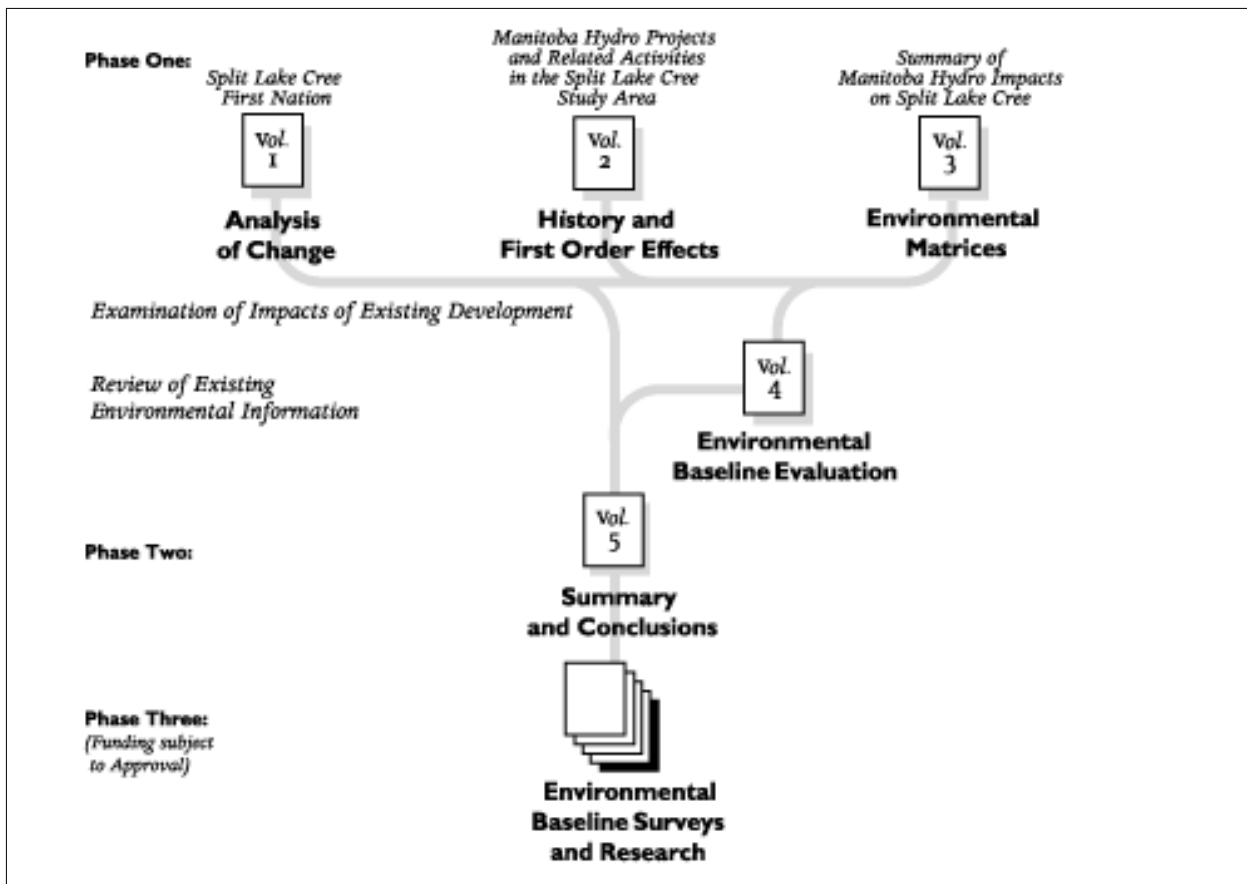


Figure 1 – Components and Phases of the Post Project Environmental Review

existing environment including the impacts of that part of Existing Development which impact on the Resource Area, and of future environmental impacts on Split Lake Cree anticipated to result from such Future Development, as such relates to Split Lake Cree.

The original terms of reference for the Post Project Environmental Review were approved by Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro in November 1993. Hydro’s wish was to begin with the Community Planning and Impact Study, the first report in the joint study process. Its completion served to foster a more harmonious working relationship between Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro. The terms of reference of the Post Project Environmental Review were revised in 1995 with joint agreement. Figure

1 (above) shows the components and phases of the Post Project Environmental Review.

### Phase One

It was agreed then that the future stages of the review would consist of three phases of work. Phase One involves four studies. The first study is this history of the First Nation, focusing on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and identifying those changes, particularly the effects of hydroelectric development, which have affected the traditional way of life in the resource area. The second study is a history of hydroelectric development in the study area including a description of first order physical impacts. Figures 3 & 4, which follow page 16, show principal Manitoba Hydro projects and related activities in the study area. The third study will be the

Environmental Matrices summarizing Manitoba Hydro impacts on the Split Lake Cree, and the fourth, the Environmental Baseline Evaluation.

### Phases Two and Three

Phase Two will entail a synthesis of the findings of the Phase One studies in a report that will concentrate on the meaning and significance of hydroelectric development to the Split Lake Cree. While it will not produce a detailed evaluation of the physical and biological impacts of individual Hydro projects, it will show what the impacts mean to the people. This is a dimension of environmental assessment that has not been addressed sufficiently in past environmental reviews and studies. Phases One and Two also involved an environmental specialist to

develop terms of reference for Phase Three, to provide additional environmental baseline data and environmental monitoring information.

It is hoped that this *Analysis of Change* report will give the reader an appreciation of the Split Lake Cree's profound attachment to the lands and waters, and of the changes which, although they have altered the nature and extent of this attachment, have never severed it. The First Nation continues to be intimately associated with its natural environment despite the assaults of modernization. Split Lake Cree appreciate the natural gifts that the Creator has provided to the earth and to them. This Aboriginal appreciation was described, albeit in another circumstance and time, most eloquently in a statement attributed to Chief Seattle in 1854 when, in response to the American government's offer for a large area of Aboriginal land and the promise of a reservation, he said:

*Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sand shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man...*

*This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you our land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.*

*The rivers are our brother, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother...*

*The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath - the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell our land, you must remember the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers...*

*You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth.*

*Figure 2: Map to Split (Tā tas que) Lake, drawn by Cha chay pay way ti, May 1806. Redrawn by Peter Fidler in one his journals, it is now housed in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.*

*Figure 3: Principal Manitoba Hydro Projects Affecting the Split Lake Cree Study Area.*

*Figure 4: Manitoba Hydro Projects and Related Activities in the Split Lake Cree Study Area.*



## Context

The devastating effects of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion hydroelectric project seriously disrupted and altered the lands and waters which had been the lifeblood of the Split Lake Cree since time immemorial. In 1988, Joseph I. Keeper, then Executive Director of the Northern Flood Committee, spoke at a conference on the environment in Montreal. As part of his paper on the NFA, he spoke about these impacts from the perspective of the Cree people of northern Manitoba, and put them in the historical context of the rapid social and economic change experienced by the Cree in the second half of the 20th century. His comments are a fitting opening for this study.

*In order to put the socio-economic expectations from the NFA into perspective, it must be realized that the Cree of Northern Manitoba have been experiencing a period of rapid social and economic change since the end of World War Two. Up to 50 years ago, prior to World War Two, the Cree of Northern Manitoba lived in a trapping, fishing and hunting economy in a manner that allowed them to exploit fully the natural resources which they had utilized in a particular way for centuries. Certainly, white contact with its superior technology, the fur trade, and its diseases had impacted the Cree but they had adapted to it within the continuing context of their own culture.*

Figure 5 (opposite): Split Lake Cree Land Use Calendar – prepared by MKO Natural Resources Secretariat.

*Post World War Two conditions brought about changes which created a severe disruption to the traditional culture. The necessities of education, the new phenomenon of family allowance, and other social and economic factors did not allow the Cree to disperse into the various sections of their traditional resource areas as they once had for the greater part of the year, from early fall until late spring. The Cree were forced by circumstances beyond their control to live in one central location all the year around. This new pattern caused a drastic impact and change not only in how the Indian people trapped, fished and hunted in their traditional resource areas, but it also created new dynamics for social interaction, for local government, for housing, for the planning of their lives, and all the other problems associated with moving into a new physical, social and economic environment. It created new pressures upon the natural resources within the home community area. Such a prosaic item as the acquisition of sufficient firewood has become a problem for most of the Bands.*

*This was not change planned by government for the Cree nor was this change planned by the Cree for themselves. It was change caused by changes in the social and economic fabric of Canada as a nation. The Federal Department responsible for Indians and Indian lands struggled to adapt itself to change but because the political dynamics which could have led to a more meaningful and productive change was lacking, a period of social and economic breakdown was set into motion for the Cree. The policy of unaware or uncaring neglect by the Canadian body politic remained in existence as it had in the pre-war era. While this policy did not have an apparent*

*effect in the pre-World War Two era, it created conditions leading to disastrous consequences for the post-World War Two era. Neither the Federal Government, the Provincial Government nor the Cree people were prepared for the forces of change that were engulfing the Cree. Many other factors, such as increased access to the media and to the outside world of the dominant society, had the effect of creating new and different expectations for the young people. A number of large mining projects in the fifties and early sixties produced outside employment for many young Cree. Increased and better health services were having a positive effect in decreasing the Cree mortality rate particularly for infants and children but this also had the effect of increasing the pressure on decreasing resources in a rapidly changing environment. The only continuing and sustained solution that governments found for this emergent situation was welfare and more welfare and by the late sixties the majority of the Cree on the five Northern Flood reserves had become welfare recipients. Through no fault of their own the Cree in the Northern Flood Area had become casualties of change. The social and economic basis for their existence and survival which had sustained them for centuries was being severely disrupted.*

*The announcement by the Province of Manitoba of a giant hydro project in Northern Manitoba in the mid-1960s brought a promise of hope which changed to despair when the Cree people discovered that the land upon which they lived and from which they had drawn their sustenance would be changed physically and their traditional livelihood from hunting, fishing and trapping would be very adversely affected, and in some*

*cases destroyed, by changes caused to the land and natural resources by new and different water regimes caused by dams and river diversions . . . Concerning the Cree and the hydro project, one often hears the arguments that the Indians were in a bad position anyway. Comments such as “The project will probably help them” or “One can’t stand in the way of progress” are often heard, reflecting misconceptions and misinformation about the actual state of affairs. If we look at the total impact of the hydro project upon a people already suffering the effects of rapid and debilitating change, we find that the effect of the project upon the Band communities has not lessened the horrendous symptoms of rapid change. Examining the statistics we find no evidence of positive social and economic change, rather we find some rather frightening indicators that the project may be exacerbating and accelerating the already devastating effects of social and economic damage in the five Northern Flood Communities. Statistics validating the increase in alcoholism, unemployment, child and family abuse, violent crime and suicide are available.*

*What is the specific nature of the changes that the project has introduced into the already serious situation of existence for the Northern Cree?*

Mr. Keeper then detailed the following five broad categories of impacts and damages: destruction of many components of the resource base; disrupted economic linkages; damage to community infrastructure; new costs; and diminished aesthetic values. He continued:

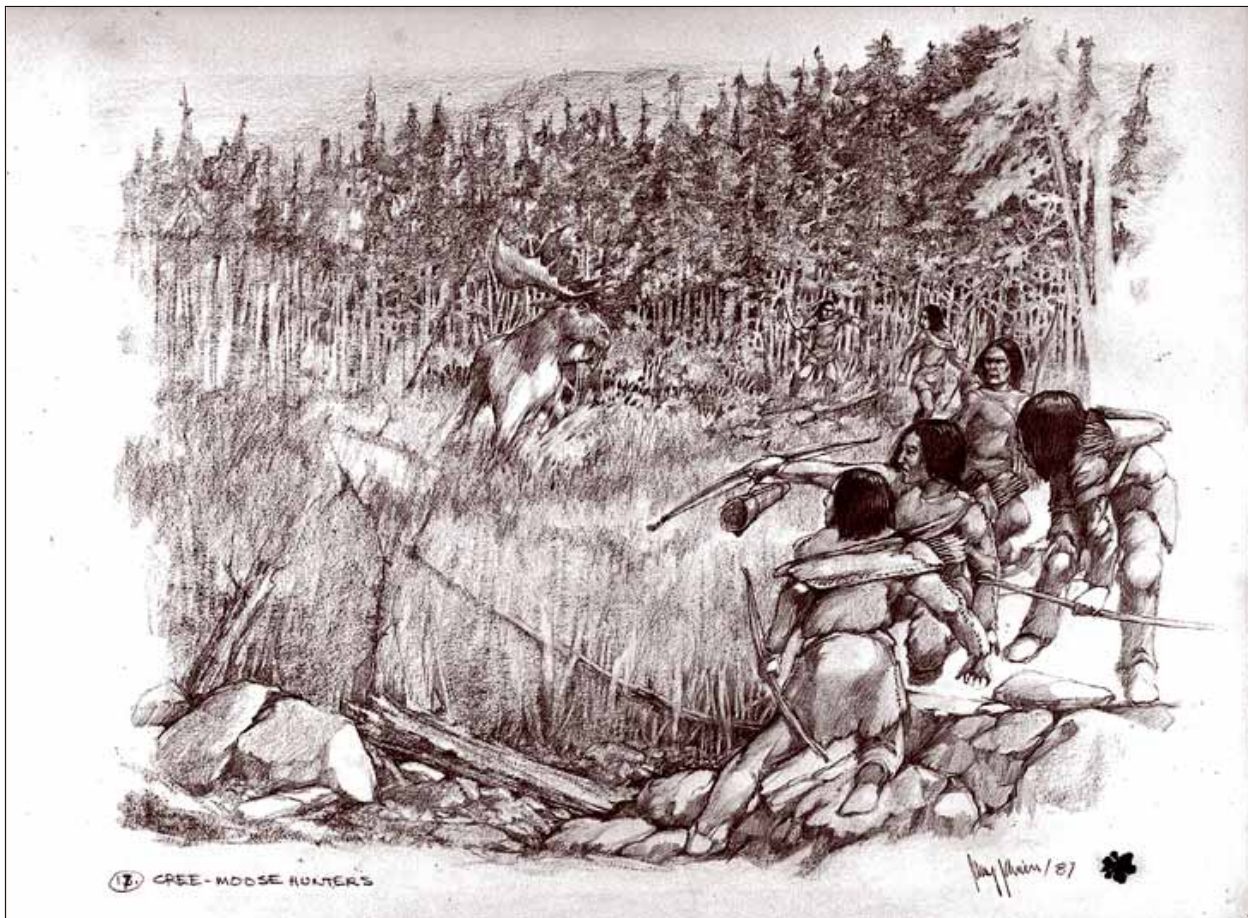
*It is difficult to quantify the costs of damages described above and the total impact is much greater than the sum of its parts because what has happened cumulatively to the Cree people from the hydro project is a separate and conceivably the most deadly of impacts because it could be just the added pressure which could cause the dam to break, to put it metaphorically.<sup>2</sup>*

The testimony of the Elders interviewed for this study, who remember the life the Split Lake Cree once enjoyed in their tribal homeland, shows that they, more than anyone else, realize what they have lost.

They speak of a life of freedom and of fulfillment in an environment that they knew and cherished. Many of the Elders recall the time when there was no need for money because the very concept of money was not a part of the Indian way of life. Their life in their resource area was not nomadic, but was an accommodation and an arrangement with nature and her rhythms. The people had everything they required – food, shelter, clothing, recreation, medicine, and their relationship with their Creator.

More than anything else, the Elders speak of the water as the lifeblood of their existence. Water, before the hydroelectric project, was always clean. People could get water from the lake and know it was safe. They could fish in the lake near their homes and know that they need not fear the possibility of poison from the fish. Their nets would not be filled with algae and debris. They could land anywhere along the banks of the lakes and rivers; the shorelines had not yet been destroyed and desecrated. They could navigate the lakes and rivers in safety and know what to expect. In the winter time they would know where to travel, where the ice was safe. These things are no longer possible.

The Manitoba Hydro project has so changed the natural environment that the Split Lake Cree have lost their faith and their trust in the land and waters which have always sustained them. The Churchill and Nelson River basins, which were the basis of their homeland, have been radically altered and their resources damaged. Based on their travels throughout the resource area, the Elders and adults also believe that, in the interior, the wildlife and very nature of the land itself have been affected, particularly the low-lying areas near the streams and rivers.



*A bull moose being brought down with stone-tipped arrows.*

## Chapter I

### Split Lake Cree Early History

#### Pre-Contact

**A**T THE TIME of the first contact with Europeans, the Cree occupied the boreal forest region of northern Canada from present day northern Quebec into Saskatchewan and Alberta in the Lake Athabaska area. There is reliable, archaeological evidence that there were Cree in what is now northern Manitoba more than 1,200 years ago, a presence which has continued through to this day.

The forefathers of Split Lake Cree were hunters and gatherers who lived off the rich resources of the lands and waters. Their way of life centred around the lakes and rivers where wildlife and plant resources could be harvested. Fish were a particularly important source of food and were abundant. Northern

Cree harvested fish with nets made from willow and birch roots. Moose and caribou were also valuable as they provided large quantities of meat, their hides could be used for clothing and shelter, and their bones fashioned for tools. The illustration above shows a bull moose being brought down with stone-tipped arrows. Beaver, muskrat, geese, ducks, bear, porcupine and hare were also important sources of food. Caribou was a staple. The ancestors of Split Lake Cree developed a rich array of tools and technologies to harvest these resources. They also developed a system of beliefs and customs to conduct their lives.<sup>3</sup>

The Cree were a water people. Living along the shores of the lakes and rivers, they hunted and fished, and gathered herbs and berries from along the shoreline. The lakes and rivers were the roads by which they travelled. The waters, the shorelines, the shallows, the marshes, the riverbanks and willow thickets supported the fish, plants and animals that fed and sheltered them. The hundreds of miles of shoreline along Split Lake and the banks of the Nelson River, and the rivers and creeks running into them, provided the Cree with their sustenance. Centuries of occupation and use of the lands and waters enabled the identification and selection of the most useful and fruitful areas for residence and harvesting, in keeping with the rhythms of the seasons. Prior to contact with the white man, Cree people were living in and around Split Lake – which in Cree is called *Tataskweyak*, meaning ‘the place of tall trees’ – and throughout the whole Split Lake resource area, as they had undoubtedly done since time immemorial.

It is reasonable to assume that many of the so-called ‘Home Guard Cree’ who lived around York Factory until the late 1800s, and who then came to live at Split Lake, were descendants of the Cree who had lived in the Split Lake area for centuries. It can also be assumed that both before and after Hudson’s Bay Company forts were built at York Factory and Churchill, many Cree continued to use the traditional area of the Split Lake Cree. Because of its extraordinary richness in all that was central to the traditional way of life, Split Lake itself was a central gathering spot for the scattered hunting clans of Split Lake Cree in the pre-contact era.



*Lay reader Chief William Keche-kesik preparing a sermon before church. Early 1900s.*

## Early Settlements

Early contact with Europeans had been made by the 1650s when the French arrived and encountered the Cree settled around Hudson Bay. In 1668, Radisson and Groseilliers sailed to James Bay and conducted trade with them.

In 1670, the Hudson’s Bay Company was granted a Royal Charter over the vast territory of Rupert’s Land, including what is now northern Manitoba. The Royal Charter gave the company sovereign ownership of the land, with enormous powers of local government including the right to

appoint governors and make laws, as well as the authority to conduct trade and commerce, including, of course, the fur trade. However, no powers were given to interfere with the Aboriginal way of life, except as needed to protect forts and factories, and to maintain peaceful trade.

While there is scholarly disagreement about the effects of the fur trade on Aboriginal life, it seems that indigenous land use and traditions continued substantially independent of the demands of the fur trade. A large measure of autonomy was maintained until the mid to late 19th century when



*Split Lake and Nelson House York boat brigade leaving Norway House.  
– Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba*

government and religious institutions began exerting their influence. Rather than establishing the dominance of one culture over another, the fur trade relationship has been characterized as one of interdependence, carried out for the mutual benefit of both the Aboriginal people and the fur merchants. The Cree acted as middlemen between Aboriginal fur gatherers to the south, west and east, and Hudson's Bay Company representatives. As a result they were able to exert control over other tribes and to expand their range. In addition, as the Elders point out, the materials and equipment obtained by the fur trade with the company, contributed to a better life for the people within their traditional lifestyle.

The first permanent Hudson's Bay Company trading post in what is now Manitoba was established at York Factory in 1684 at the outlet of the Hayes River on the western shore of Hudson Bay, approximately 240 kilometres northeast of Split Lake. It was the most important source of European trade goods for the Aboriginal people in the central and southern areas of the region. In 1717, the company established Fort Prince of Wales trading post at Churchill. However, the furs traded there were never half as many as those at York Factory. After its destruction by the French in 1782 and subsequent re-establishment, Fort Prince of Wales lost much of its significance to the Cree. Other smaller trading posts or supply depots in the vicinity appear to have included Flamborough Head and Seal Island slightly southwest of

York Factory, and Paint Lake, Chatham and Sipiwesk Lake Houses in the upstream area of Split Lake.

The Cree who took up residence around the York Factory trading post were known to the traders as the 'Home Guard Cree'. It is important to note, however, that this term is not how the Cree saw or described themselves. The Cree word for the Cree people is *Ininewuk* (plural) or *Ininew* (singular), and that is how the Split Lake Cree have always described themselves whether at York Factory or at Split Lake.



*Split Lake mission and trading post, on the shore of Split Lake due north of the peninsula. Early 1900s.  
– Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba*

The Cree people were instrumental in the York Factory post's operation, providing meat for Hudson's Bay Company workers, haying, rafting wood, loading and unloading ships, and transporting goods and furs between York Factory and Norway House, 500 kilometres to the southwest. These Cree were some of the ancestors of present members of the Split Lake, York Factory, War Lake and Fox Lake First Nations, all of whom reside within the general boundaries of the Split Lake Cree traditional resource area.<sup>4</sup>

It is almost certain that neither the 'Home Guard Cree' nor their forefathers originated at York Factory, but came to live there from different locations over a number of years. Many of these people may have originated from the Split Lake, Fox Lake, and War Lake areas and other places in the interior. York Factory was like a boom town to which some Cree people had migrated. Their presence at York Factory was a mutually beneficial arrangement with the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>5</sup>

### **Community Establishment**

In response to increased competition from the Northwest Company, the Hudson's Bay Company established a post on Split Lake in 1790. While the post was located on the Nelson River route to York Factory, the Hayes River was the main travel route to York Factory used by the Cree. Therefore, the post's utility depended upon the use made of both routes. As a result, the fortunes of the post at Split Lake, Split Lake House, fluctuated, but it remained in operation off and on for almost 100 years.



*Confirmation class at Split Lake with Reverend A. Dewdney. Anglican Church and bell tower are also shown. Before 1929.*

A new post was established in 1886 to meet the requirements of Norway House and Cross Lake Cree who hunted in the area. It was located at the north end of Split Lake near the outlet, close to the mouth of the Assen River. This new trading post, located within the traditional summer gathering area of the Split Lake Cree, facilitated the establishment of a more permanent community at Split Lake, as well as encouraging an influx of 'Home Guard Cree' from York Factory during the 1880s. These latter were suffering from a scarcity of caribou and game in that area and could no longer depend upon assistance from the declining York Factory trading post.

When the many families of York Factory Cree settled at Split Lake in the late 1800s, it was necessary for them to re-establish themselves within the resource area which provided them with a year-round source of fish and was a good place to hunt caribou and moose. Another reason for the York Factory Cree settling at Split Lake was that it was easier to reach from Norway House than from York Factory. After York Factory became redundant, material, equipment and food stuffs, that used to come from York Factory, began to be shipped north by steamboat on Lake Winnipeg to Norway House. Norway House then became the transportation hub for much of the north.

The Split Lake Cree faced some very challenging times in the transition from having a close relationship with York Factory, when it was the port for the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupert's Land, to living at Split Lake near a small outpost of the company. The changes resulted from the growth of Canada westward as a nation and other forces over which the Split Lake Cree had no control. However, these were changes with which they could cope, as they had with the many other changes experienced over their centuries of life in the area. It meant re-affirming their linkage, and turning inward, to primary reliance again on the Split Lake resource area. Their relationship continued to the land and waters which had always existed for them, since long before the coming of the white man.

In 1896, Anglican Archdeacon J. Lofthouse visited Split Lake which had no church, no school and no resident missionary. At that time, he estimated that there were 75 families living all around Split Lake, 45 of whom were from York Factory or Churchill. These figures would suggest that the 30 families who were not from York Factory or Churchill were indigenous to the Split Lake area. As well, other family groups were then inhabiting the further northern reaches of the vast permanent tribal homeland.

In 1897, native catechist Joseph Keche-kesik arrived in the community and stayed for two years. Together with missionary Lofthouse, he built a log school house. The Reverend Charles Fox came to Split Lake in 1898 and ministered to the community until 1916. He spearheaded the construction of the first Anglican church and mission house in Split Lake in 1906.<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Keche-kesik, must have been an extraordinary servant of the Lord for, by working with the Reverends Lofthouse and Fox, he was able to help establish the Anglican Church in Split Lake in such a way that had real meaning for the Split Lake Cree. Reverend Charles Fox learned Cree, and how to travel by dogteam from camp to camp during the winter months. The Elders say that he was taught to do these things by the Split Lake Cree.

It is a tribute to these early Christians, both Indian and white, that they were able to establish such a strong Christian presence at Split Lake, a presence which exists up to the present time. It is not clear whether or not some or all of the Cree who had moved from York Factory were already Christians.



*Arecha and Chief William Keche-kesik at treaty signing ceremony in early 1900s .*

### **Treaty 5 Adhesion**

In the late 19<sup>TH</sup> and early 20<sup>TH</sup> century, the Canadian government was looking to the north in order to develop and exploit its resource potential. The government, therefore, believed it necessary to extinguish Indian title to the land, in the same manner it had in other parts of Canada. The vast area of Rupert's Land controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company was transferred to Canada in 1869. This helped to foster the negotiation of treaties in order to pave the way for white settlement and development.<sup>7</sup>

In 1875, Treaty 5 was signed between representatives of Canada and the Saukteaux and Cree tribes of central-eastern Manitoba. In exchange for ceding title to their traditional lands, the First Nation signatories were promised reserve lands based on 100 to 160 acres for each family of five, gifts and annuities, ammunition and nets, agricultural implements, and maintenance of on-reserve schools. The right to hunt and fish was also promised but, in the words of the treaty, was subject to government regulation and to those surrendered lands required for settlement and development.





*Early Split Lake settlement in 1925 showing Hudson's Bay Company buildings and residences.*

By the early 20<sup>TH</sup> century, Split Lake Cree First Nation, with the assistance of Anglican Church representatives including the Reverend Charles Fox, had communicated its desire to make treaty. The federal government prepared to sign treaty adhesions with several northern Manitoba Cree First Nations. Federal agents knew that the Split Lake Cree made their living entirely by trapping, hunting and fishing, and as boatmen for the Hudson's Bay Company, freighting goods down the Hayes River to Norway House. Their harvesting area was described in 1907 as follows:

*The population [of the First Nation] is about 250... Their hunting grounds may be described:*

*(1) Draw a line from the point where the Little Churchill River junctions with the larger Churchill south westward to the Wintering Lake.*

*(2) Draw a line from Wintering Lake northeastward to Fox Lake including all the Lake.*

*(3) Draw a line from Fox Lake northward to the junction of the two Churchill Rivers, the point of starting.<sup>8</sup>*

Apart from their desire to preserve their traditional way of life, Split Lake Cree were particularly concerned about protecting their fishing activities. Next to Split Lake itself, the most important site for this was Waskauiowaka Lake located at the head waters of the Little Churchill River. The First Nation was starting to become alarmed by the potential infiltration of southern fishing companies, which had crept up to the southern boundary of the Treaty 5 area and were killing off sturgeon, a traditional country food.

In 1908, representatives of Split Lake Cree – William Keche-kesik, Charles Morris and Albert Spence –

signed an Adhesion to Treaty 5, relinquishing title to 133,000 square miles of traditional lands in exchange for the benefits of Treaty 5, which included hunting and fishing rights. A gratuity of \$5.00 per person was also paid. This surrender covered all of the area included in the current Split Lake Resource Management Area. Joseph Keche-kesik was elected at this time as the first Chief of Split Lake Cree First Nation although he is not explicitly mentioned as such in the treaty.

The Split Lake Cree felt strongly that by signing the treaty with the Crown, they were asserting, affirming and guaranteeing their relationship to their permanent tribal homeland. The Cree did not view their relationship with the land and natural resources as a right, as the white man interprets a right. Rather, they saw it as a reciprocal relationship in which respect and responsibility flow both ways. Their hope and belief that they could preserve this relationship with their land, waters and resources, was the main motivating factor which induced them to sign the treaty. They knew that their brothers to the south at Cross Lake and Norway House had signed Treaty 5 with the Queen, who had promised them protection and the right to hunt and fish and trap in their tribal homeland as long as “the sun shines and the rivers flow”.

The testimony of the Elders reflects the view that the Split Lake Cree had of their way of life and its relationship to the land and waters and the resources that flow from them. The Elders described a way of life that was a continuation of a way of life that had sustained them for centuries, in which they fished, hunted, and trapped, and gathered berries, roots, and herbs from the land. The Split Lake Cree as a group had established themselves in a vast area of land where family groups utilized particular areas. This, however, was not done by any strict type of regulation or enforcement. Their right to hunt in a particular area was determined by consensus and mutual respect. There were instances where people would venture into another area but this was the exception rather than the rule.

At the time of the first survey of the reserve in 1913, the population was 326, entitling the Split Lake Cree First Nation to 10,432 acres. In fact, the amount of reserve land surveyed exceeded this, as indicated below:

<i>Reserve 171 Split Lake</i>	<i>3,608 acres</i>
<i>Reserve 171A Split Lake</i>	<i>7,390 acres</i>
<i>Reserve 171B Split Lake</i>	<i>335 acres</i>
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>11,333 acres</i>

The legal creation of these reserves was only confirmed by federal Order-In-Council OC/PC 1958-1062, dated July 31, 1959. This would not be the last time that the reliance of Split Lake Cree on the good faith of the Crown, to act promptly and in accordance with its promises, would prove to be unwarranted. It is beyond the scope of the present study to determine to what extent the belated action by Canada to deal with the ‘legal niceties’ respecting the creation of the reserves, was related to the Kelsey Hydro development that was taking place at the same time.



*Early aerial photograph of Split Lake community showing old Northwest Mounted Police post (centre).*

## Chapter 2

### Traditional Life Continues at Split Lake into the 20th Century

**A**FTER SIGNING the Treaty 5 Adhesion in 1908, the Split Lake Cree continued to live in their traditional ways, remaining self-sufficient and stable, and depending upon the lands and waterways for their livelihood and identity as their ancestors had done before them.<sup>9</sup> In addition, they continued to do some seasonal transport work for the Hudson's Bay Company, freighting goods on York boats between York Factory and Norway House although this was to come to an end once the railway was built in the area. The only outside assistance consisted of occasional food rations from the Hudson's Bay Company during times when big game was scarce, as well as some clothing provisions from the government.

The community was isolated and only visited by the government on

treaty days. Northwest Mounted Police visits from Norway House were not common. Social problems were few and were solved in the traditional ways. There was no formal education, apart from limited instruction during the summer from Anglican missionaries, as the younger generation were taught traditional skills by their parents and grandparents. In 1906, there were fewer than 20 students, few of whom progressed beyond grade two or three. Family and generational ties were close and the people practiced the Anglican religion. Good health was the normal condition, a testament to the rigorous life and reliance on natural foods and traditional medicines. However, already non-Aboriginal influences were beginning to make their presence felt.



Left to right: William A. Kitchekeesik, Jonah Flett and Mr. McLeod at Landing (Aiken) River, trading for supplies.

## Resource Harvesting and the Economy

Although the traditional way of life was continuing, Split Lake Cree were beginning to be concerned about the preservation of their harvesting activities, particularly the fishery in Waskaiowaka Lake. The reserve surveyor wrote in 1914 that:

*...they are afraid when the railroad is built that fishing companies will come in and fish out the supply at this point (Waskaiowaka) and I would recommend that the Department protect their interests in this matter insofar as it is possible to do so as a considerable number of them live in that vicinity during the winter.<sup>10</sup>*

In 1912, the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs requested that the Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries set aside Split Lake, Waskaiowaka Lake and Pukatawakan Lake for the Split Lake Cree.<sup>11</sup> It is not evident from the available records whether or not this acknowledgement of Split Lake Cree rights and interests was ever formalized by subsequent action of Canada. However, the request itself does represent an official acceptance of the rights of Split Lake Cree guaranteed by Treaty 5 well before the 1930 federal Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, which formally recognized these rights. Split Lake Cree had not yet come to realize that these protected rights would be evident more in the breach than the observance in their relations with the governments.

In those days the land and its resources still provided for almost all Split Lake Cree needs. Hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering were the chief forms of economic activity and were carried out all year round, with specific kinds of harvesting being more prevalent during certain seasons. Every part of the animal was used, and animals were usually killed when they were fat so that maximum use could be made of them. For example, a bull moose would be taken around September while the cow would not be killed until November or December.

Trapping was carried on from the fall and winter, when beaver was harvested, until the spring when muskrat was caught. Furbearers were generally caught with wood-frame traps capable of a 'quick-kill'. Traps made of logs, so-called 'double log' traps, were also used. Foxes were often captured in the fall and

penned until December when their fur had matured. People trapped primarily for food, clothing and other forms of sustenance. In addition, furs were exchanged with the Hudson's Bay Company for food and provisions, rather than for money.

Fishing was pursued all year round, and was perhaps the key source of food. Fish would be dried and smoked for future consumption. It was also caught as food for the sled dogs and used as bait in fur-bearer traps. Fishing was conducted by means of weirs and with hand-made fishing nets; fish hooks were used for ice fishing. Moose and caribou were primarily hunted in the fall, and were a plentiful source of meat. Ducks were also hunted in the fall, while geese were harvested in the spring. Small game like rabbits and chickens were easily caught with snares.

Trees were a rich source of medicinal aids which could heal a wide variety of ailments. Treated leaves and fir needles were used to heal wounds. Teething babies' pain was alleviated by applying the sugary coating of young birch trees, and the ground-up remains of dry rotted trees soothed diaper rash on infants. Seneca root was a natural medicine for headaches. The ashes of burnt wood were used for cleaning purposes. Respected, traditional healers who possessed knowledge of Aboriginal medicines included Mary Keeper and John Joseph.

Split Lake Cree harvested over a vast area that extended in most directions beyond the current registered trapline boundaries, particularly in the northern region. Resource harvesters travelled north to Billard and North Knife lakes, and sometimes went as far as Fort Prince of Wales and York Factory. They went northwest to Fidler and Kiask lakes and as far west as Southern Indian Lake, as well as east to the



*Fanny Brightnose and family at camp.*

Hudson Bay rail line route. They moved southwest on the Nelson River to Sipiwesk Lake and harvested fish and game along the Grass River, as well as along the Bigstone and Fox rivers in the southeast.

Travel was mainly by dog team or birch bark canoes and later by canvas canoes. Sometimes large wooden boats were used for freight, and at other times people would simply walk along pulling a toboggan with provisions. Wood frame teepee-like lodges, covered with moss or spruce boughs, or canvas tents provided shelter. All of

these indigenous technologies were the result of centuries of learned experience. They were fashioned with patience and skill from materials harvested from the natural environment, had little or no monetary cost, and enabled the mutually respectful, albeit fragile, relationship between man and nature to be sustained.

Split Lake Cree lived throughout the resource area in camps of various sizes. In summer, large camps were set up beside lakes and rivers where fish could be found in abundance. As winter drew near, the summer camps were abandoned to the



*Gathering at the church in Split Lake.*

whiskey-jacks and ravens, and the people left in smaller groups of five to ten families to head for their fall and winter hunting grounds. Days were filled with the numerous activities necessary for survival – hunting, snaring, skinning, preparing pelts, making tools, smoking meat, cooking, sewing, and so on. The day began early, with adults up before the dawn to make preparations for the busy day ahead.

The rising and setting of the sun was the natural measurement of daily time. In much the same way, people followed the natural cycles of the moon, and their calendar was the circle formed by the changing of the seasons from summer to fall, fall to winter, winter to spring and round again, as another season would begin anew. In the old days, the Split Lake Cree would observe the natural resource calendar, that has been documented and clearly illustrated by Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Natural Resources Secretariat. This calendar, shown in Figure 4 opposite page 17,

is based upon interviews with several Split Lake Cree Elders and forms part of a base of Split Lake Cree traditional ecological knowledge.

Because Split Lake Cree harvested resources over a wide expanse of land, interaction with other First Nations was common, particularly with the Fox Lake Cree around Moose Nose Lake (Stephens Lake) and Atkinson Lake, where both Cree Nations would gather sturgeon in the spring and summer, and fish in the fall. To the south, down the Bigstone and Fox rivers, members of the Oxford House First Nation would be encountered. In the eastern reaches of the resource area, the York Factory and Shamattawa Cree also harvested. To the south there were also the Cross Lake and Norway House First Nations; and to the west, the Nelson House First Nation. Summer gatherings and political meetings were held from time to time with Nelson House, Norway House and other Cree Nations on their reserves, and at

Southern Indian Lake as well.

## **Community Development**

By the early years of the 20<sup>TH</sup> century, the community was already a permanent year-round settlement, but mainly housing old people and various members of Chief and Council. Most able-bodied First Nation members left the community in the fall or winter to hunt, fish and trap, living in semi-permanent camps. They would return to the Split Lake community in the summer, staying a month or two including treaty days. They also returned for special occasions like Christmas and Easter. The traditional gathering times were most frequently happy social occasions, an opportunity to renew ties among families and clans. These times were also when self-governance was most actively practiced by the Split Lake Cree, in lengthy, regular meetings among the First Nation members to consider and take decisions on all matters of collective importance to the people.

Recluse Lake, 80 kilometres due north of Split Lake and in the centre of the traditional resource area, was the site of a year-round settlement, complete with a Hudson's Bay Company trading post and a church. This site was covered with birch trees, and there were sturgeon downstream in the Little Churchill River. Throughout the Split Lake resource area there were several large outcamps such as those at Assean, Waskaiowaka and Billard Lakes to the north, and Atkinson Lake to the southeast. Other smaller camps could be found at Kettle, Jam, Blackwater, Limestone, Gull and Moose lakes. Figure 6 following page 32 shows the location of many of these outcamps, and the main trails made and maintained through frequent usage by the Split Lake Cree to access their resource area.

In the Split Lake community people lived mainly in teepee-like lodges and huts made of wood, tree boughs, animal skins and moss, all held together with mud. Other buildings included police barracks, the Hudson's Bay Company trading post, a church and mission house, and a log school house. There were no roads but rather well-worn trails.

Country foods harvested from the land were supplemented by root crops from local vegetable gardens and abundant fish from the waters of Split Lake. Only a few staples like tea, sugar, lard, pork and baking powder were available from the Hudson's Bay Company store. On rare occasions flour could be bought, but there was never any butter. Caribou were so plentiful at times that people tell stories of them being shot right from their homes.

Community supplies were usually transported to the Hudson's Bay Company post along the Nelson River. This route was abandoned in 1916 when the first stage of the Hudson Bay railway was completed. Then provisions came by rail from

The Pas as far as Landing River, and then by canoe to Split Lake.

The Anglican Church was a central part of the community in the early decades of the 20TH century and people took up Christianity, finding a comfortable fit with their Cree view of the world. Church offerings were presented three times annually at Christmas, Treaty Sunday and at Easter. Thanksgiving Sunday was held in early September and functioned as a 'farewell' service for those who would travel to the fall and winter camps where Thanksgiving would be celebrated again in the mid-fall. Weddings were usually held in Split Lake or Recluse Lake, although the local priest occasionally travelled to the outcamps to perform some religious functions.

### **Community Governance**

In the early days the First Nation government was not formally institutionalized. Rather, it functioned as was needed to maintain the traditional Aboriginal way of life. The family was the main governing and social unit. Next was the clan or group of families and beyond that the tribe followed by the Cree Nation as a whole. Certain members of a clan earned a level of authority based on their skills and knowledge in particular areas of resource harvesting. Clan leaders would emerge as a result of their general leadership skills, personality and effectiveness in dealing with outside contacts. Leaders could not force their views on families or individuals, who were free to obey or to ignore the leadership and even move away if they chose.

First Nation laws and their enforcement were made and exercised through general clan opinion and concerns. Decisions were made by consensus. The people already followed the practice of selecting peacekeepers to maintain

in their own customary fashion the peace, order and mutual respect that was central to the way of life. Elders report that their grandfathers carried out this collective governance function, leaving its actual origin shrouded in the mists of time. At any rate the peacekeepers have proven to be a very durable and visible reminder that the people have never ceased exercising their inherent right to self-governance.

The signing of the treaty in 1908 had formalized a relationship between the Split Lake Cree and the Crown. The Split Lake Cree understood this relationship as providing them protection to continue to live in their tribal homeland as they had since time immemorial. It is evident from the Elders' testimony that the people never understood the treaty as a reduction in their prior rights, but rather as an agreement to share the bounties of nature with the white man, receiving in return the modern benefits that Her Majesty's government could provide.

Split Lake Cree selected reserves on Split Lake at the site of their most useful lands and waters. These were surveyed by Canada in 1913. The people understood that these reserves were lands for their permanent and exclusive use. The Split Lake Cree honoured their understanding of the importance of Treaty 5 by means of a yearly treaty ceremony, at which time treaty money was paid and other items promised under the treaty would be given out, such as the distribution of ammunition and twine for making nets. This ceremony was the occasion of community festivities and sharing.



*“Split Lake in the summer. In the distance are pine and spruce clad rocky islands. Note the rank grass and flowers. The canoe is pulling a raft of wood; there are no horses and they bring the wood”– Jack Harrison*

After the treaty was signed, there was an elected Chief and Council who represented the people in dealing with government. In practice, the new Chief and Council system favoured by the federal government did not change much in the prior approach to community governance. According to the Elders, an accurate picture of this new arrangement is of a system giving a somewhat higher level of formality to relationships and governing practices that had evolved within the Split Lake Cree way of life over the centuries. The Chief would act as chairman for meetings where local matters were decided. The Split Lake Cree Elders, while not an elected body as such, were the respected advisors and counsellors in a decision-making

process that involved the whole community, including regular general meetings where many of the members actively participated. In fact, the Chief and Council had no actual powers beyond what was given to them by the people. The formal powers of Chief and Council set out in the Indian Act were not well understood, being practiced more as a result of coincidental similarity between traditional approaches and the legislation, rather than by design.

The Split Lake Cree membership and Chief and Council, over the years, developed their own unwritten constitution or set of rules by which matters were decided. It was a system in which the Split Lake Cree knew and understood the rules for living in the Split Lake community. These rules had a strong spiritual and moral base. However, they were rules and a way of life which were soon to be challenged by the new and dramatic changes that were to confront the Split Lake Cree in the coming decades.

*Figure 6 (opposite): Split Lake Cree Traditional Use Area, Settlements, Outcamps, Trails and Routes.*





*Treaty party at Split Lake in 1930; making lunch. The school is in the background.*

## Chapter 3

### Adapting to Outside Influences

#### Split Lake in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s

**D**URING THE 1920s, the way of life of the Split Lake Cree remained, much as it had for generations, within the ongoing process of gradual adaptation and change that had enabled the self-sustenance of the people since time immemorial. The *Ininewuk* continued to utilize their traditional territory in the manner, and according to the rhythms their forefathers had followed. However, external factors were beginning to intrude and make their presence felt.

The final Adhesions to Treaty 5 were signed by the Deer Lake, Fort Churchill and York Factory First Nations in 1910.<sup>12</sup> Two years later in 1912, Manitoba's boundaries were extended north to the 60th parallel, increasing the province's land base by over 180,000 square miles.<sup>13</sup> This set the stage for the development of northern lands and resources by non-Aboriginal outsiders.

Although the Cree had been adapting successfully for more than a century to changes introduced into their way of life by Europeans, most notably through the fur trade, the 1920s saw the start of an acceleration in the pace and nature of such change. Two examples discussed by Split Lake Elders could be considered a portent of what was to come.

*Figure 7 (opposite): Split Lake Registered Trapline Zone.*



*Reverend Dewdney amidst the congregation at Split Lake in 1929.*

Some of the Elders spoke of a mysterious 'plague-like' illness that killed many Split Lake Cree over a four month period in the early 1920s. Many people starved and others suffered tending to the dead and dying. While the cause of the disease is not known, it is speculated that it was part of the deadly world-wide influenza epidemic of 1918 making its way to northern Manitoba and Split Lake.<sup>14</sup>

One story suggests that it may have been a York Factory resident who inadvertently spread the disease when he travelled across the territory to warn people at Split Lake not to visit York Factory, where the illness was running rampant. Whatever the cause, people suffered greatly and it has been only recently that the Elders have found it possible to talk about "the time of death".

In the late 1920s, for the first time, some children from Split Lake were sent out to residential schools. They went to Elkhorn and Birtle, Manitoba and some went out-of-province to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Usually the eldest child in the family was selected, with the parents consent, to attend such schools. Formal education at residential schools was for full days up to grade four. After that students spent half of the day in class with the remaining time taken up by farm labour. While the precise impact of the residential schools of this era is beyond the scope of this study, it appears that it had only a minimal disruptive effect on the teaching of traditional knowledge and skills to young people. It was by no means as devastating as the impact wrought by residential school attendance in the 1960s when greater numbers of

children attended, and other modernizing factors also played a part.

However, by far the most significant development at this time, which was to open the door to all future change, was the completion in 1929 of the railway line through Split Lake Cree traditional lands to Churchill.

## Hudson Bay Railway

Canadian National Railways (then the Canadian Northern Railway) began construction of a line from Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan in 1906 and by 1918 had completed the track as far as Wabowden, 106 kilometres southeast of present day Thompson.<sup>15</sup> The Pas, 300 kilometres southwest of Thompson, which had been a fur trading post, agricultural centre and mission, became a divisional point on the railway. By 1916 it had become the economic and administrative centre of the north.<sup>16</sup> Forestry, mining, and rail line employment were its key industries and by 1921 its population had grown to over 1,800.<sup>17</sup>

The rail line had been extended to Churchill by 1929, crossing northeasterly through the Split Lake Cree's traditional territory and introducing a new technology into their way of life.<sup>18</sup> Even though the Elders speak of the railway as a largely beneficial development, it also brought other less desirable features that the people would soon learn were associated with all of the externally-driven developments. The plan to build the railway and the selection of the right-of-way were not matters on which Split Lake Cree were consulted. There was no apparent consideration of any adverse effects that might be related to this incursion across the resource area. No record exists of any thought of compensating Split Lake Cree for this use of their traditional lands for the primary benefit of outsiders.

The railway was built for the primary purpose of transporting grain to tidewater, where it was stored for later shipment overseas, and its construction and operation was a key step in opening up the north to development. A significant number of northern Cree, including many from Split Lake who were

noted as some of the hardest workers, worked on the construction of the railway and subsequently settled along the line to take advantage of seasonal employment and transportation. Railway employment introduced Split Lake Cree to cash remuneration and the goods and services it could purchase. It also took them away from traditional activities.

The various communities that arose at railway section or divisional points quickly became places of contact and settlement for Split Lake Cree. Some families moved to these communities and often remained there throughout their working lives, although they generally returned to Split Lake to retire. Others obtained supplies and traded furs at these settlements. Ilford, 55 kilometres southeast of Split Lake and accessible from Split Lake by the Aiken River, became a major point of contact with the outside world. Another important settlement was Gillam, 85 kilometres to the east which was directly accessible by rail from Ilford and Bird.

Indeed, the railway played a significant role in increasing and maintaining contact with the outside world. By the 1940s more and more Split Lake Cree were participating in the wage economy. During the Second World War, as the labor force shrank reflecting the demands of Canada's participation in the war, the railway hired men from Split Lake to work as section men. Men were also hired to go south in the summer months to help harvest the crops on the farms. Some men from Split Lake also saw action in the war.

In addition, contact increased with the Department of Indian Affairs and the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources, from their offices in Ilford. Chief and Council began to travel more on outside business. Ilford remained the main point of contact through these

decades, although Gillam had a significant presence as well. The Pas was still visited for medical emergencies and for the delivery of babies.

## Resource Harvesting, the Economy, and Government Involvement

Despite this increased contact, the nature, mode and range of resource harvesting continued much as before at Split Lake. Its primary purpose and greatest value continued to be self-sustenance, rather than commercial gain. However, both the federal and provincial governments gradually started to become more actively involved in the regulation of harvesting activities.

The federal Natural Resources Transfer Act came into force in 1930. By virtue of this legislation, Manitoba received title to all of the lands and resources within its boundaries, subject to outstanding treaty land entitlement and to Aboriginal rights to hunt, trap and fish for food on unoccupied Crown land.<sup>19</sup> Subsequent developments have shown that Manitoba was eager to exercise the rights of ownership, but was rather less observant of the related responsibility associated with the obligation to protect Aboriginal rights. Indeed, the historical record does not show the province having any great concern to protect these rights. Rather, it seems to have been primarily interested in seeking ways of controlling trapping activities.

During the depression years of the 1930s, many white men came north looking for work and to get away from the bleak economic conditions in the south. Some of the people involved in the construction of the rail line stayed in the north. A lot of these men decided to try their hand at trapping.

Beaver and marten were the most



*Left to right: Billy Wavey, William Wavey and Horace Morris having tea on the trail.*

commonly trapped furbearers at this time. However, excessive demand, resulting from good prices as well as non-native trapping pressures, led to beaver becoming over-harvested. The government imposed a quota system to deal with the depletion of the beaver population and Northwest Mounted Police officers began confiscating pelts, sometimes without regard for eligible quotas. As a result, significant quantities of beaver could only be trapped in the far northern regions along the Churchill River and beyond.

The new rail transportation link was making a difference both for the Hudson's Bay Company and for free traders, who saw possible profits in the fur business. Many such trappers began to find their way into what had once been exclusive trapping territory for the Split Lake Cree and other northern First Nations. This influx of white trappers made the need to share the lands and resources a much more tangible reality. Unfortunately, with little planning or consultation, and inattention to existing Cree rights and usages, the influx disturbed the delicate balance between the Cree and their environment, resulting in avoidable damages.

Despite the increasing intrusion of external influences on the Split Lake Cree way of life, traditional harvesting patterns generally continued. New technologies were adapted to support traditional practices. Canvas canoes replaced those made of birch bark, and small-powered motors were introduced in the early 1930s. Beaver continued to be scarce throughout the 1930s, and were still available mainly in the vicinity of the Churchill River. The continuing scarcity was made worse by outside trappers who used poison

to kill the animals. The quota system remained in effect. The Northwest Mounted Police continued to make sudden searches and arbitrarily confiscate pelts.

In addition, with the introduction of a wolf cull program in the 1930s, the province further broadened its interference with traditional resource harvesting and management practices. The use of poison to kill the wolves, along with its use to harvest beaver, is reported by the Elders to have been deadly to other animals in the region. At the same time, Manitoba also indicated its intention to establish a registered trapline system in northern Manitoba, a development which was to have an impact upon the scope of traditional resource harvesting. This proposal to divide up the resource area into individual traplines was initially resisted by the Split Lake Cree.

### **Registered Trapline System Established**

Long traditions had governed the allocation of lands and resources through arrangements among clan leaders and Chief and Council, with the decisions based upon the good of the collective whole, not on individual entitlements. According to the Elders, the provincial government people did not understand the communal aspects of the system traditionally used by the Split Lake Cree. Even though the new system was meant to keep out the non-Indian trappers, it was based on a concept of individual ownership, rather than the customary land use relationship. Chief Sam Cook warned that if parts of the resource area were allocated to certain trappers it would lead to tension and in-fighting.

A provincial representative, Jack Lundy of the Manitoba Department Natural Resources, who was fluent in Cree, persuaded the Split Lake



*“The missionary and his wife are in the two sleighs. This is the post at Sand Lake - 65 miles north...” – Jack Harrison*

Cree that the registered trapline system would be beneficial for them. It would prevent outsiders from harvesting their resources. In addition, he argued, Split Lake Cree trappers could be better assisted by the department, if it knew where they were located, for example, in case of emergencies.

The intent of the new system, at least with respect to conservation, may have been sound, but there was no real consultation with the Split Lake Cree beyond trying to convince them of the system’s merits and making many promises. While the system was sold to the people on the basis of its ability to keep the resource area for their use, in practice it resulted in provincial control of the resource area, with provincial game wardens essentially acting as a new type of ‘Indian Agent’ with very strong powers of enforcement.

Notwithstanding their concerns, and with no effective alternative, the Split Lake Cree accepted the merits of controlling the intrusions into their homeland by outside trappers. Reluctantly, and after much local consideration, three Split Lake Cree Elders – Donald Flett, Judah Ouskan

and Isaac Spence – described and marked out the Split Lake Cree’s traditional resource area for the province. However, regardless of the information they provided about the extent of traditional occupation and usage, the creation of the registered trapline zone by Manitoba resulted in the formal reduction of the size of the traditional harvesting area. In the southwest the Sipiwesk Lake-Grass River region was allocated to Pikwitonei, although some of Split Lake trappers still retain lines in that area.

Nevertheless, despite the negative effects of the changes caused by the registered trapline system, the Elders also report that general harvesting traditions were maintained, albeit with progressively less time being spent on the land. Even though there was a greater permanency to the community, Split Lake Cree still made extensive use of much of their traditional resource area. Figure 7 opposite page 33 shows the Split Lake registered trapline zone.

## Community Development

In the 1920s, Split Lake was still not a permanent settlement for most First Nation members, many of whom continued to live in the bush and return to the community only during Christian holiday seasons and the summer. About 100 people lived year-round at Split Lake. Recluse Lake was still the main settlement outcamp in the resource area where six to ten families lived. Kettle and Atkinson lakes were important gathering places in the spring for muskrat trapping.

The community of Split Lake was still in the early stages of development. Settlers were arriving from York Factory, where the wildlife resources had been depleted, and many Cree are reported to have come in an attempt to escape the worst influences of non-Aboriginal culture, which conflicted with traditional values. York boats still travelled up and down the Nelson River from Norway House. Their arrival in the community was a major event. As summer frosts were unusual in the region and the long hours of summer sunlight resulted in rapid germination, gardens were very successful and produced a rich abundance of crops.

The construction of a one-room school house in 1928 was an important community development leading to the expansion of formal education.

The Anglican Church maintained its influential social presence. A men’s guild and a guild for teenage girls were formed in 1928 to care for and maintain the church. A women’s auxiliary was established around the same time. It held quarterly meetings and provided many gifts of furnishings to the church.

Social problems were still the exception in the community. Bush life remained the centre of most Split Lake Cree’s existence. Wherever



*Christmas festivities outside the old band hall.*

they resided, the church and customary enforcement of practices and mores exerted a stabilizing influence.

Although Split Lake was still not treated as a year-round community in the 1930s, it continued to develop. Log cabins began to replace teepees and tents. Gardens continued to be cultivated. The fur buyer, Mike Hatley, opened a small store, competing with the Hudson's Bay Company, and was popular with local residents. Modern appliances like radios and wind-up phonographs made their first appearance.

The great depression, which economically devastated much of Canada in the 1930s, was only marginally felt in Split Lake, existing as it did on the margins of the mainstream Canadian economy. While a scarcity of store-bought items like flour and baking powder

were noticed, no one starved as there was always an availability of country foods.

The Anglican Church Minister, Reverend George Cowley, arrived in the community in 1930. He was to be a key figure in the Split Lake community for the next 25 years or so, acting as missionary, school teacher, doctor and generally as the 'Indian Agent'. Social stability continued. While non-Aboriginal influences were growing, Reverend Cowley and the Hudson's Bay Company manager were the only white residents. The presence of the Department of Indian Affairs was minimal despite the existence of the district office in Ilford. The work ethic was promoted and no alcohol was allowed on the reserve.

The community's composition and character remained much the same into the 1940s, although it continued to grow. Some people

began to move away from the outcamps, such as Recluse Lake, and to settle in the community to be nearer to Ilford which was the closest transportation and service centre. A seaplane base was constructed there. Outside resource harvesting activities increased in the Split Lake vicinity and in 1949 Indian Affairs built the first teacherage in the community.

Split Lake's social and cultural fabric remained strong, as Chief and Council and the Anglican Church both maintained their positions of authority and influence. Traditions continued, exemplified by the use made of medicine men who had special knowledge of the healing attributes of many plants and animal parts. Christian teachings continued as well and blended with traditional values.



*Isaiah Mayham, Tubal Kirkness, William Flett, Billy Spence and Simeon Beardy*



*Fanny Dick, Susanna Flett, Labella Kirkness, Emily Nepitabo and Priscilla Kirkness*

*"Some of my class. 1930 - Split Lake, Manitoba" – Jack Harrison*



*Left to right: Oliver Lindal, Billy Wavey and Carl Muir outside the local store in Gillam. Late 1930s.*



*Left to right: In the foreground, Moodie Nepitabo, James Wavey, Jonah Flett (standing) and John Flett. 1930s.*



*Reverend George Cowley. c. 1935.*



*Left to right: Unknown man, Sarah Brightnose and George Brightnose. c. 1935.*





*Leaving the church after the Saunders' wedding in Split Lake. Late 1930s.*

## **Community Governance**

Just as the patterns of resource harvesting and community life gradually evolved over these decades, so too did the practice of local government. Much however was marked more by continuity than by change. Chief and Council was the respected authority in all social matters and opposition was rare. Social relations, such as marriages, were governed by Chief and Council, many of whom were Anglican clergy. These responsibilities were rooted very firmly in the traditional Cree understandings of the role of the leadership.

A larger, more permanent community population as the years passed required Chief and Council to spend more time and pay more attention to dealing with community matters that had been less important when people lived with fewer close neighbours. As a result of the increasing need to deal with the governments, Chief and Council were called upon more often to represent Split Lake Cree interests. For example, when the registered trapline system was being considered locally, Chief and Council both organized internal discussions and spearheaded the dealings with Manitoba.

There was still no permanent staff of the First Nation government, and all required government functions, whether executive, political or administrative, were carried out by Chief and Council, as had customarily been the case.

The peacekeepers continued to be influential, contributing considerably to the tranquillity and continuing mutual respect in the community. It seems most likely that it was early in this period that these positions started to be filled by election at the same time Chief and Council were elected.

Even though the structure of governance was rudimentary, it was entirely adequate and appropriate to meet the everyday needs of the Split Lake Cree. Its evolution continued within the essential concepts derived from the practice of generations of ancestors.



*Left to right: Solomon Harvey, John Flett, Peter Beardy, Aaron Beardy and Jack Wavey camping on the trail to Split Lake. c. 1940s*

### **Conclusion**

The period up to 1950 brought many changes for the Split Lake Cree, a number of which challenged traditional ways of getting things done. The perceived disturbance related to the introduction by Manitoba of the registered trapline system has been noted. For all of the change, however, life continued within the known, respected and loved environment of the permanent

tribal homeland. Even though the changes strained the Split Lake Cree patterns of life, they did so to no greater extent than many other changes which the people had experienced and accommodated during their long occupation of the lands and waters. Unknown to the Split Lake Cree, however, more disturbing developments were just around the corner.



*The Lamont house in Split Lake. c.1950s.*

## Chapter 4

### Traditional Lifestyle Changes

#### Split Lake in the 1950s

**B**EGINNING IN 1945, in addition to the registered trapline system, there were forces building up from outside Split Lake which were to have the effect of forcing the Split Lake Cree to adapt their way of life in a manner that had never happened before. National policies concerning Indian education and the introduction of the family allowance would have a major impact on the traditional lifestyle. Both mining development at Thompson and the need for more and more hydroelectric power in the south would also have far-reaching consequences on the lives and the lands of the Split Lake Cree.

Split Lake Cree Elders have characterized the 1950s as a period of important change in the history of their people. This change can be best described as the transition from a traditional way of life to a more

modern settled existence in the community at Split Lake, together with the disruption and need for adaptation that such change necessarily entailed.<sup>20</sup>

#### Resource Harvesting and the Economy

While fur and fish harvesting activities continued over as large an area as before, notwithstanding registered trapline boundaries, several factors reduced the central importance of harvesting in the lives of the Split Lake Cree. Resource harvesting was increasingly regulated by Manitoba, and conservation officers suddenly became more noticeable, although the restrictions imposed were relatively minor, such as prohibiting the harvesting of tagged animals. Prices for fur, particularly beaver, began to plummet in the early 1950s



*The Flett family at Muskrat Portage, Waskaiowaka Lake.*

and trapping proved less remunerative. Caribou migration started to diminish, reducing hunting activity.

In addition, contrary to the forecast benefits of the registered trapline system, outsiders were intruding more and more into the resource area. Outside commercial fishermen like Duke Lindal and Bill Chorchinsky were fishing lakes traditionally harvested by Split Lake Cree, such as Waskaiowaka Lake where all of the lake trout eventually disappeared. A fishing lodge established on the lake by Indian Affairs passed through a succession of private owners.

Although the outside fishing companies introduced modern fishing equipment such as commercial nets and motor boats, and offered seasonal employment to some Split Lake Cree, they were inevitably competing for this important domestic resource. In other words, the introduction of outside commercial fishing

operations, which first focused on catching sturgeon in the Nelson River followed by whitefish and pickerel in Split Lake, was yet another external, uncompensated imposition on the traditional pursuits of the Split Lake Cree.

At the same time, both wage employment and social assistance increased. Wood cutting continued for the Hudson's Bay Company, and many Split Lake Cree also engaged in other kinds of employment, including freighting and maintenance work for the railway, as well as for Duke Lindal, and, in the late 1950s, clearing a route for the transmission line from Kelsey to service the new mining town of Thompson. This latter work was arranged by the Department of Indian Affairs. Whole families would move to the employment site. Split Lake Cree Elders recall that wages for the clearing project were very low or even non-existent, with labour essentially being bartered for food.

The federal government's introduction of family allowance at Split Lake, with the requirement of school attendance by the children, was another major factor in changing people's relationship with the lands and resources. Whereas in the past groups of families would go into the bush and trap together, now only the men undertook this activity. The women had to stay in the community to care for and raise the children who were attending school. Modern education brought its own rewards, but the failure to adapt the school year to the rhythms of Aboriginal life inevitably meant that the children lost continuity in their learning of traditional harvesting skills and knowledge. A knowledge gap began to exist between the young and the old, as it never had in the past.

### **Community Development**

All of the pressures on traditional harvesting activities further increased the concentration of



*Wedding of William and Illa Garson in Split Lake.*

settlement and activity in and around the Split Lake community. Many of the numerous trapping and fishing camps scattered throughout the resource area were slowly abandoned as people settled in year-round communities, although there was still a significant settlement at Atkinson Lake. The community of Split Lake had grown to a population of more than 200 by the end of the decade.<sup>21</sup>

There was no electricity yet, but other significant developments occurred. Houses continued to be built of logs from locally available material and, during the 1950s, a log band hall was constructed. Two new small school buildings were built. The establishment of these facilities, in conjunction with increased school attendance, was a key impetus in the growth of a permanent community.

A nursing station was built in 1955, although births and other major medical procedures were still handled at the hospital in The Pas, which remained the centre for major services in the north. The existence of the nursing station tended to reduce the reliance on traditional medicines, although they were still used. Country foods were still a predominant part of the diet, as they

had been for generations, and continued to be stored in the ground.

Outside access was still mainly by rail through Landing River in the summer and Ilford in the winter. Mail was picked up once a week at the junction of the railway and Aiken River. Sigfusson Transport constructed hundreds of miles of winter roads in the resource area, and delivered supplies to the community by winter road on its way towards Southern Indian Lake. Dog-teams and canvas canoes were still the primary means of travel, but float planes and bombardiers had made their appearance and were used occasionally. More powerful boat motors were also introduced in this decade.

A considerable number of Split Lake Cree continued to go to Ilford to take advantage of employment there with the railway. This community was still the key point of contact with the outside world, although there was also continued interaction with other rail line communities where First Nation members worked, visited and traded. Ilford was the main supply centre for Split Lake, and Duke Lindal ran a store in the community.

Ilford also had political significance in the region as both the Department of Indian Affairs and the provincial Department of Natural Resources continued to maintain district offices there. In addition, it was a major place of social contact with friends and relatives.

York Landing was established in 1957 on the southern end of Split Lake when members of the York Factory First Nation were relocated there by Indian Affairs. This created another community where people could visit neighbours who shared some of the same ancestors, the 'Home Guard Cree' of York Factory.

Many Split Lake Cree became enfranchised both as a result of working at outside wage employment and in order to obtain the legal right to drink alcohol. The destructive effects of this strongly government-encouraged but relatively poorly understood practice of enfranchisement, were not dealt with until treaty status was again made possible with the passage of Bill C-31 in 1985.

Even though times were changing, traditional knowledge and beliefs still prevailed. The people continued to oppose alcohol. Although Reverend Cowley left the community during this decade, the Anglican Church maintained its strong presence and church attendance remained important. By 1950, the church's women's auxiliary had a large membership. Salt pork and other foods were distributed by the priest every Friday. Generally, there was a high degree of community cohesion, a system of curfews, and few social problems, although drinking outside of the community was starting to become a concern.



*Split Lake Cree men hauling freight from the Landing River portage on the Aiken River.*

## **Community Governance**

Chief and Council continued to exert leadership and influence, with the Chief now acting as local magistrate. Nevertheless, the passing of Chief Sam Cook in the 1950s, who had led the First Nation since the 1930s, was taken as a sign that the old ways were changing.

The stresses of the 1950s, attributable to the heightened pace of exploitation of the resources of the region by outsiders, were imposed on a structure of governance which was poorly equipped to manage such relatively rapid and unknown change. Little practical advice and support was available from the governments, which tended to either ignore the impacts, or to view them as 'short term pain for long term gain'. Outside, independent advisors, who might have assisted the Split Lake Cree Chief and Council in the

autonomous exercise of their responsibilities, were unheard of.

Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties, central dimensions of continued self-governance, in the form of the peacekeepers and the consideration of matters of community import in general band membership meetings, were maintained, and in retrospect quite probably strengthened as they had no choice but to come to grips with new problems.

## **First Hydroelectric Development**

Of all externally-imposed factors for change, hydroelectric development was destined by the geography of northern Manitoba and the growing energy demands of industrial Canadian society to have the most significant impact on the Split Lake Cree. There is certainly bitter irony in the nature and extent

of these impacts given the usual description of hydroelectricity as a 'clean' source of power. Unknowingly and without consultation, hydroelectric development was to result in serious disruption of and changes to the way of life of the Cree of northern Manitoba. Unfortunately, it also neglected to take into consideration the requirement to protect Aboriginal rights.

Until 1960, hydro power development in northern Manitoba consisted of the Laurie River I and II generating stations with a combined capacity of only 10 megawatts. These were developed by Sherritt Gordon Mines to provide electricity for its mining operations and the townsite at Lynn Lake,<sup>22</sup> and were unknown to and had no effect on the Split Lake Cree.

In 1956 construction began on a larger hydro facility, the Kelsey dam

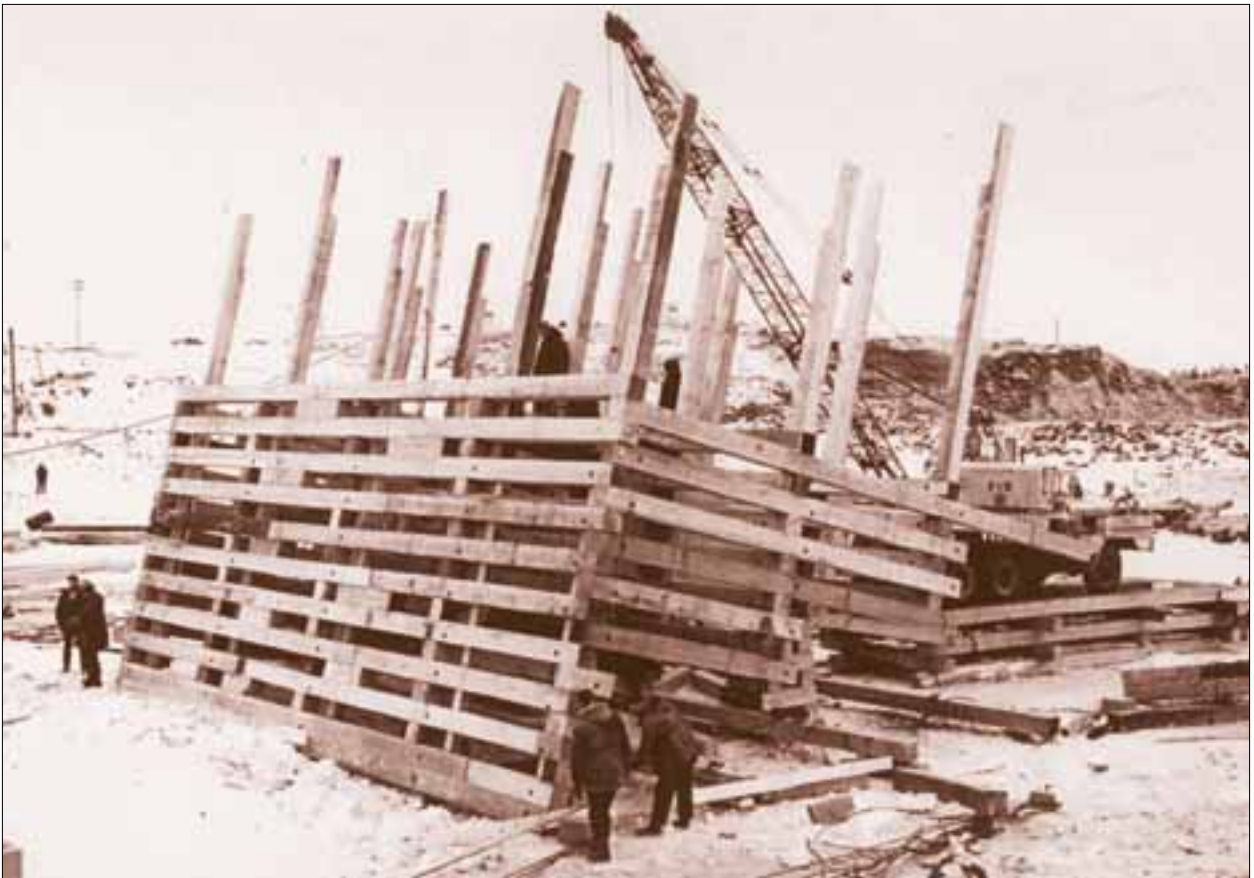


*Start of the dock construction at Kelsey from which scows would carry material across the river. September 1957.*

and generating station on the upper Nelson River. It came into operation in 1960 with a generating capacity of 160 megawatts. This station was not connected to the southern systems, and was built to provide power to the INCO mining establishment and the new town of Thompson. Located just 40 kilometres south of Split Lake community, this was the first direct experience Split Lake Cree had with the powerful and destructive effects of hydroelectric development.

The Kelsey generating station was a forerunner to the major hydroelectric projects of the following decades, and represented the initial phase of what would become known as the Lake Winnipeg Regulation-Churchill River Diversion project, which began in the late 1960s and would have such a major impact on the lands, waters and livelihood of the Split Lake Cree.

The Kelsey project was developed without any consultation with the Split Lake Cree, either as to its construction or its impacts. They were concerned, but did not know how to deal with Manitoba Hydro. This was a decade of rapid change for the Split Lake Cree, and they were occupied with coming to grips with its challenges and problems. With very little understanding or information about the nature or effects of such a hydroelectric development project, some people thought that the development might be a good idea as it would provide sorely needed work. In any event, Kelsey was completed, establishing the pattern of ignoring Split Lake Cree rights and interests, and failing to provide compensation for damages until much later. It was a pattern that long continued to characterize hydro developments within the resource area.



*Kelsey, March 14, 1958. The coffer dam crib for the last tailrace, ready for launching.*

## **Conclusion**

The changes of the 1950s described in this chapter undoubtedly required the Split Lake Cree to undergo much adaptation. They were forced by circumstances beyond their control to live in one central location all year round to an extent that previous generations never had. This not only caused major changes to their traditional resource harvesting practices, but also created new requirements for people living in an unfamiliar physical, and social environment.

While pressure grew even greater to keep the children in school, and families in the community, there was no concerted effort to facilitate the type of local economic opportunities that could provide a self-reliant alternative to the traditional way of life.

Nevertheless, while the people adapted to their new conditions, including the increased cash requirements of the economy, there still continued to be strong reliance on the traditional use of lands and waters, despite pressures for modernization. The way of life may have been changing, but the underlying Aboriginal values remained. Moreover, the full effects of Kelsey had not yet been felt as the decade drew to a close. While the stresses on Split Lake Cree society were more noticeable, the people's traditional resilience in the face of change was still supporting their adaptation to the changes within an understood, albeit evolving environment.





*John the Baptist Anglican Church, built in the mid-1960s by Split Lake residents.*

## Chapter 5

### Advent of the Modern Era

#### Split Lake in the 1960s

**S**PLIT LAKE CREE ELDERS have portrayed this phase of Split Lake Cree history as relatively stable after the changes of the 1950s, as a time of more calm community growth and modernization.<sup>23</sup> There were, of course, still increasing pressures and influences from the outside world. Not least, this decade saw the establishment of two new communities within the resource area, as well as the direct experience of hydroelectric development impacts.

#### Resource Harvesting and the Economy

Wildlife and fish gathering activities still extended beyond the northern and southern limits of the registered trapline zone, but fewer

people would range this far. Nevertheless, trapping remained an important activity and the return of a trapper after months on the trapline was a significant community event, as the men went to visit the successful trapper in his home. Fur prices remained depressed, as reflected in the records of low remuneration received by Split Lake trappers during the 1960s. The commercial fishery on Split Lake continued, but with somewhat erratic catch and financial returns. The Elders have observed that the porcupine disappeared during the late 1960s. Resource harvesting was still pursued primarily for domestic sustenance purposes and affirmation of traditional ways, rather than for commercial gain.

Wood hauling, building log cabins and freighting were the main sources of wage employment. In addition, employment on the rail line still attracted a significant number of Split Lake Cree families. From the perspective of an economist, Split Lake Cree lived on the margins of the modern economy, with a growing but still relatively weak attachment to its cash basis. In financial terms the people were poor, but their continuing use of available natural resources for domestic purposes meant that life was less hard than a simple assessment of financial means would suggest.

The introduction of social assistance for adults, primarily for married couples, in the form of vouchers or cash, provided some modest relief from the scarcity of cash. However, the availability of social assistance also resulted in more Split Lake Cree reducing the amount of time they spent away from the community trapping, hunting and fishing. More and more people were leading an increasingly sedentary and dependent life in the community.

The increase in cash income did not result in a marked change in consumption patterns. The community store was still relatively small and was only restocked in winter. As well, with little electricity, there were no refrigerators in the homes for food preservation. Country foods like moose, fish and beaver continued to make up most meals, supplemented by oats, tea, and bannock.

Split Lake Cree remained largely dependent upon the natural environment, as they had always been, for their recreational and leisure activities. Access to the outside world was limited and travel was expensive. Even though the effects of the operation of Kelsey were noticeable, people maintained

their confidence in the quality of the waters, which are reported to have still been relatively clear, and which were relied upon for drinking, other domestic purposes, swimming and boating. Shorelines were used extensively for camping and picnicking, and the bird life around the community was extensive. A favourite activity for young Split Lake Cree was to search for minnows between the rocks in the shallow water along the shoreline.

## **Community Development**

Centred on the peninsula, the Split Lake community continued to modernize. It started to become a more formal, planned community with the completion of a planning study by Underwood McLellan Associates in 1966. Figure 8 shows the extent of community development at that time. The on-reserve population was 368, 57% of whom were young people.<sup>24</sup> Some modern homes were being built and 15 amp diesel electrical service was introduced. This was enough to power a few electric lights and a radio. Wood stoves were still relied on for cooking and heating. For the first time radio programming broadcast from Thompson included some Cree language content.

A new four-room school house was constructed, but after grade six most children were sent to Indian Affairs residential schools in Dauphin, Brandon, Cranberry Portage or Norway House. When they returned to the community, few took up the traditional life of their Elders, and many had lost their mother tongue. Some slowly regained it; others never did. The residential school experience widened the generation gap between Elders and young people.

This was a time of significant natural turbulence. In the early 1960s, a huge forest fire threatened the reserve. There was a major flood

on Split Lake in 1966 which raised the level to elevation 553 feet, that was five feet or more above the long-term average. While these events threatened the community for their duration, people accepted them as natural occurrences that were expected in the centuries old relationship between man and nature, which was certainly not always benign.

There was no road access to the community yet, and few, if any, cars on the reserve. Travel by dog-team continued, but snowmobiles became more common. The use of motorized boats expanded further. In both cases, the traditional paths and travel routes, over the open or frozen waters, remained the principal transportation corridors within the resource area and to the outside world. These were travelled in safety and with confidence.

Although the community was modernizing, social problems are not noted by the Elders to have been prevalent. There was still a respect for traditional values and authority, as illustrated by regular church attendance, the significant role of the priests and by evening curfews. When necessary, individuals were assisted in physical chores like wood cutting and water hauling. The community was still close-knit and traditional, celebrating seasonal community events together. Children would visit the school teachers, not least to see the wonders of new technologies such as vacuum cleaners in their modern homes. Wood was gathered for the church in the early fall, when a community feast was also staged.

There were few visitors to the community, which retained many of its traditional Cree customs. In 1969, a major community event was the meeting between then Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chrétien and Split Lake Cree on the reserve.



Figure 8: Extent of Split Lake Community Development in 1966.

## New Communities

The emergence of two new communities playing major roles in the resource area brought Split Lake Cree into further contact with the modern world.

Gillam, once a small divisional point on the Hudson Bay railway, was a thriving modern town by the late 1960s. It was developed by Manitoba Hydro as an operational base for the Kettle Rapids generating station and the future planned hydroelectric facilities downstream on the lower Nelson River. It was inhabited primarily by Manitoba Hydro personnel. Many Cree in the resource area, attracted by wage labour opportunities, moved to the townsite. These were mainly Fox Lake First Nation members, but some Split Lake Cree also moved there. The settlement at Atkinson Lake was practically vacated by members of both of these First

Nations in favour of Gillam.

Thompson was the other community that began to play an important role after 1960. There had been mining activity in northern Manitoba for several decades. From the discovery of gold at Herb Lake near The Pas in 1914 and sulphide ores in the vicinity of Flin Flon in 1915, to the development of nickel and copper mines at Lynn Lake in the early 1950s, the mining industry had been a major catalyst of northern development and settlement.<sup>25</sup> However, none of this had had significant impact on the Split Lake Cree until Thompson.

In 1956, nickel deposits were found, after a decade of exploratory drilling by INCO, in the Cook Lake area.<sup>26</sup> This led to the development of the huge INCO mines and the establishment in 1960 of the town of Thompson which grew rapidly. Thompson quickly became the

administrative and service centre of northeastern Manitoba and, located 140 kilometres by air southwest of Split Lake, its influence would soon become pervasive. However, this was not felt immediately by the Split Lake Cree.

Train access to Thompson from Split Lake was available through Landing River by way of the Aiken River, but initially there was no road connection. It was not until the late 1960s, when an airport was built at Split Lake and scheduled air service was started, that Thompson became more influential. Unlike the experience with the railway, it is notable that few, if any, Split Lake Cree were employed at the INCO mines. The reasons for this are hard to pin down definitively, although lack of local interest in working underground and the impossibility of simultaneously maintaining mining employment and the



*Squared log house on the peninsula built by William Wavey in the early 1950s.*



*Round log house built by Robert Wavey on the peninsula.*



*This stained glass window sits above the altar in John the Baptist Church. From the original old log church in Split Lake, it was donated by the women's auxiliary.*

traditional way of life, as well as the mining company preference for hiring experienced miners, all undoubtedly played a role. The fact that INCO hiring took place in The Pas was also a factor. Thompson would have progressively greater influence on the Split Lake Cree way of life in following decades, and the early signs of this future role were already inescapable.

In spite of the expanding influences of Thompson and Gillam, Ilford still continued to be the key service/supply centre and point of external contact for the Split Lake Cree in the 1960s. Its easy accessibility by the Aiken River either by winter road or by seaplanes operated by Ilford-Riverton Airways and its direct rail link to the outside assured its ongoing importance in this period.

## Hydroelectric Development

As noted in the previous chapter, starting in 1960 the operation of the Kelsey generating station made Manitoba Hydro's presence well-known in the Split Lake resource area. Kelsey flooded land for a distance of 150 kilometres upstream of Split Lake along the Nelson River, affecting 14,250 acres of northern boreal forest. Little, if any, of the shoreline was cleared and tons of debris, trees and soil entered the Nelson River increasing its sediment load. Traditional hunting areas on the upper Nelson River, in particular Goose Hunting Lake and as far as Sipiwesk Lake, were lost to Split Lake Cree hunters. The dam raised forebay water various levels up to 30 feet at the site of the former rapids.

Kelsey was a 'run of the river'

project which harnessed only a modest portion of the total Nelson River, and did not greatly change the levels and flows of the downstream reach of the river. However, Split Lake residents noticed many adverse effects. The water in Split Lake seemed to be less clear, and algae became more common. There was more debris both downstream of the dam on the Nelson River and in Split Lake. After heavy rains water levels on Split Lake seemed to rise faster. In 1968 a winter fire at the dam site caused the release of stored up water and substantially raised elevations on Split Lake, causing slush ice. These effects started the process of undermining the confidence that the people had always had in the quality and safety of their waters.

The commercial and domestic



*Long Spruce dam and generating station was the third plant built in the Split Lake resource area. Started in 1971, the first units went into service in 1977. It is located 16 kilometres downstream of Kettle.*

winter levels were increased by an average of nearly three feet while summer levels were reduced by about three-quarters of a foot. A greater frequency of water fluctuation also resulted.

According to the testimony of the Elders, each part of Hydro's project, particularly Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion and the Kettle dam and generating station, caused a large range of impacts, from bio-physical to cultural and social, in a domino-like fashion.

### **Biophysical Effects**

Terrestrial and shoreline habitat was either destroyed by flooding or rendered inhospitable for wildlife and human use by water level and flow changes. Flooded shorelines along the diversion route introduced mud, silt, vegetation and wood debris into the waterways and made the water dirtier. The projects drastically altered the ice regime. Ice

now formed later in the year and break-up came earlier. Higher winter water flows caused thin ice and slush ice which resulted in perilous travel conditions according to Split Lake Cree. Fluctuating water levels in winter resulted in very dangerous ice conditions, for example on Stephens Lake, where water levels varied by as much as six feet in one week. The seasonal reversal of water flows, combined with debris, limited shoreline access and water-based transportation.

The waterways had been the most travelled transportation routes. The developments of the 1970s effectively left the Split Lake Cree with much reduced, more costly and less safe access to their territory. The negative effects experienced with respect to the waterways, on which the Split Lake Cree had always relied, explains why the Cree came to call Manitoba Hydro "the flooder", or *o-inski-poo-chi-kayoo* in Cree.

These extensive bio-physical impacts of hydroelectric development affected every facet of the First Nation's use of its traditional lands and waters and shook its cultural identity to the very roots.

### **Harvesting Effects**

Commercial and domestic harvesting activities were seriously affected. Fur bearers and waterfowl were destroyed, or driven from their ruined habitats. Moose, deer, and lynx were forced upland as the shorelands could no longer support them. Fish habitat was changed by the increased turbidity, and the relative abundance of various species changed. Mercury contamination of fish, particularly in Stephens Lake, became a problem, and Split Lake Cree were advised not to eat certain species.

There was a local perception that the fur and fish that were caught were of inferior quality. Trapping

and fishing now required significantly greater effort and expense to produce a reasonable return. Winter ice conditions, particularly slush ice, was reported to have been a costly problem for fur trappers. The cost of fishing increased dramatically as boats and motors were damaged by debris and shoreline conditions, and nets had to be cleaned or repaired because of fouling by algae, silt, mud and other debris. More expensive aluminum boats now had to be used. On the Churchill River, the dewatering of lakes damaged fish habitat. For example, Billard Lake could not be commercially fished after 1976. The Butnau River diversion into the Kettle River, completed as part of the Kettle dam development, made the water more turbid and damaged domestic fishing in the lower Kettle River.

### **Changed Water Quality**

People could not drink the lake and river water, as had always been their practice, without feeling they were getting sick. As a result they became afraid to eat any fish they caught. The changes to the source of the peoples' drinking water completed the loss of confidence in the wholesomeness and safety of the water for consumption that had started in the 1960s after Kelsey. These changes in the water quality made particularly significant the contractual guarantee of continuous availability of potable water which the Northern Flood Committee had secured under Article 6 of the NFA.

### **Effects on Recreation**

The Hydro projects also destroyed the aesthetic beauty of the waterways and severely limited their recreational and cultural use. Dirty water made swimming less attractive and debris inhibited boating. Children got sores from swimming in the lake. Winter

recreation was adversely affected as ice conditions made many activities more dangerous. Summer activities had to be curtailed because camping and picnicking sites had either been flooded or left high and dry. Boating was dangerous below the Kettle dam because of severe water level fluctuations. The Churchill River was completely destroyed for recreational use and its pristine wilderness values were lost.

The presence of construction and operational personnel associated with the hydroelectric project also had detrimental effects on traditional land and water use. As discussed in the previous chapter, the establishment of the modern town of Gillam in the late 1960s left a permanent, new population within the resource area who used Split Lake Cree lands, resources, and waters as if they were their own. Hunting and fishing by the newcomers also placed increased pressure upon wildlife and fish resources.

### **The 1979 Flood**

There was not even any consistency in the changed water regime. Only three years after Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion, spring and summer flooding in 1979 produced some of the highest water levels on record, with particularly severe impacts on shorelines, wildlife habitat, and domestic harvesting. Split Lake Cree had barely begun adapting to the new 'normal' water regime when this happened. The occurrence of this flood, in spite of Hydro's assurance that the changed water regime would behave 'normally', even if somewhat differently than the state of nature, further eroded peoples' willingness to believe that the outsiders really understood the continuing effects of what they had done.

### **Few Benefits**

While the Kettle and Long Spruce projects were responsible for generating a substantial proportion of provincial power and produced corresponding revenue, Split Lake Cree received only minimal benefits. A few First Nation members worked on the construction of Kettle and Long Spruce. Some people worked in operations and maintenance at Kelsey, and one First Nation member recently retired from Manitoba Hydro employment to reside in Split Lake. One hundred (100) amp power was provided to community households, but electrical costs were high, imposing a new requirement for cash expenditures on the people. Benefits under the NFA were slow in coming, and Elders commented that in the 1970s the cost of the new hydroelectricity may actually have exceeded the Hydro resource compensation programs.

As the power developments curtailed traditional land and water activities, cultural values were damaged. Social problems began to increase in Split Lake. People lost confidence in the lands and waters which had always sustained their identity. Negative aspects of modern society for the Cree, such as store-bought food and television (made possible as a result of the telecommunication towers built by Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Telephone System in conjunction with the Kettle development), began to exert more of an attraction. The growing social disruption was increased by the construction of PR 280 to Split Lake in 1979. The Thompson-Gillam road, serving Split Lake, was built as a result of the Long Spruce development and was cost-shared by Manitoba Hydro.



*One of the major streets in Split Lake. c. 1970.*

## Chapter 6

### Environmental and Social Disruption

#### Split Lake in the 1970s

**T**HE 1970S WERE A TIME OF turbulence and environmental upheaval for the Split Lake Cree. The Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion projects of 1972-77 wrought havoc with the water and shoreline habitats of hundreds of kilometres of the resource area. At the same time the negative aspects of other outside agents of change, such as social assistance, residential schools and television, were also becoming more pronounced and widespread. Television, for example, was perceived by Elders as having a bad influence on young people. At the same time, other examples of modernization, such as electrical appliances and better education, were positive developments.

The community became less tightly-knit and family cohesion weakened. The environmental devastation and disruption caused in part by hydroelectric development affected traditional Aboriginal values and compounded social problems as people found themselves cast adrift in a new, strange, and hostile world.<sup>27</sup>

#### Resource Harvesting and the Economy

By far the most significant pressure on Split Lake Cree resource harvesting and other traditional land and water activities in the 1970s was the massive hydroelectric developments which were profoundly altering the landscape in ways which were far more dramatic and profound than the effects of the Kelsey generating station.

Although traditional harvesting activities did continue, fewer young people participated, and the territory travelled continued to decrease. Dog teams were replaced by snowmobiles, which were more expensive to operate and maintain. As a result of increased prices for certain fur bearers, trappers did manage to increase the gross financial return of their activities in the late 1970s. At the same time, trapping programs negotiated with Manitoba Hydro to offset the adverse effects of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation -Churchill River Diversion project provided incentive for some trappers. However, those people who went to the north of the resource area talked so negatively on their return about the impacts on the Churchill River that trappers stopped going there. The commercial fishery on Split Lake continued, although income was erratic and it was closed or partially closed for many of the early years of the decade because of concerns about industrial mercury contamination expressed by the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

External pressures on harvesting continued to be felt. Hunters and anglers from Gillam and Thompson were active in the Split Lake resource area. Gillam residents began illegally constructing cottages on Stephens (Moose Nose) Lake without the consent of either Manitoba or Split Lake Cree. About the same time, the Manitoba Registered Trapline Association came into existence to give trappers a united voice on provincial trapping issues.



*Jigging at the old band hall.*



*Elders Eveline Wastasecoot, Sophie Spence and Helen Spence.*

In addition to the traditional resource-based pursuits, Split Lake Cree continued to work on the rail line. As well, some First Nation members found temporary work with outside developers, usually in relatively low skill jobs. Some younger people who had secondary school education were able to find employment away from the community. A few local businesses were established towards the end of the decade as a result of funding from Neyanun, an economic

development corporation established under the terms of the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA). Unfortunately, in spite of all of the investment and economic activity surrounding Split Lake, social assistance became more widespread, increasing dependency and idle time.





*Since the establishment of a mission at Split Lake in 1890, the Anglican religion has been an important part of community life. Shown here is the existing Anglican church and cemetery.*

## **Community Development**

In the community, development on the peninsula continued. The on-reserve population had grown to 792 by 1974, and there was an influx of families of CN rail retirees to Split Lake.<sup>28</sup> A new kindergarten to grade nine school was completed in 1973, and local teachers began to be trained through the Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program. An electrical submarine cable allowed for the use of home appliances, as 60 to 100 amp service became available. Local party-line telephone exchange service was also introduced.

Community standpipes were constructed by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1973, providing a rudimentary chlorinated water supply for the community. The people were told that the lake water was no longer safe to drink. According to the Elders, this new source of supply was, in one sense, welcomed by the people, given the growing lack of confidence in the safety of the traditional lake supply. At the same time the need for this alternative source deepened people's suspicions that the changes being experienced would last forever. The replacement of easy access to lake waters with several centralized sources also increased the effort required to access this most fundamental element of life's sustenance.

Television was also introduced into many community homes and its impact cannot be underestimated. It created expectations, some false. It exposed young people to the outside world, on the one hand introducing previously unknown cultural influences, but at the same time bringing readier access to information about the struggles of other Indian peoples, in far off parts of the country, to assert their rights. The greater difficulty and less satisfying nature of traditional, outdoor activities tended to make television a substitute, thus isolating the youth even more from the experience of the Elders and the traditional values of the Split Lake Cree.

Reliance on store-bought food grew, although country foods still reportedly comprised the majority of meals. In the early 1970s, the Hudson's Bay store encouraged increased consumption of red meat, at the expense of fish consumption. The perception that the taste of the fish from the lake had changed, and the associated lack of confidence in its wholesome nature, markedly increased the effectiveness of the store's advertising. As the diet changed and sedentary ways became more prevalent, the health of residents deteriorated and the incidence of modern illnesses, particularly diabetes, became more common.

Parents placed increasing emphasis on formal education as a means of understanding and dealing with the changes being experienced, as well as of obtaining future employment. This, combined with continued residential school attendance, left many of the youth unfamiliar with the traditional ways of living off the land.

Increased access to Thompson with its 'city ways' was another destabilizing factor. By the early 1970s there was scheduled air service between Split Lake and Thompson. Taxi service from the Odei River, near Orr Creek, began in the mid-1970s. The completion in 1979 of a year-round road, Provincial Road 280, between Thompson and Split Lake consolidated the link.

As a result of all of these factors, the social fabric in Split Lake began to erode and young people, alienated from the old ways, increasingly questioned the wisdom of traditional life and values. Church attendance began to drop. The curfew disappeared. Alcohol and drug use increased, although still mainly off-reserve.

## **Hydroelectric Development Accelerates**

There can be no doubt, however, that the most profound factor of change in the 1970s was hydroelectric development. Manitoba Hydro projects caused extensive flooding along the Nelson River, and also dewatered thousands of acres of land along the Churchill River. These projects permanently altered waterways in the resource area, forever changing the relationship the Split Lake Cree had enjoyed with the natural world since time began.

Manitoba, along with the federal government, had established the Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board in 1971 to study the environmental impacts of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion projects. However, by the time the board's report came out in 1975, both projects were already nearing completion as was the construction of the Long Spruce generating station and initial development of Limestone on the lower Nelson River. The board's report was also considered by some environmental experts and critics to be substantially less than an environmental impact assessment that one would expect today.

In the space of a decade, two dams and generating stations were constructed downstream of Split Lake on the lower Nelson River, and the massive Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion scheme was implemented. The Kettle dam and generating station, with a generating capacity of over 1,272 megawatts, began operation in 1970. It tripled the size of the lake that had always been known to the Cree as Moose Nose Lake, and flooded over 54,000 acres of land including many First Nation traditional harvesting, recreational and cultural sites. This was not unlike the flood that had occurred naturally in 1966. However, this time it was unexpected as Split Lake Cree believed that Manitoba Hydro was now regulating the waterways. At the same time Moose Nose Lake was re-named Stephens Lake in honour of a former Chairman of Manitoba Hydro.

Shortly after this flooding, construction began on the Long Spruce dam and generating station, 16 kilometres downstream of Kettle. Long Spruce became operational in 1977 and water levels were raised 85 feet. Over 3,400 acres of Nelson River shoreline and tributaries were flooded. The Split Lake Cree were not consulted about either of these hydroelectric projects nor were they prepared for the range of negative impacts that would result. Although both the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion project and the Long Spruce generating station on the lower Nelson River had been planned for a number of years and were already being built, the First Nation did not know that its reserve lands would be directly affected until 1973.

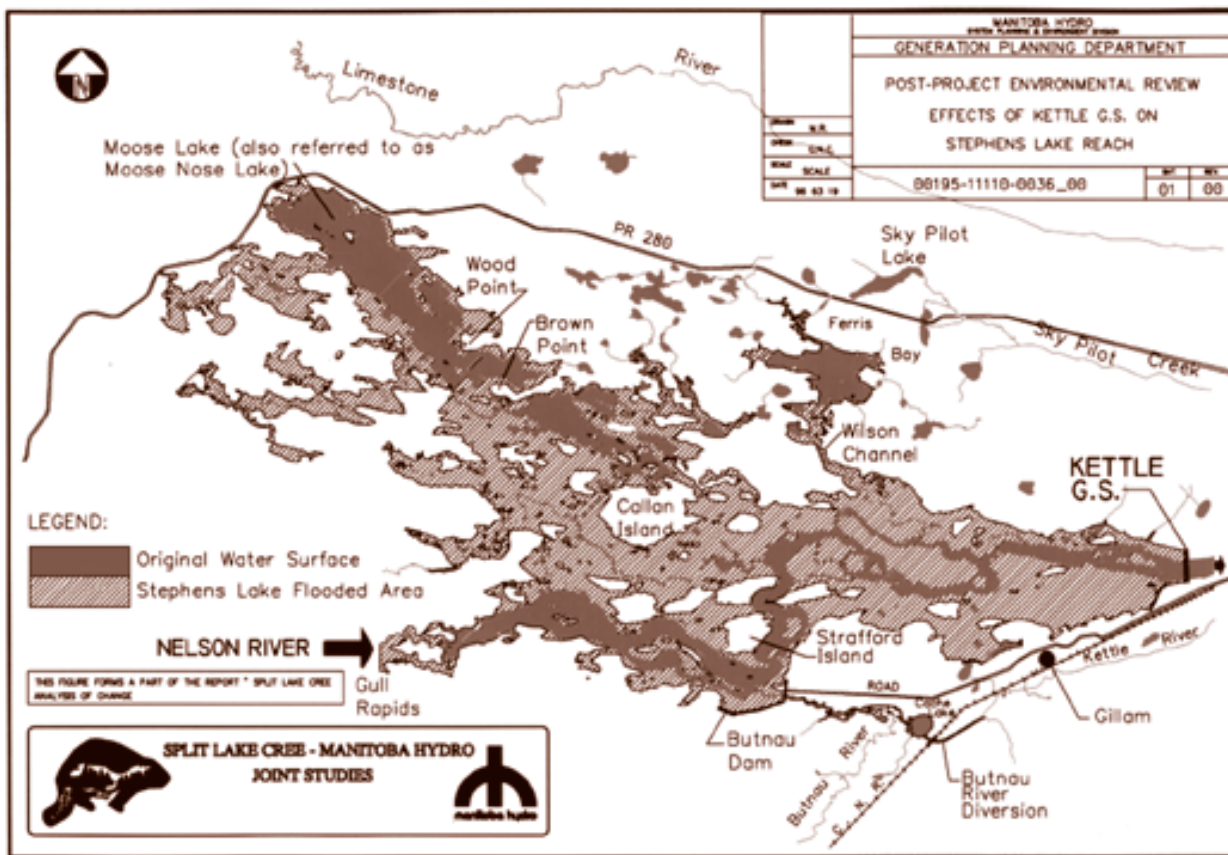


Figure 9: Effects of Kettle Generating Station on Stephens Lake Reach. – Manitoba Hydro

## The Northern Flood Committee and Negotiation of the NFA

As discussed earlier, allying itself with four other Cree Nations who anticipated and experienced adverse effects from the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion, Split Lake Cree First Nation became a founding member of the Northern Flood Committee in 1974. The committee was formed, by the independent action of Split Lake, Nelson House, Norway House, Cross Lake and York Factory First Nations, to oppose the Manitoba Hydro development project. This coming together of the threatened Cree peoples marked a fundamental step in their political development. The basis of the alliance was that each First Nation would remain responsible for its own affairs, but that there would be cooperation to fight the actions of Manitoba Hydro

and the governments, and to secure the collective rights and interests of the Cree.

Initially, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro, refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Northern Flood Committee and attempted to negotiate separate compensation settlements with each of the communities and affected resource users. However, under pressure to negotiate with the Northern Flood Committee from the increasingly organized and informed First Nations, as well as from the federal government, which recognized the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion’s certain impact on reserve lands, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro finally recognized the committee in 1975.

In the face of the huge investments that had already been made, and the consensus among Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba

Hydro that the First Nations should not succeed in stopping what was seen by the outsiders as ‘progress’, the Cree were not successful in stopping the project.

However, even though the primary objective could not be accomplished, the Northern Flood Committee was successful, for the first time in the history of northern Manitoba, in forcing the governments and Manitoba Hydro to recognize the legal rights of the First Nations. Negotiations began, but notwithstanding Cree legal rights – related to reserve lands and other interests – they were conducted under considerable duress, caused not least by the continuing construction activities within the resource areas. In spite of the difficulties they faced and the unequal bargaining positions, the First Nations, under the umbrella of the Northern Flood Committee,



*Kettle generating station, located on the lower Nelson River seven miles east of Gillam. Construction occurred over the period 1966 to 1974. The first turbine units went into service in 1970.*

succeeded in negotiating the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA), which was finalized in 1977 and ratified in 1978, by the Northern Flood Committee and the five First Nations, Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. Key Split Lake negotiators included the then Chief Ken Wastasecoot, Philip Garson, and Sam Garson, the latter of whom signed the NFA on behalf of the Chief. The signing of the NFA was testimony to the cooperative efforts of the Chiefs, Councillors and Elders of the five First Nations, and to their determination and tenacity in the face of very adverse circumstances. This was exemplified by the fact that the reserves of the Nelson House Cree were already starting to be flooded by the Churchill Diversion even before the NFA was finalized.

The Northern Flood Agreement contained promises, by Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba and Canada, to replace all affected reserve lands on a 4:1 basis, as well as to provide a wide range of compensatory, remedial and developmental measures to offset the adverse effects of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion. Under the terms of the NFA, the

implementation of the promised measures was left substantially in the hands of Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. Unfortunately, the Cree First Nations' faith in the willingness of the other parties to take all of the promised actions was found to be misplaced. Faced with high projected costs to implement the NFA consistent with its language, spirit and intent, the other parties shrank from the task and proceeded with what can only be described as the narrowest possible interpretation of their responsibilities. Indeed, it would be several years before the other parties' insistence that the NFA was a 'political accord' rather than a contract, would be overturned, first by the arbitrator appointed pursuant to the NFA, and then by the Manitoba Court of Appeal.

In 1979, the Commission of Inquiry into Manitoba Hydro (the Tritschler Inquiry) criticized Manitoba's and Manitoba Hydro's approach towards the northern Aboriginal communities in the development of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion:

*It is clear to the Commission, after reviewing all of the evidence and listening to all of the witnesses,*

*that had the Government and Hydro started meaningful negotiations with the communities prior to 1968 and even as late as 1972, the course of events would have been vastly different.*

The Commission went on to recommend that:

*...in the future all Hydro projects that will have an appreciable impact on a community or on the environment be given a rigorous environmental assessment and review before authorization. Moreover, the people affected should be consulted and fully informed long before project committal, so that their legitimate concerns are taken into account in the authorized scheme.*

*Government must ensure these ends are achieved.<sup>29</sup>*

## **Hydro Project Impacts**

The Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion development became operational in 1976-77, prior to the Long Spruce flooding, and, as noted, before the signing of the NFA. The Churchill River Diversion increased flows down the Burntwood River more than eight-fold, permanently flooding shorelines and adding additional flow down the lower Nelson River. Over 1,500 acres of Split Lake reserve land were taken for Hydro water storage purposes. The opposite effect occurred on the Churchill River, in the north of the resource area, where over 17,000 acres of formerly rugged wilderness shoreline were dewatered and Billard and Fidler Lakes were substantially reduced in size and depth.

Lake Winnipeg Regulation reversed the natural, seasonal flows and levels which the Split Lake Cree had lived with for all time. The entire Nelson River from Lake Winnipeg as far as the Kettle dam forebay was altered. On Split Lake,



*Kelsey dam and generating station located on the Nelson River where it flows into Split Lake. Construction began in 1956 and the first four turbines started operating in 1960.*

fisheries were also affected. Sturgeon did not come down the Nelson River as frequently as in the past, which the Elders attribute to the presence of the Kelsey generating station. Split Lake Cree fishermen noticed cyst-like defects in fish, particularly in walleye and pike. The mooneye population was reduced. In the areas not protected by bedrock and stone shorelines, shoreline bird and furbearer habitat was damaged; the red-winged blackbird disappeared from the upper Nelson River area in the mid-1960s.

First Nation members were gaining their first direct experience with the impacts of hydroelectric development, which, as noted earlier, had been planned without any consultation, and certainly without the informed consent of Split Lake Cree. In spite of the impacts that the Elders report were being experienced by the people as a result of the operation of Kelsey, no compensation was paid. The project was viewed by the proponents and other northern developers as an admirable sign of northern growth,

and any costs, to the extent they were recognized at all, were treated as the 'price of progress'. There is no record of Canada doing anything to insist on the recognition of Split Lake Cree rights, other than perhaps the belated creation of the Split Lake Cree reserves in the late 1950s.

At about the same time as the Kelsey development became operational, Manitoba Hydro began construction of the Grand Rapids hydro project on the Saskatchewan River between Lake Winnipeg and Cedar Lake. The Grand Rapids dam and generating station was completed in 1965 and was fully operational by 1968. This severely damaged traditional resource areas of the four First Nations inhabiting the Saskatchewan River delta and the Chemawawin Cree were forced to completely relocate. These negative effects provided a tragic lesson for Manitoba Hydro and the governments. They revealed the inevitable consequences of such development on the indigenous population. Sadly, in spite of what the governments and Manitoba Hydro knew, or ought to have

known, there is little evidence that the lessons were applied to the developments that would shortly create similar impacts on the Split Lake Cree.

After completing Grand Rapids, described in official Manitoba Hydro literature as the 'jewel of the system', Manitoba Hydro turned its attention to harnessing the enormous power potential of the Nelson River. The federal-provincial Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba Board in 1958 and the Nelson River Programming Board in 1965 completed reports investigating the energy potential of the Nelson River, including the regulation of the outflow of Lake Winnipeg and the diversion of the Churchill River into the Nelson River.

In 1966, Manitoba and Canada entered into an agreement that provided the basis for the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion. It specified that Manitoba Hydro would finance and construct the Kettle Rapids dam and generating station, 80 kilometres downstream of Split Lake, while Canada would pay for the

construction of, and own, the high voltage direct current transmission lines (500 kV) between Kettle Rapids and Winnipeg. Manitoba would provide the land required for the transmission line and give the necessary approvals for the project. Water power reserves along the major river systems were created in that same year.

This was the beginning of the hydroelectric project that would cause such damage and disruption, and change forever the way of life of the Split Lake Cree in the coming decade.

### **Community Governance**

Even though the impacts of hydroelectric development and of the new communities in the resource area were only beginning to be felt in the 1960s, they created new pressures for the Chief and Council. Such changes had never before been experienced by Split Lake Cree. The impacts of Kelsey were increasingly being raised in the general band meetings, but the leadership was unsure how to effectively voice these concerns to the governments and Manitoba Hydro. It would be another ten years before the government of the First Nation would succeed in establishing a forum for doing so, by allying itself with other northern Cree First Nations within the Northern Flood Committee.

At least during the first half of the decade, Chief and Council, comprised of the older First Nation members, governed consistently with the traditional customs. The Elders continued to exercise the most influence on decisions within the community. The functions of government remained primarily inward-looking, such as the strictly enforced daily curfews imposed by Chief Alfred Spence and Council. Similarly, Chief and Council had, and used from time to time, the

power to reduce or cut off social assistance. The Department of Indian Affairs exercised considerable power, managing directly both the finances and the external relationships of the First Nation. Up until at least the mid-1960s, there were no direct employees to carry out the everyday functions of governance, which were integrated into the responsibilities of the Chief and Council.

The peacekeepers were still proving to be an enduring force in the community, a very visible symbol of the continuity of governance practices from ancient times, enforcing the curfews and generally maintaining the good order and traditions of the people. The Elders report that at this time there were still three peacekeepers. The RCMP were viewed generally as an unnecessary outside force, and were only allowed on the reserve with the permission of Chief and Council.

In the latter half of the decade, as pressures continued to mount on the traditional leadership, there appears to have been a conscious effort made to actively encourage the participation of the younger men in the community decision-making process. Today's leaders talk of Elders approaching them individually as young men to convince them of the need for their more active role in the regular general band meetings. The age of the Council started to reflect this transition. The late 1960s saw the election of the youngest Chief in the history of the Split Lake Cree.

Frequent general band meetings were still held, maintaining the age-old tradition of the active participation of the adult members in the everyday governance of the First Nation, while retaining the power to make decisions which Chief and Council felt obliged to put into effect.

### **Conclusion**

The 1960s were essentially an extension and continuation of the changes of the 1950s. Harvesting of natural resources was still very important to Split Lake Cree who continued to rely on the lands, resources and waters of their forefathers, despite being more settled in a planned and growing community. According to Elders, considerable country food in the form of moose, beaver, whitefish, and pickerel was harvested, blessed and consumed by the people, with country food meals still surpassing store-bought. Traditional cultural practices and festivals were actively maintained. The community of Split Lake remained relatively isolated and stable.

While the changes taking place were not as dramatic as those of the 1950s, influences, such as the growth of northern towns, mining and the first direct effects of hydroelectric development were increasingly evident. As a result, the most central beliefs and trust in a well-understood environment were shaken by the magnitude of devastation seen upstream along the Nelson River to Sipiwesk and Cauchon lakes. The 1960s provided the first concrete indications to the Split Lake Cree that their unending struggle for survival and adaptation to circumstances in a known world was changing because of fundamental changes to the very character of that familiar world. Further serious impacts were soon to come.

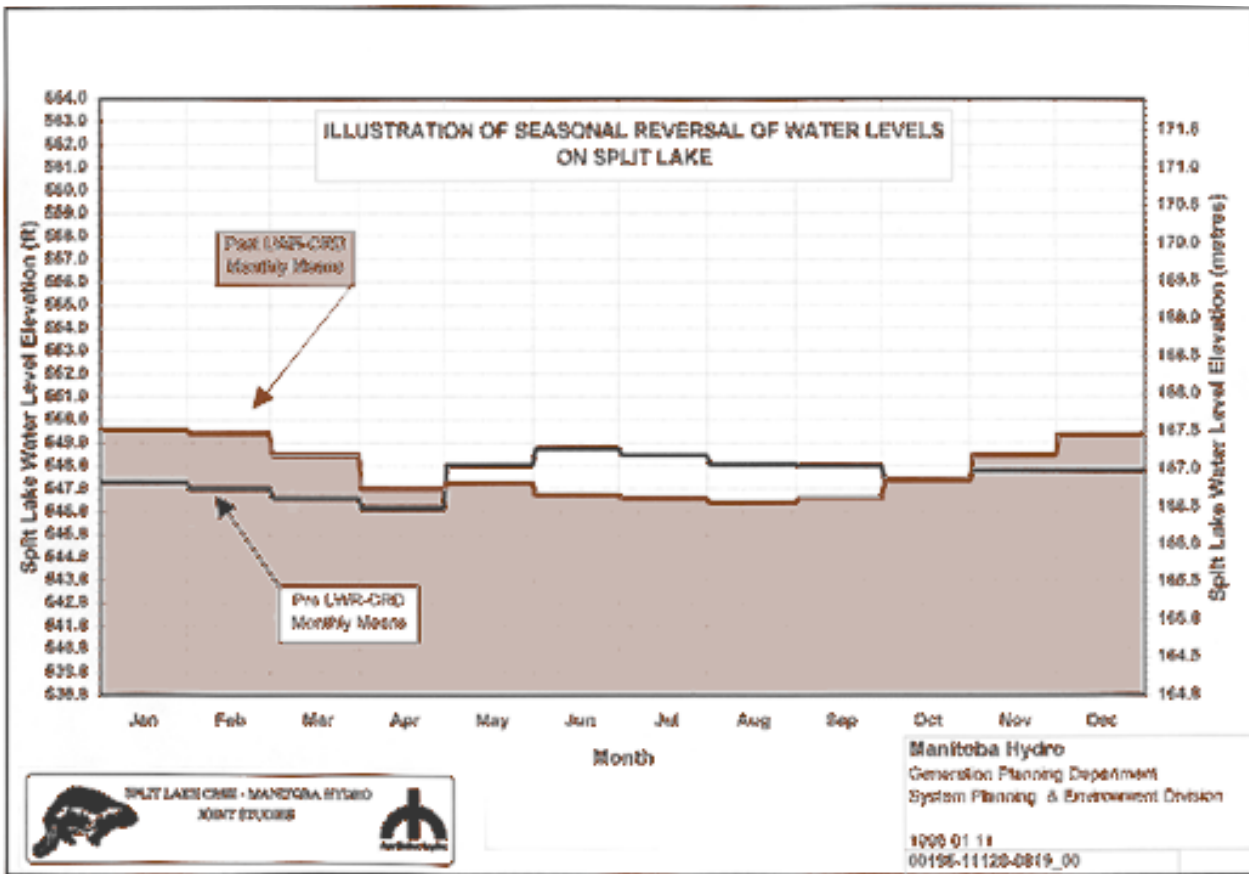


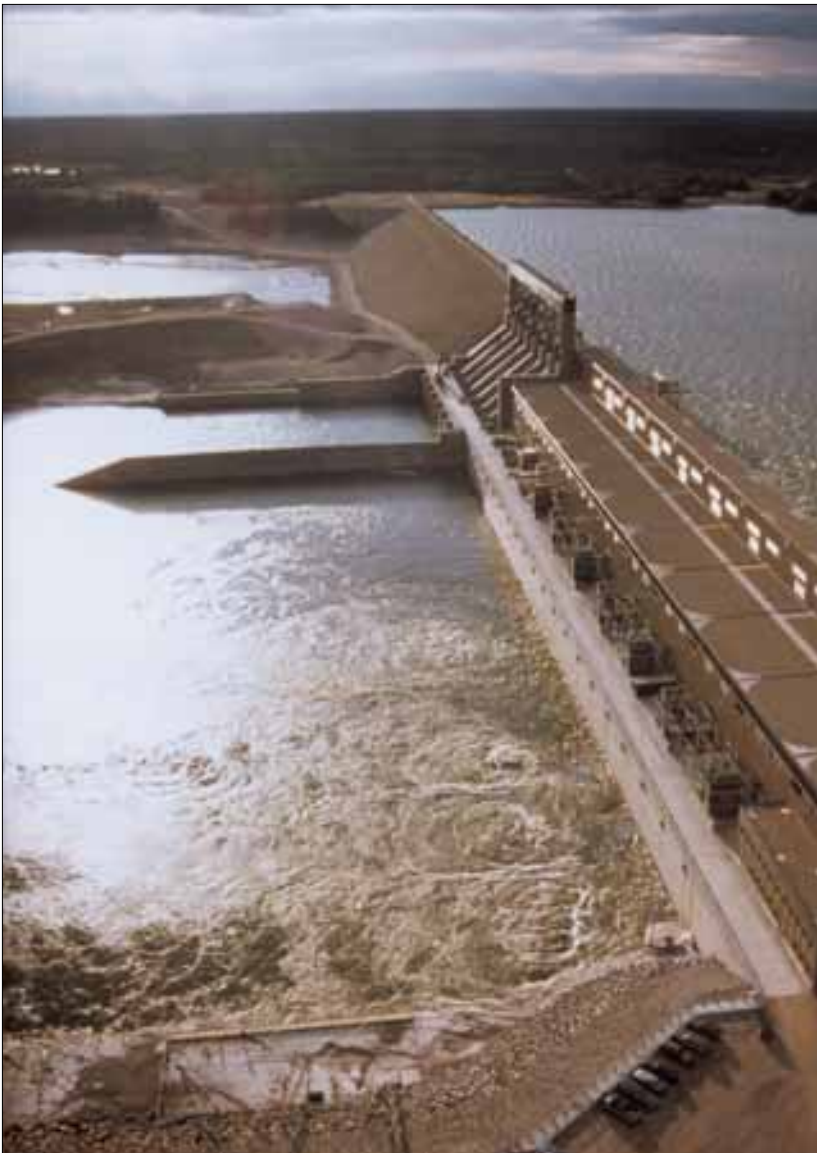
Figure 10: Split Lake Water Regime: Average Monthly Water Levels for Pre- and Post-LWR-CRD Periods. – Manitoba Hydro

Figure 9 on page 59 illustrates the effects of the Kettle dam and generating station on the Moose Nose (Stephens) Lake reach of the Nelson River. Visually, the effects are dramatic. More subtle, but nonetheless profound, were the seasonal reversal effects of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion on the immediate environs of Split Lake. Figure 10 illustrates the Split Lake water regime for the pre- and post-Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion periods. The reversed cycle of low water in the summer and high water in the winter periods is particularly notable.

### Community Governance

Not surprisingly, the 1970s was a period of rapid transition in the role of Chief and Council. In order to deal with the perceived threats to the very existence of the people, there was a need to draw upon the more ‘modern’ perspectives and education of younger members, who had greater familiarity with the outside world. This internal impetus, coming from the older people, to pass the torch of leadership sooner than would have traditionally been the case, was reinforced by the reduction in voting age from 21 to 18 in 1972. This substantially expanded the voting age population.

Complicating this generational shift in leadership was the increasing requirement for Chief and Council to be out of the community to participate in tribal governing activities. This contributed to a decrease in their internal authority. While the younger generation took more of a leadership role in terms of political responsibilities, the Elders continued to take responsibility for ensuring respect for the moral and customary practices of the community.



*Limestone dam and generating station, the most recent Manitoba Hydro plant, is located 47 kilometres east of Gillam. Initially started in the 1970s, it was built over a period of several years, mainly in the late 1980s.*

The tremendous efforts required first to negotiate and then endeavour to convince the other parties to implement the NFA, began to impose a diverse array of administrative, technical and legal demands upon Chief and Council. The very modest numbers of staff working in the First Nation government were complemented by the Cree staff and other technical and legal advisors working within the Northern Flood Committee. Chiefs during the 1970s were, in chronological order, Daniel Kirkness, Bill Spence, John Wavey,

Ken Wastasecoot, and Michael P. Garson. John Wavey and Ken Wastasecoot led the Split Lake Cree participation in the struggle to negotiate the NFA.

Despite the many significant changes that occurred during this decade, there were still significant elements of continuity within the structure of governance. As noted, the Elders continued to play an important and respected role, both internally and as valued advisors in meetings among the five Northern Flood Committee First Nations. The

peacekeepers still represented the will of the people in the maintenance of social peace and order. The general band meetings, while having to address hitherto unknown challenges, remained an important forum for discussions and debate, and a source of guidance and support for the leadership.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has described how traditional values and customs came under increasing pressure during the 1970s, as the consequences of increased modernization and contact with the outside world were felt. From the Split Lake Cree perspective, hydroelectric development was by far the most profound agent of change, causing both major physical impacts on the lands and waters, as well as the resulting undermining of the essence of Aboriginal practices and customs. As a result of externally imposed developments that were beyond their control, the people of Split Lake had become casualties of change.

While resource harvesting activities continued, people participated for less sustained periods of time. Many young people, steered towards educational endeavours, were less capable of carrying on traditional activities and began to hold animals in less esteem than had their Elders. The centre of traditional pursuits had always been the shorelines, but shoreline activity decreased because of the adverse effects of hydroelectric development. People lost faith in the altered waterways and in the natural environment that had always sustained them. In short, the sudden environmental degradation in the traditional territories resulted in a traumatic break in the pattern of evolution and sometimes difficult adaptation that had characterized earlier eras.





*Aerial view of the growing Split Lake community.*

## Chapter 7

### Decade of Uncertainty and Reconstruction

#### Split Lake in the 1980s

**T**HE EARLY 1980s were marked by uncertainty and indecision. Split Lake Cree First Nation was unsure how to deal with the deepening negative influences of the outside world and, in particular, with the continuing adverse effects of hydroelectric development which should have been mitigated or alleviated by the 1977 NFA. From the Split Lake Cree perspective, the other parties to the agreement had not lived up to the promises in the NFA. While, from the outside, the community was perceived to be stable, among members there were real concerns that it may be overwhelmed by the new, stark realities it was facing. By the late 1980s, however, a number of developments indicated that the

First Nation had again found its bearings, and was beginning to reassert control over its own affairs.<sup>30</sup>

#### Resource Harvesting and the Economy

Hunting, fishing, trapping, and the gathering of country foods and medicines carried on in the 1980s. Because of continuing interest in these pursuits, as well as a growing population, there were more trappers than in the 1970s, although the number of commercial fishermen remained about the same. Among resource harvesters there was as strong an attachment to the land as before. However, hydroelectric development impacts were still a major limiting factor.

On the surface, trapping and fishing appeared productive with large numbers of participants. However, the continuing physical effects of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion, particularly related to transportation impediments, made these activities difficult to carry out and produced substantial hidden costs in terms of extra expense, time and effort. Domestic fishing declined on Split Lake because of concerns about the water quality, particularly after the flood of 1986. Elders noted a sharp decline in goldeye in the early 1980s. As well, fur prices dropped sharply towards the end of the decade. Despite all of these problems, the people's attachment to the lands and waters continued. Country foods still comprised, perhaps, half of the diet. One response to the hydroelectric impacts was to move some of the harvesting activities and to fish and trap unregulated waters and shorelines.

Notwithstanding the continuing attachment to resource harvesting, severe unemployment characterized the local economy for most of the year in the first half of the decade, with a corresponding increase in social assistance dependency. Women's handicraft production all but ceased, with bingo and visits to Thompson taking its place. Fewer people made snowshoes. The customary division of labour became blurred as women began to work and men took more of a role in raising children. To some extent this was made possible by the gradual expansion of employment opportunities in the government and service sectors of the local economy, particularly in the latter part of the decade, as progressively more functions of government were made subject to the devolution policies of the Department of Indian Affairs. The education and health systems also contributed to the increase in local job opportunities for women.

In the early eighties, construction on the reserve was essentially confined to a modest housing program. After the middle of the decade, however, there was a relative boom in this sector. The extensive construction activity on the reserve, resulting from the provision of basic infrastructure such as the water and sewer system, improved housing, and local streets, provided many much-needed local jobs for First Nation members.

Hydro construction continued when work on the huge Limestone dam and generating station resumed in 1985. This was the fifth and last hydroelectric generating station to date on the Nelson River. Some Split Lake Cree participated in skills and employment training programs there. Benefits from these programs were slight, however, as skills were not adequately developed at work or could not be applied elsewhere as employment opportunities were few. In addition, those Split Lake Cree with jobs were often overlooked for advancement.

In spite of the general increase in local job opportunities in the late 1980s, the rapidly growing labour force meant that there were probably more people unemployed and reliant on social assistance at the end of the decade, than at the beginning. This was particularly the case since most of the people born in Split Lake continued to reside there, with a very low rate of permanent out-migration. The challenge of defining a new basis for the economic self-reliance of the Split Lake Cree, which had never been seriously addressed by the governments, remained to be taken up by the people in the future.



*Several construction projects began in Split Lake in the late 1980s.*

## **Community Development**

Social and health problems seemed to deepen. Lack of respect for authority increased. Young people became even more alienated from the values of their Elders and began asserting their new-found legal rights, as individualistic notions began taking hold, partly as a result of Constitutional deliberations and the passage into law of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There was conflict between external values and Aboriginal cultural traditions, which were weakened and began to be redefined. Traditional religious beliefs were practiced only by the Elders, who were also the First Nation members most frequently attending church services. Although there was a reported decline in active church attendance, the Anglican Church and its practices and moral code remained a predominant influence on everyday life. Alcohol and drug abuse was more frequent, although, as in the past decade, usually not in the community, given the local ban on intoxicants and active enforcement by the peacekeepers.

Numerous events interrupted or curtailed a wide range of community services in the 1980s. The airport was closed in the early part of the decade. The school burned down in 1986 and temporary classrooms had to be used for the next four years until a new school was built. The Bay store burned down in 1987 but was soon rebuilt. There were power outages because of load rejection at Kelsey. Electricity was also cut off when the submarine cable snapped in 1989. Shoreline development became restricted because of the Manitoba Hydro setback or severance lines. On top of these problems, Split Lake experienced high waters in 1986, and in 1989 major forest fires threatened the whole community.

However, there were also notable community improvements. Household telephone service to the outside world became available in the early 1980s. The Split Lake community doubled in size when adjacent land beyond the peninsula, including the old airstrip, was set aside and developed for community expansion. This had been recommended by the 1985 Hilderman, Witty Community Plan. A major water and sewer project began slowly in 1986 as one of the then major benefits from the Northern Food Agreement. Under this program water and sewer installation occurred on the mainland, providing running water and bathrooms for about 65% of the homes. This was part of a major water and sewer infrastructure program that took place on all five NFA First Nation reserves.

### **The New School**

The response of the Split Lake Cree to the destruction of the school by fire illustrates that no matter how desperate the situation may have seemed at times in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the will to control their own affairs was never lost. When the school burned, the Department of Indian Affairs informed the First Nation that the children would be taken out of the community to school until the building could be replaced. It also indicated its plan to construct replacement school facilities on the site of the old school, a site that had always been considered undesirable by the local population.

Chief and Council, supported by the members, rejected both these positions. Using the First Nation's own money which had been secured through negotiations to implement the NFA, portable classrooms were purchased, moved to the community and installed on the old school site. Having succeeded in creating this

new situation on the basis of their own efforts, Split Lake Cree continued the pressure to secure a modern, replacement school, with the goal of providing kindergarten to grade 12 education in the community for the first time. At the end of July 1988, two busloads of Split Lake Cree arrived in Ottawa to lobby the federal government. Shortly afterwards, approval was received for the construction of the new school, on the site favoured by the people. This noteworthy success contributed to renewed self-respect, and underpinned the major efforts made by Chief and Council to gain local control of education in the 1990s.

### **Road to Split Lake**

Even though the Split Lake airport was closed in the 1980s, access to Thompson, and to southern Manitoba, became easier because of the completion of PR 280 to Split Lake in 1979. By 1983, the road had been extended to Gillam. This caused an increase in on-reserve vehicles, creating added pressure to improve the inadequate internal road system. More important, however, was its negative influence on social stability.

Besides hydroelectric development, PR 280 has been cited as perhaps the key agent of change affecting Split Lake in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>31</sup> By making access to the outside world easier, modern influences affected the community more, further weakening traditional social and family relationships.

Chief and Council agreed to the road, which was vital for maintaining a reasonable level of services in the community, and was made even more necessary as a result of the deterioration in traditional travel routes on the waterways caused by the hydroelectric projects. At the same time they were aware of its potential adverse effects, in

particular, easier access to alcohol. One result of this realization was to maintain Split Lake as a 'dry' reserve where alcohol was banned. There is no doubt that the road created a major attraction to take advantage of services in Thompson, with very many Split Lake members travelling there weekly, if not more frequently.

### **Impacts of Hydroelectric Development Continue**

Adverse effects on the lands and waters continued as before. The seasonal reversal of flows and levels on Split Lake, the low flows on the Churchill, and high flows on the Burntwood, were now permanent features of the environment. While some outsiders claimed that nature had begun to adjust to the unnatural cycles, the Elders continued to notice far more signs of negative effects than positive adjustment. Traditional pursuits continued to be adversely affected along 'on-system' waterways and, more and more, hunters, fishermen and trappers had to go further afield in order to harvest game and fish, incurring additional expenses.

The spring and early summer flood of 1986, not totally unusual in a state of nature, also caused consternation, as had the earlier flood of 1979, since such floods were contrary to the intended effects of the Hydro regulation scheme. Both domestic and commercial harvesting practices were seriously disrupted as unnatural ice effects and flooding up to five or six feet beyond the norm took their toll. Extreme events such as these also caused many 'hidden' effects on plants, insects and wildlife struggling to adapt to the regulated water regime. These are difficult to describe and impossible to quantify. The flood seriously affected the recreational use and enjoyment of Split Lake, caused community concern and anxiety because of its



*Satellite view of Split Lake area showing main highway and other features. July 27, 1987. – Manitoba Centre for Remote Sensing*

unpredicted nature, and, perhaps most troubling of all, seriously undermined the theory that Mother Nature would be able to adapt well to artificial interference with her natural rhythms and patterns.<sup>32</sup>

### **Northern Flood Agreement Implementation**

Both the perceived failure of Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to adequately address the ongoing physical adverse effects of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion, and the resulting sense of powerlessness, were symptomatic of the loss of control felt by Split Lake Cree in the early 1980s. The people had believed the promises in the NFA, had trusted that its terms would provide a vehicle to counteract the adverse effects of the hydro projects, protect the integrity of their lands and waters, and foster the social and

economic recovery of their community. The failure of these expectations to be realized led to bitter disappointment and mistrust.

The governments and Manitoba Hydro failed to implement seriously the numerous advantageous provisions of the NFA, and adequate resources were not made available to ensure that its provisions were carried out. Notwithstanding the determination that the NFA was a binding contract, its general wording left considerable room for interpretation. Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro consistently used this fact to downplay their responsibilities.

The NFA had generated understandable expectations amongst the Split Lake Cree. These expectations were increasingly frustrated as successive Chiefs and Councils, in alliance with the other Northern Flood Committee First Nations, waged a continual struggle

to obtain the promised benefits contained in the agreement. The Split Lake Cree, like the other NFA First Nations, had to resort to filing numerous arbitration claims to try to force implementation of the agreement.

By the mid-1980s, almost a decade after its signing, most of the NFA was being implemented only partly, inadequately, or not at all. Compensation lands had not been provided; drinking water was considered unsafe; shared management of wildlife was minimal; and community development was not being addressed. Normal Indian Affairs program funding had been reduced, because of perceived benefits that were supposed to result from the NFA. Some benefits that were seen by Split Lake Cree included a few local remedial works, advance payments on a handful of claims which went towards housing

development, and the Manitoba Hydro trappers' assistance programs.

One of the key provisions of the NFA not adequately addressed by the other parties was the commitment to comprehensive monitoring of the adverse effects of the Hydro projects, including a socio-economic assessment of such effects. The first order physical, biological and chemical consequences had been suffered by Split Lake Cree on a continuing basis since 1960, when Kelsey began operating. Yet the impacts had only been investigated or monitored in a limited, piece-meal way by Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro since the early 1980s. The lack of comprehensive monitoring of hydroelectric project impacts rendered such assessments meaningless to the Split Lake Cree, and did nothing to allay the enormous uncertainties associated with the projects' effects.

### **Political Approach to Implementation**

Faced with the continuing intransigence of the other parties, the Northern Flood Committee Chiefs and their senior staff and advisors held many discussions to find a way to obtain the entitlements which their people insisted had been promised. Finding the NFA arbitration provisions ineffective at producing practical results, the decision was taken to forge a more political approach to secure the promised benefits of the NFA.

Consistent with this decision, the five Chiefs travelled to Ottawa in May 1984 to meet then Minister of Indian Affairs, John Munro, and press their case. The outcome of the meeting was unusually rewarding, and only six weeks later Canada announced the approval of a package of NFA implementation measures, including: ongoing

funding for the Northern Flood Committee; the commitment to spend the money required to provide water and sewer services, in recognition of the obligation to provide safe water to the communities; and a Federal Ecological Monitoring Program, to monitor selected impacts of the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion upon the lands, waters, fish and wildlife of the five NFA First Nations.

This almost stunning success, after so many years of frustration, started Split Lake Cree and the other First Nations down a road with many new challenges. A period of intensive planning and organization began in order to develop the means to control and secure the maximum possible spin-off benefits from the unprecedented infrastructure development in the communities. Split Lake Cree took on the shared leadership in proposing to Canada and receiving approval for the establishment of the Northern Flood Capital Reconstruction Authority, a wholly Cree-owned institution, which would take on and manage successfully the completion of the water, sewer, housing and road development project. Local work in Split Lake was substantially completed by the end of the 1980s.

The efforts to implement the NFA Article 6 water and sewer program demanded a large portion of the time and energy of the leadership of the Northern Flood Committee and the First Nations, until a formal agreement was concluded with Canada in May 1988. Nevertheless, important lessons from this process were applied to other unmet entitlements under the NFA. Split Lake Cree and the other First Nations concluded that political means could be effective in asserting their rights, and that the First Nations would do best to take on direct responsibility for implementation measures, rather

than relying on the other parties to take the lead.

### **Global Approach**

Out of this experience was born the global or comprehensive approach to implementing the NFA, based on the concept that the First Nations should negotiate with the other parties to receive the lands, moneys, authorities and continuing inter-party relationships sufficient to place each First Nation in the lead with regard to implementation of the NFA. Many workshops were held in Split Lake, and among the First Nations, during the late 1980s in order to reach a consensus among the people. Finally, in January 1989, full four-party negotiations began in order to try to win the complete implementation of the agreement that had been signed in 1977.

For the Split Lake Cree another critical factor in reaching the decision to take this global approach was the growing apprehension and uncertainty over future impacts associated with Hydro's exploration and drilling around Birthday and Gull rapids downstream of Split Lake in 1988. That same year Manitoba Hydro announced that the Split Lake reserve boundaries would need to be re-negotiated because the planned Birthday/Gull hydro development option could raise Split Lake by several feet.

Split Lake Cree protested Manitoba Hydro's lack of consultation about these twin projects as well as the failure to conduct an adequate assessment of already existing impacts. Faced with this strong local opposition, Manitoba Hydro withdrew its request to renegotiate the Split Lake Reserve setback lines in late 1988, pending further investigation and study of the flooding effects of Birthday/Gull. Buoyed by this additional evidence of their increasing capability to protect their

own rights, Split Lake Cree took assurance that Manitoba Hydro was now more aware of the importance of joint planning and impact assessment processes. The Split Lake Cree approached the global negotiations with renewed determination and confidence that this time things would be different.

## **Community Governance**

The struggle to win the implementation of the NFA, combined with the increasing responsibilities of the First Nation government flowing from the program devolution policies of the Department of Indian Affairs, resulted in substantial changes to community governance in the 1980s. Chief and Council became less involved in family issues, and focused more on the broader collective rights and interests of the First Nation. This transition was aided by the negotiations, along with other First Nations in the north, to establish AWASIS, an Indian child care agency providing specialized support, help and guidance to First Nation families and children.

Chief Norman Flett took a very active role in the Northern Flood Committee in starting the successful negotiation of the Article 6 Agreement of the NFA regarding sewer and water services, over a period of three years. The experience gained in building from scratch a major Cree institution, the Northern Flood Capital Reconstruction Authority, to manage the construction, added new understanding of the ways in which a modern government could meet the needs of the people.

The global negotiations which began with the goal of settling outstanding NFA obligations, provided valuable lessons on how governments worked and the requirements for negotiating for

community development initiatives. These developments were concrete evidence that Split Lake Cree were progressively reclaiming control, not only over NFA implementation, but over other dimensions of community development as well. The Chiefs who continued to negotiate implementation during this decade were, beginning with the 1979 election, Ken Wastasecoot, Michael P. Garson, Daniel Kirkness, Norman Flett and Larry Beardy.

Another very visible characteristic of the increasingly sophisticated First Nation government was the growth of staff, both executive and administrative, at the local level. At the beginning of the decade there were fewer than a half dozen such staff; by the end, there were as many as four dozen, including those working in the school and at the nursing station. Although this growth was fuelled to a considerable extent by the devolution of program management responsibilities from the federal government, it was fundamentally driven by the decisions of the people and Chief and Council to take on all responsibilities possible, and to structure NFA implementation activities with the maximum possible local involvement.

Even with all of the changes resulting from the growth and increasing sophistication of the First Nation government, essential aspects of continuity could still be found. All decisions of vital interest to the First Nation continued to be debated fully in the general band meetings, which were still very well attended. The respected role of the Elders remained. Indeed, notwithstanding the pre-eminent role of the younger leaders in meetings at the Northern Flood Committee level, Elders were frequently in attendance and their wise words of counsel and experience were highly valued.

The peacekeepers also maintained their prominent community responsibilities, and grew in number over the decade. The persistence and growth of this traditional institution of self-governance is particularly notable given that senior officials of the RCMP and Indian Affairs made several trips to Split Lake to explain that the peacekeepers could not remain in existence. The people listened patiently, but persisted in the ways passed on to them by their grandparents. This persistence not only underlines the unbroken autonomy of the Split Lake Cree, but also the people's wisdom, since by the end of the decade Split Lake was openly acknowledged to have the lowest incarceration rate of any northern Manitoba Aboriginal community.

## **Conclusion**

The 1980s were a defining moment for the Split Lake Cree. At the beginning of the decade, it seemed to many that the way forward had become obscure, that there was a real danger of losing not only a known and loved environment as a consequence of hydroelectric development, but also the precious, sustaining links with those who had gone before. The First Nation showed remarkable resilience and by the mid-1980s there was already practical evidence that this was beginning to change. By the end of the decade, the practical groundwork had been successfully laid, based on the decisions of the people to create a new and different basis for future self-sustenance, building on the traditions, knowledge and perspectives that had sustained the Split Lake Cree in their tribal homelands for many generations.



*MV Joe Keeper provides ferry service between Split Lake and York Landing.*



*Community York boat built to represent Split Lake Cree at York Boat Days in Norway House and at other festivals.*





*Construction of the 50,000 sq. ft. Chief Sam Cook Mahmuwee Education Centre in Split Lake.*

## Chapter 8

### Community Renewal

#### Split Lake in the First Half of the 1990s

**E**VEN THOUGH it would be premature to draw definitive conclusions about the experience of the 1990s, community renewal seems to have been the main feature of life in Split Lake since 1990. The First Nation has made major strides in reasserting control over its development, its lands and its waters. Split Lake Cree have been actively involved in managing their resources and further developing their government administration. They have also overseen the extensive redevelopment of their reserve community. Rightful pride is taken in the fact that all of this has also contributed to a revival of traditional cultural pursuits, particularly among younger members, as well as an increase in the consumption of domestic food.<sup>33</sup>

### Community Development

Several important physical and other community development initiatives have been completed in the last five years, building on the foundation laid in the 1980s. A new band office was constructed in 1990. A modern kindergarten to grade 12 school was opened in September 1991, allowing students to complete their high school education in the community. By 1992 water and sewer services had been provided to about 65% of the expanded community. To meet community power needs a direct transmission line from Kelsey was completed in 1992, for the first time ensuring the availability of reliable, unrestricted amounts of electrical energy. The arena was finished in 1994. Mail service increased to three times per

week. Figure 11 on page 75 shows the extent of development in the community by 1995.

Split Lake Cree are still carrying on traditional pursuits despite the ongoing effects of hydroelectric development. Recent activities have helped foster a revival of cultural practices throughout the community; the sharing of country foods is but one example. The spiritual aspect of Cree culture has assumed more significance. Although problems of contemporary society continue – the increase in diabetes is particularly disturbing – Split Lake Cree are better able to handle them, equipped as they are with both Aboriginal values and modern science and technology.

Indeed, the community appears to be moving towards a way of life which is blending both traditional and modern practices and values. Several examples illustrate this trend. Resource harvesters still winter in cabins in the bush, but at the same time they watch the NHL playoffs on portable televisions while they are there. Split Lake Cree youth are educated in a modern school, learning computer and other contemporary skills. At the same time they also express increasing interest in Split Lake Cree traditions and Aboriginal culture. Cree language is taught in the Chief Sam Cook Mahmuwee Education Centre, and field trips to traditional land use sites are common. Despite their taste for chips and cola, many young people are also eating more country foods.

## Northern Flood Agreement Implementation

The global negotiations to implement the NFA that began in early 1989, resulted in divisions among the member First Nations of the Northern Flood Committee, just at the time that a comprehensive implementation framework had been negotiated. The details of this period are recounted in the Introduction to this study. Faced with the decision of either abandoning years of work and departing from the clear direction provided by the people, or proceeding alone if necessary, Split Lake Cree First Nation chose to proceed, and committed itself to continued negotiations.

These negotiations, carried out in the face of what many assessed to be overwhelming odds, resulted in the signing of the historic NFA Implementation Agreement, on June 24, 1992 amongst Split Lake Cree, Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. Chief Norman Flett, ably supported throughout by the Council, First Nation staff and the

people, guided Split Lake through the negotiations between 1989 and 1992.

The 1992 agreement provided additional financial compensation of \$47 million, making for a total implementation package worth more than \$63 million, along with tens of thousands of acres of new reserve land at Waskaiowaka Lake and Assean Lake, and titled lands throughout the resource area. Just as important, new institutional arrangements were created among the parties, in terms of the management and use of Split Lake Cree traditional lands, resources, and waterways, as well as the enhanced environmental monitoring capability of the First Nation. Additional details on the specific provisions of the Implementation Agreement are provided in Appendix 2. The Split Lake Cree are convinced that this agreement has been, and will continue to be, of central importance in the First Nation reclaiming its rightful share of control over its lands and waters, as well as enabling it to reaffirm its Aboriginal identity.



*Elder Joseph Morris assists in opening the new arena at Split Lake. The 1992 Implementation Agreement helped fund construction of the arena.*

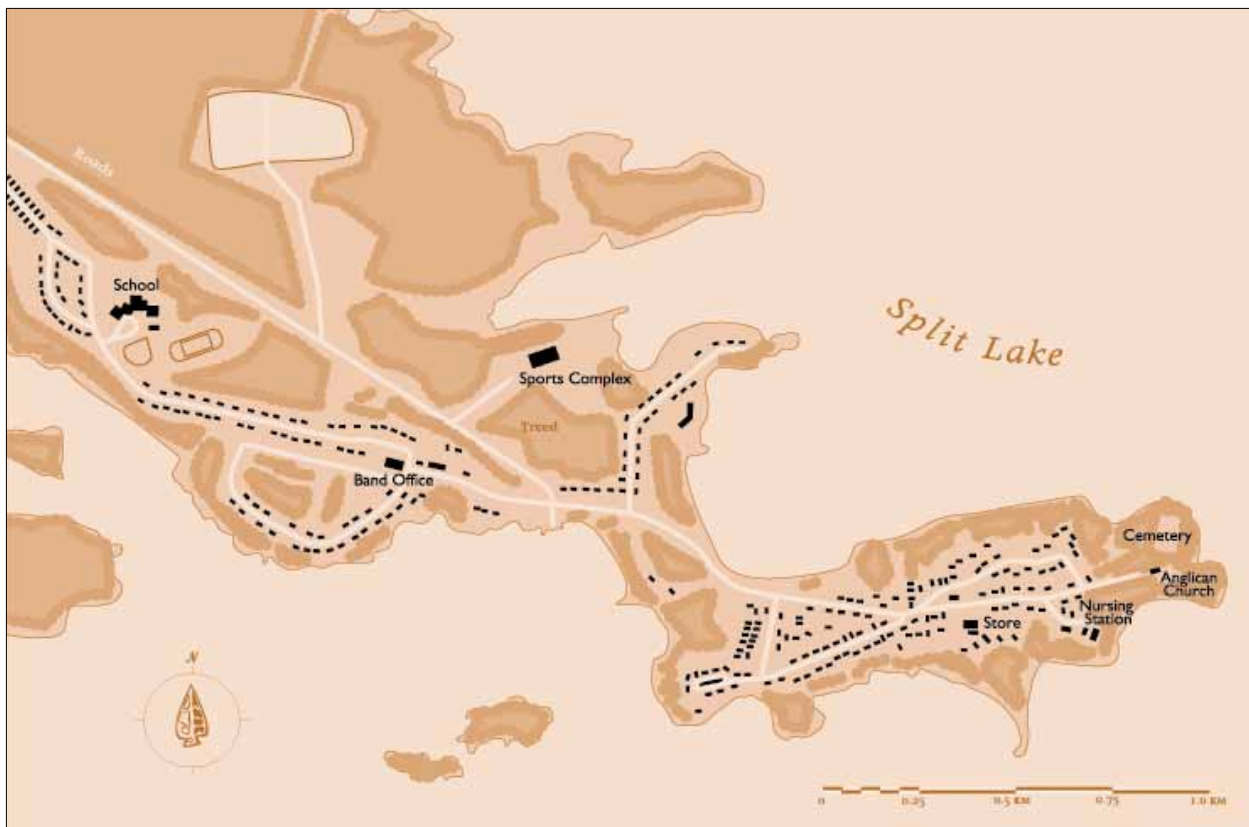


Figure 11: Extent of Split Lake Community Development in 1995.

### Hydroelectric Development Effects

As in the 1970s and 1980s, hydroelectric project impacts continue to affect Split Lake Cree lands and waters and, through bio-physical linkages, their social, economic and cultural systems. While the wounds inflicted by the residential school system and other negative aspects of change are beginning to heal, and while some negative effects of modernization continue, the Hydro-related impacts and damages may never diminish. Nevertheless, Split Lake Cree are confident that they are better equipped than ever to deal with them.

### Community Governance

The growth in the size and sophistication of the First Nation government that took place in the 1980s, has continued as the nineties unfold. Government staff now number about 36, the Tataskweyak Education Authority employs 43 people, and the Tataskweyak Trust, responsible for the implementation of activities related to the 1992 agreement, has 11 employees. In addition, relationships with the federal and provincial governments and with Manitoba Hydro, defined in contract as well as politically, are actively managed through multi-party structures created under the 1992 Implementation Agreement.

This agreement also provided the opportunity to formalize several of the traditional forms of self-government. These include the Elders' Tribunal to resolve certain disputes, the autonomous financing of the peacekeepers, and the role of general band meetings in determining implementation objectives and expenditure priorities.



*Today, Split Lake is a thriving community of nearly 1700 people.*

Overseeing all of these activities, with strict accountability to the people, Chief and Council today perform the legislative functions of a much more complex government. Even here traditions are maintained, as bi-annual elections continue to return a Council which is broadly representative of both the family and age groups in the community.

### **Conclusion**

The Split Lake Cree have chosen the path of blending the old and new in order to gain control of their lives and destiny with confidence and determination. The people, faced with new challenges, are continuing, as their forefathers did, to exercise their inherent right to govern themselves, across a wide spectrum of governmental functions. While the First Nation is employing

modern means of doing this through various new institutional and operational arrangements, these are rooted in practices passed down through the generations.

The Split Lake community continues to modernize and evolve but traditional pursuits and respect for cultural practices and customs are not forgotten; they are growing, and are forming part of an exciting new synthesis of the traditional and the modern. One could fairly characterize the past decade in Split Lake as a time of community renaissance.



*Victor Spence manages Split Lake's Tataskweyak Environmental Agency. Without him this report would not have been possible.*



*Split Lake Elders and other members at the 1992 signing ceremony for the Split Lake Implementation Agreement.*



*Signing of the Split Lake Cree NFA Implementation Agreement in Split Lake on June 24, 1992. From left to right:  
Hon. Thomas Siddon, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development;  
Chief Norman Flett, Split Lake Cree First Nation;  
Hon. James Downey, Minister of Northern Affairs, Manitoba;  
Mr. John McCallum, Chairman, Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board.*



*Split Lake 'New Core' showing band office, Tataskweyak Trust office and security office.*



*Chief, Councillors and Elders cutting the ribbon at the opening of the new band office.*

Table 1

SPLIT LAKE CREE FIRST NATION  
CHIEFS SINCE 1937



1937 TO 1951	SAM COOK
1951 TO 1953	DANIEL KIRKNESS
1953 TO 1959	ALFRED SPENCE
1959 TO 1960	JACOB SPENCE
1960 TO 1961	WILLIAM GARSON
1962 TO 1963	ALFRED SPENCE
1963 TO 1965	ADAM MAYHAM
1965 TO 1967	DAN FLETT
1967 TO 1969	ADAM MAYHAM
1969 TO 1972	DANIEL KIRKNESS
1972 TO 1973	BILL SPENCE
1973 TO 1975	JOHN WAVEY
1975 TO 1977	KENNETH WASTASECOOT
1977 TO 1979	MICHAEL P. GARSON
1979 TO 1982	KENNETH WASTASECOOT
1982 TO 1983	DANIEL KIRKNESS
1983 TO 1987	NORMAN FLETT
1987 TO 1989	LARRY BEARDY
1989 TO 1994	NORMAN FLETT
1994 TO 1995	JOHN GARSON
1995 TO PRESENT	NORMAN FLETT



*Split Lake peninsula in 1927 (above) and in 1990 (inset).*



*Since 1992, a joint board of Split Lake Cree and Manitoba appointees controls land use and manages the resources throughout the 18,000 sq.mile Split Lake Resource Management Area.*

*Meeting of the Split Lake Resource Management Board at Recluse Lake on August 10, 1994. From left to right: Bill Kennedy; Bryant Keeper (B); Loretta Clarke (B); Chief Norman Flett; Doug Barrett (B); Harold Smith; Samuel Garson (B-now deceased); Michael Garson (B); Don Cook (B); Eric Wilson (B); John Garson (B); Lazarus Kitchikeesick (B); Bernie Osiowy (B); and Anthony Mayham. The (B) denotes board member.*





*Overlooking Wasakamew (Troy) Lake, one of many beautiful Split Lake area views.*

## Chapter 9

### Concluding Summary

**O**NLY A PORTION of the long and vibrant story of the Split Lake Cree is presented in this study. It concentrates on the 20<sup>TH</sup> century, and attempts to identify and analyze the developments which have changed forever the First Nation's environment and ancient way of life. Undoubtedly, the most profound of these has been the impact of hydroelectric projects on the lands and waters, as well as on Split Lake Cree cultural, social, and spiritual traditions.

This report has been completed as one of several studies in the joint study program of Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro that has been underway since 1992. It is also part of Phase One of a joint Post Project Environmental Review of hydroelectric project impacts which Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro are conducting. It should be read in conjunction with the other Phase One reports dealing with the history, extent and impacts of hydro development in the Split Lake resource area and with environmental impacts of such development on the Split Lake Cree.

The ancestors of the Split Lake Cree have lived in what is now northern Manitoba for generations. Here they hunted, trapped, and fished, relying on the often abundant wealth that Mother Nature provided to sustain them and to give meaning to their lives. Although the world was changing, their forefathers adapted within the context of their own culture and, well into the first half of the 20TH century, continued to find their livelihood and their identity from the lands and waters in their vast resource area. A proud, self-reliant people, they still had little contact with the outside world and continued to rely on their own strength and social cohesion.

However, by the 1920s, the outside world was beginning to intrude into the lives of the Split Lake Cree, challenging their traditional ways and values. This trend continued with increasing persistence, such that by the 1950s the changes it brought could no longer be ignored. The registered trapline system, residential schools, the Hudson Bay railway, family allowance – all of these had an impact on the way people lived. They affected the Cree culture in various and complex ways, all of which reduced the traditional reliance on and use of the lands and waters. People no longer harvested resources as extensively as they had in the past, some of the younger generation did not have the opportunity to learn the traditional skills, and more and more people began to live in one central location year-round at Split Lake. Social impacts did not occur immediately, but the stage was being set for future problems.

Split Lake Elders say that by the 1960s people were adapting. They were getting used to the new realities and beginning to accept the modernization that could not be avoided. However, just as the community was getting used to these changes, the first signs appeared of what was to be the most devastating change of all. With the operation of the Kelsey dam and generating station, Split Lake Cree got a first taste of what was to them the totally inconceivable – dramatic changes to the nature of their lands and waters such as had never before been known. While they were just starting to take in the magnitude of what was happening to their sacred land, they also had to begin dealing with the social consequences of other outside influences. The development of Thompson as a regional centre, the coming of electricity, television, modern appliances, and perhaps more significantly, the completion of an all-weather road to Thompson – all of these had destabilizing effects on the community.

These changes were compounded by the drastic manipulation of the waterways that occurred in the 1970s with the Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Churchill River Diversion project, and the related construction of major generating stations. The effects of Kelsey were tame by comparison. The lands and waters that Split Lake Cree had relied on since time immemorial, that formed the very centre of their identity as Cree people, were uncompromisingly altered by an outside force over which they had no control. People became disoriented as they tried to grasp what was happening to them and come to terms with an uncertain future.

Joining together with other impacted First Nations in the Northern Flood Committee, Split Lake Cree found themselves frustrated in their efforts to have the 1977 Northern Flood Agreement implemented. Just as they had trusted the Crown when they signed their treaty at the beginning of the century, so they had believed the promises that, through the Northern Flood Agreement, they would at least be compensated for the devastation they had suffered. Yet, as the 1970s and 1980s wore on, they seemed to be getting nowhere and the community, weakened by the loss of its traditional ways, faced ever deepening social problems.



*The Kelsey generating station on the Nelson River at Split Lake was the first of four generating stations in the Split Lake resource area.*

Finally, as the 1980s progressed, the First Nation managed to reassert control of its destiny. Its decision to conclude the global Northern Flood Agreement negotiations, by itself if necessary, signalled the beginning of a new era. In June 1992, Split Lake Cree First Nation finally concluded the NFA Implementation Agreement with Canada, Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro to compensate for the losses it had suffered. The arrangements entered into with the other three parties under the terms of the agreement will lead to both the physical renewal of the community at Split Lake and shared control by the First Nation of development throughout its resource area.

The proud Split Lake Cree have re-established the foundation for their development, combining the best of their traditional ways and values with the benefits of the modern world.

Numerous influences have affected and changed the lives of the Split Lake Cree in the 20TH century. While hydroelectric development has had the most dramatic impact, it must be seen in relation to other forces which have also changed forever the old way of life. Other agents of change, like residential school and family allowance, had major but transitory and manageable effects. Features of modernization like formal education, electric appliances, and water and sewer systems became easily blended with traditional values. However, hydroelectric impacts, some of which were permanent, were profound and directly contrary to those values.

This study has documented some of the key changes that have occurred in Split Lake Cree resource harvesting activities, particularly as they have been impacted by the hydroelectric projects. Many of the other effects of hydroelectric development are unseen and impossible to measure. They can be direct or indirect but are, nonetheless, just as real. The damages to Split Lake Cree cultural, social, and spiritual identity have been the most disturbing, touching the very core of their being. It will be the task of Phase Three of the Manitoba Hydro-Split Lake joint Post Project Environmental Review to establish an environmental baseline from which to measure future potential hydroelectric impacts.

## Appendix I

### Wildlife Harvesting Impacts

The harvesting of wildlife for sustenance and commercial purposes has continued throughout the recorded history of Split Lake Cree First Nation. Harvesting traditions are still maintained and are an essential ingredient of members' identity as Cree people. Spring and fall hunts are an annual rite binding the community together. Country foods are a staple of the diet and still comprise much the same animals that the forefathers of Split Lake Cree depended upon - moose, beaver, muskrat, whitefish, pickerel, waterfowl, including ducks and geese, and small animals like rabbits and chickens. Wild berry crops like gooseberries are consumed, and gull and duck eggs are a treasured delicacy.

However, many factors of change, in different ways and at different times, have affected the amount and the success of wildlife harvesting activities. These factors have complex and cumulative effects. They include natural forces such as wildlife population cycles, migration patterns, disease, and habitat destruction/creation by fire. Production factors such as fur and fish prices, the influence of marketing agents, and distance from markets also play a part. In addition, 'modernizing' influences, like residential schools, access to commercial facilities, and reliance on other forms of income, have affected

harvesting patterns. Other external factors, such as greater competition for game and fish from outside the region resulting from increased road and rail access, and from inside the region in the form of growing populations in places like Gillam and Thompson, have also had an effect. Hydro facilities, transmission line construction and related activities, like the construction of PR 280, construction roads, trails, and stream crossings have opened up the resource area for greater exploitation.

By far, the most significant factor of change, however, has been the hydroelectric development which has permanently altered the lands and waters. The range of impacts from the dams and generating stations, the multitude of transmission lines, and the water diversion and regulation schemes, is described in detail in previous chapters. It is very clear that since 1960, when the Kelsey generating station began operating, these hydroelectric developments have had profound and continuous negative effects upon the wildlife harvesting pursuits of the Split Lake Cree and other Aboriginal people in the region.

It is very difficult, however, to scientifically measure the relative impacts of any one of these factors of change, including hydroelectric development. Harvesting data either does not exist, is not reliable, or fails to accurately portray the complete range of impacts of any one factor. This last deficiency is particularly critical.

Usher and Weinstein (1991), note:

*Although development projects may lead to certain predictable physical, biological and institutional changes, how these are perceived and experienced locally cannot be predicted without reference to the historical experience, culture and social*

*organization of the community itself.*<sup>34</sup>

In short, new indicators and data of relevance to Split Lake Cree are required.

Given this reality, the graphs included in this appendix cannot possibly provide an accurate or comprehensive portrayal of the profound and far-reaching impacts on Split Lake Cree harvesting pursuits that have resulted from these historical developments. Therefore, they should be interpreted with caution and at best can only illustrate trends with respect to a limited number of indicators.

### Subsistence Harvesting

Harvesting for food over the resource area has been, and continues to be, a cornerstone of the Split Lake Cree way of life. Informal surveys of Elders and other knowledgeable people indicate that domestic food consumption, while varying, has comprised much of the diet in the latter half of this century. In the 1960s, it comprised about 90% of all meals eaten. This declined to 70% in the 1970s, reaching a low of 50% in the 1980s. As the Split Lake Cree have begun to heal and again value the Aboriginal way of life, domestic food consumption has started to increase, reaching about 60% of all meals in the first half of the 1990s.

Many influences have been responsible for this variation in country food consumption. Split Lake Cree acknowledge that these have, of course, included the availability of store-bought food, particularly in the early 1970s when the Bay store was actively encouraging people to eat red meat. However, the effects of hydroelectric development have been the primary negative influence on country food consumption. The flooding, destruction of wildlife and

LAKE	R	NR	Total Seasons		Duration	1975 Quota	Avg. Weight	Avg. \$ Value	Avg. Men	
			Years Fished	Fished S W						
<b>On-System</b>										
Split	X	–	28	28	1	1954-88	45,000	21,834	16,239	14
Stephens	X	–	5	4	2	1979-84	20,000	2,325	4,843	2
Billard	–	X	7	–	7	1966-76	7,000	7,976	3,501	3
Fidler	–	X	17	7	10	1959-87	11,000	7,733	3,266	4
<b>Total</b>			<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1954-88</b>	<b>83,000</b>	<b>26,138</b>	<b>17,449</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Off-System</b>										
Assean	X	X	9	9	–	1965-88	5,000	13,611	6,025	5
Atkinson	–	X	22	13	12	1958-87	23,000	13,839	7,903	4
Buckland	–	X	8	8	1	1967-88	9,000	9,485	4,539	2
Butnau	X	–	3	–	3	1968-83	2,000	1,545	180	1
Caldwell	–	X	3	2	1	1971-83	11,000	3,235	1,789	2
Campbell	–	X	3	2	1	1965-71	11,000	8,535	1,260	3
Christie	–	X	4	3	1	1965-72	7,000	2,598	786	4
Dafoe	–	X	19	8	11	1958-88	14,000	7,659	4,385	3
Holmes	–	X	10	8	2	1961-73	20,000	17,636	4,553	4
Kiask	–	X	4	2	2	1963-72	5,000	3,206	594	3
Moose Nose	–	X	10	10	–	1968-87	5,000	5,862	3,235	1
Myre	–	X	2	–	2	1961-63	2,000	1,907	529	3
Settee	–	X	8	3	5	1957-69	5,000	4,234	1,297	3
War	–	X	24	11	14	1950-86	2,000	2,621	1,524	2
Waskaiowaka	X	X	11	10	6	1954 – 73	23,000	17,454	4,158	8
<b>Total</b>			<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1950 – 88</b>	<b>144,000</b>	<b>36,444</b>	<b>15,154</b>	<b>13</b>

R = resident; NR = non-resident S = summer; W = winter  
Source: Usher and Weinstein (1991)

Table 2: Commercial Fishing Use, Quota and Production: Split Lake Resource Area, by Lake.

its habitat, and enormous obstacles caused by reduced access to some traditional harvesting areas, have all taken their toll. In addition to the general impacts, the flooding in 1979 and 1986 severely curtailed seasonal harvesting activities.

It is practically impossible, however, to ascertain or quantify with any accuracy the impacts of any one of these factors on domestic food gathering. The necessary data are either non-existent, as in the case of small game and waterfowl statistics, or highly suspect because of the lack of scientific rigour in data-gathering methods.<sup>35</sup>

### Commercial Fishing

Most of the commercial fishing in the resource area dates from the late 1950s. The commercial fishery had trouble getting started due to delays in the construction of the fish plant. Historically, community residents have fished mostly in Split Lake, which on average has produced the largest catches of any lake in the resource area. Almost all of the off-system lakes are fished by non-Split Lake residents. Table 2 (above) shows historical commercial fishing use, quota and production by lake for the Split Lake resource area. The Split Lake commercial fishery has been mainly a summer operation. Whitefish, pickerel, jackfish, and

sauger comprise most of the catch, with whitefish being the most plentiful.

A review of the literature reveals little detailed information on the history of the Split Lake fishery, particularly those factors which have influenced production, participation and value levels. Conservation officer reports between 1953 and 1961 acknowledge the fishery but offer little analysis or data concerning this harvesting activity, unlike trapping which receives far greater attention.

Split Lake has been affected by financial factors which have affected the entire northern Manitoba commercial fish harvest. However,

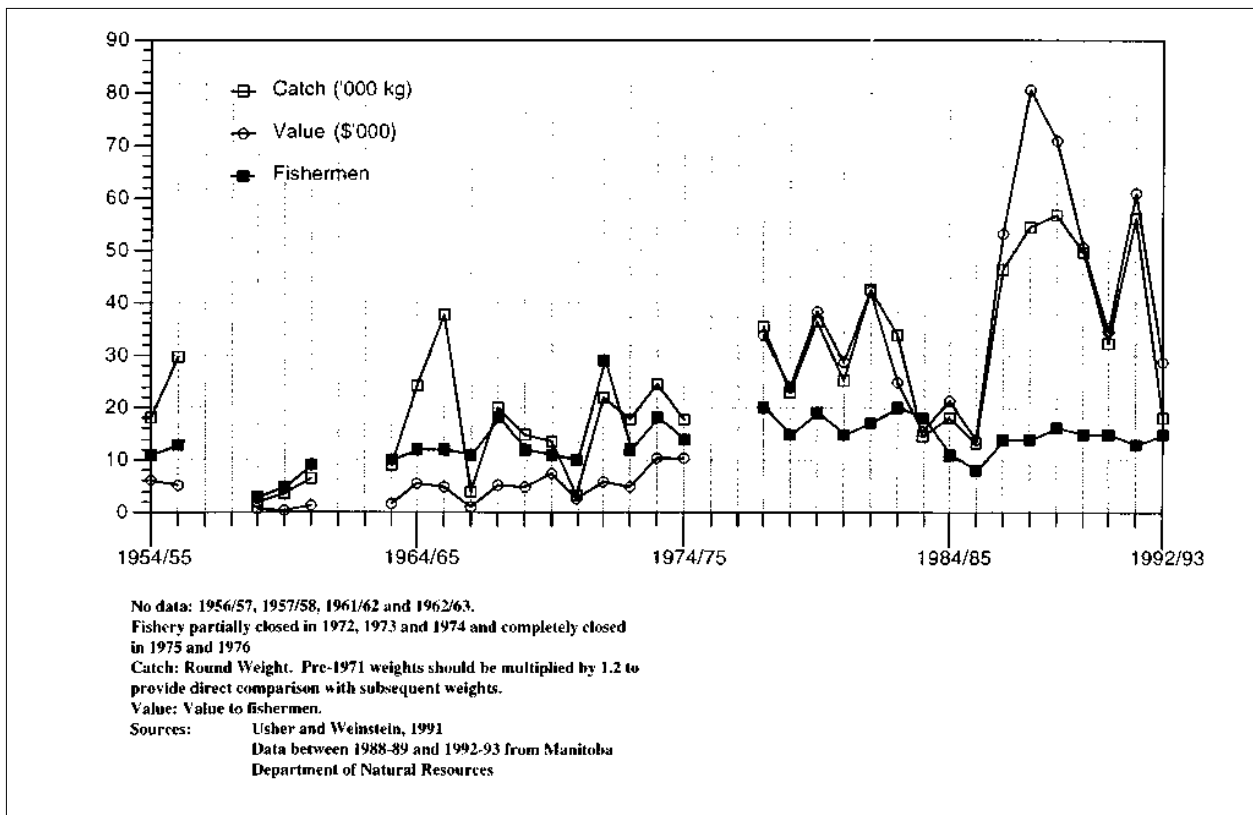


Figure 12: Split Lake Fish Harvests – 1954/55 to 1992/93.

the extent to which this is a consideration is not clear. More thorough research, analysis, and consultation with Split Lake fishermen would be required to determine how certain variables common to the northern fishery as a whole have impacted upon the fishery at Split Lake.

The establishment of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation in 1969 as the sole purchaser/marketer of fish in Manitoba has been cited as a key factor in the decline of the northern fishery after 1965.<sup>36</sup> However, production, participation and value levels for the Split Lake fishery have generally increased since 1965. The impact of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation on the Split Lake fishery is not known. Transportation costs have been noted as one of the key problems affecting northern fisheries. Provincial transport subsidies were

introduced in 1976<sup>37</sup> but the nature of the effect of this upon the First Nation is not well understood.

Another general issue mentioned in the literature is parasitic infestation of whitefish,<sup>38</sup> but, unlike other fisheries, the Split Lake commercial fishery has been able to maintain its status as a lake with export quality whitefish.

Mercury contamination, particularly in jackfish and pickerel, has also affected northern fish harvesting. For example, commercial quotas were not met in 1970/71, when the Split Lake fishery was closed early because of a concern over potential mercury contamination of fish. Over the next two years, the lake was closed all year for the same reason. It was also closed in 1975/76 and 1976/77, but for all species on these occasions.

In most cases the mercury is naturally occurring, but hydroelectric development has been

linked to higher mercury levels. The 1992 final report of the Federal Ecological Monitoring Program conducted by Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, noted that mercury levels in jackfish and pickerel were uncharacteristically high for all lakes including unflooded lakes in the program study area. It was speculated by the Federal Ecological Monitoring Program that the source of the fish mercury in Split Lake may be due to the earlier flooding of the Kelsey forebay on the upper Nelson in the 1950s.<sup>39</sup>

Figure 12 shows level of catch, value and participation for the Split Lake fishery between the mid-1950s and early 1990s. It indicates that all three variables, while fluctuating, have generally increased.

Existing data does not present a full picture of the effects of agents of change upon the commercial fishery, in particular the impacts of

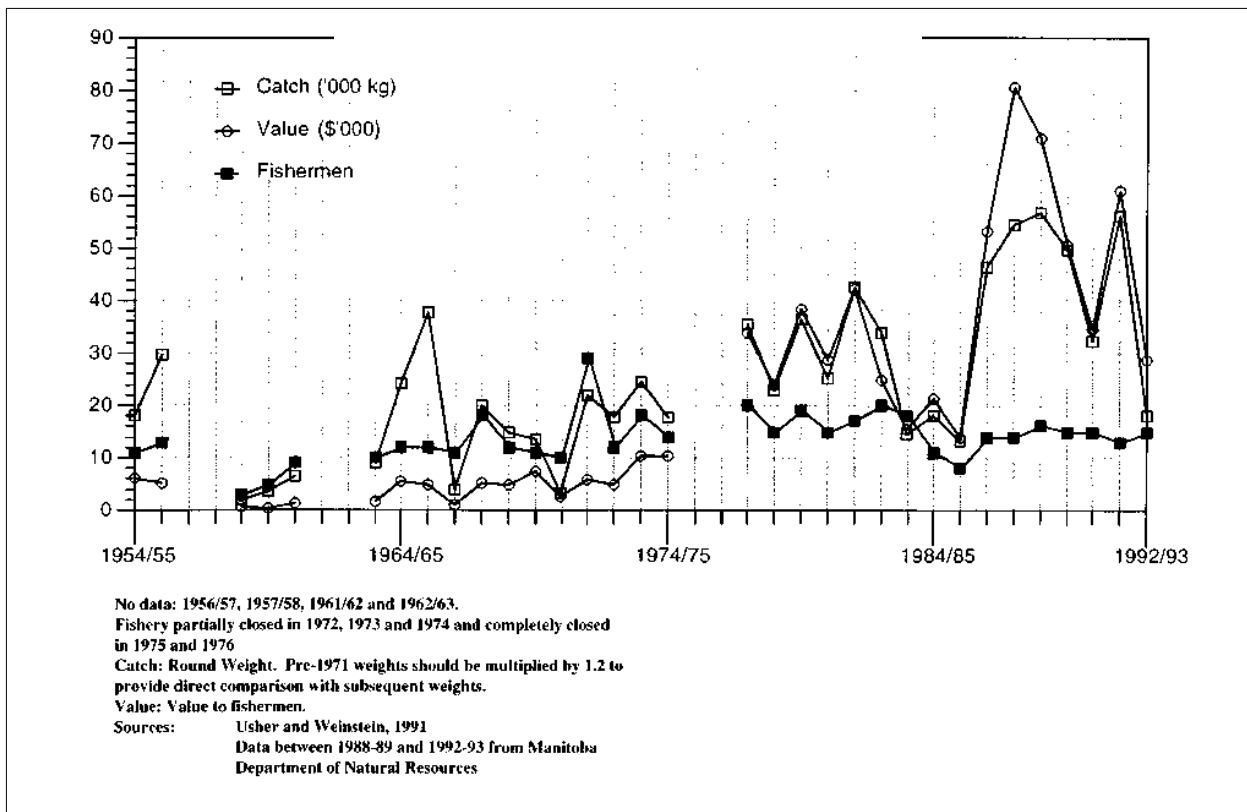


Figure 13: Split Lake Registered Trapline Zone: Value of Furs /Number of Trappers-1951/52 to 1993/94.

hydroelectric development.

According to Split Lake fishermen, the cost of fishing has increased because of the additional effort and expense required as a result of debris damaging boats, motors and nets, as well as the increased travelling distances required. These increased costs have reduced the financial return for the fishermen.

Ramsey and Patalas (1992) note that the pickerel catch has decreased by 50% since 1973, while sauger has increased by an unspecified amount. This may be due to the sediment build-up at the mouth of the Burntwood outlet into Split Lake caused by the Churchill River Diversion, but further investigation is required.<sup>40</sup>

## Trapping

The Split Lake trapping block, created during the early 1940s when the provincial registered trapline system was established in northern Manitoba, consists of 44 active traplines covering about 18,000 square miles. These traplines are registered to residents not only from Split Lake but also from Gillam, Ilford, Bird and York Landing.

Historically, many factors have affected fur harvesting, and the literature contains much useful information in this regard. Although many of the sources refer to northern trapping in general, some factors would undoubtedly have impacted upon the Split Lake Cree fur harvest, although the extent of the impact is not clear. These factors include furbearer population and disease, fires, bad weather, alternative sources of income including wage employment, and most importantly, fur prices.

After reaching high levels of economic value in the 1940s, trapping declined in the 1950s and 1960s primarily because of low fur prices for beaver. Trapping returns represented a substantially reduced portion of annual income. A recovery in the mid-1970s and early 1980s is reflected in the Split Lake harvesting data. This was likely because of higher prices for long-haired species such as lynx. In recent years, trapping has declined in value and, not surprisingly, participation, province-wide. This also appears to be the case in the Split Lake trapping block.

Trapping, requiring intensive effort, has never generated a high financial return. Reliance on alternative sources of income has been common. For example, one of the factors which precipitated the trapping slump in the 1950s, and helped foster a decline in trapping as a family activity, was the introduction after World War Two of federal relief for Indian people in Canada. By 1956, this was being paid in cash, in place of payments in kind such as food vouchers.<sup>41</sup>

Federal income maintenance support was another monetary source which deterred trappers from fur harvesting. In particular, family allowance, which was introduced nationally in 1944,<sup>42</sup> has been cited as a key factor that has adversely affected Aboriginal trapping participation in Manitoba:

*The institution of the Family Allowance system since the war, with its requirement of regular school attendance, has all but eliminated family participation in trapping.*<sup>43</sup>

The rise in school attendance by young Manitoba Aboriginals, either at reserve day schools or in residential schools off-reserve, resulted in young people not acquiring the skills and experience required for trapping, which mainly takes place in the fall and winter. To counter this loss Split Lake Cree made an effort to provide a community trapline where young people could learn trapping skills.

It is important to note that the provision of relief and other federal financial assistance was not the same all across Canada during the post-war period. It varied from region to region, partly at the discretion of Chiefs and Councils and, in particular, of the local Indian Agent.<sup>44</sup> Split Lake Elders report that the community began receiving family allowance in the mid-1950s, and social assistance, in the form of

vouchers and cash, around 1965.

Overall, the commercial value of fur harvested on the Split Lake registered trapline has generally increased since the early 1950s. The number of trappers has also increased as Figure 13 shows. Usher and Weinstein (1991) conclude that the probable reasons for this were the rapid increase in fur prices in the late 1970s, as well as the incentive provided by Manitoba Hydro's Trapline Compensation Program from 1975 to 1983.<sup>45</sup> However, both value and participation variables have been subject to wide fluctuations since the 1970s. Data also show that the beaver and muskrat harvest is not as abundant as it once was and other species like marten have assumed more importance.

However, the existing data do not capture the full impact that changed conditions have had on the trapping activities of Split Lake Cree. For example, trappers have incurred increased costs and expenses because of travel difficulties caused by hydroelectric development, particularly slush ice. These additional costs have to be considered in any determination of the value of the fur to the trapper. Unfortunately, such data are not available.

Additionally, as Usher and Weinstein point out, existing fur value records do not give a reliable indication of the real effects hydroelectric development has had on actual harvests or on the population of any particular species of furbearer, as they combine harvest and price changes. Nor do the records measure other factors which affect harvesting levels, such as customary use arrangements and forest fires. They also note potential inaccuracies in the existing numbers.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

Wildlife harvesting, in both the commercial and domestic sectors, continues to be actively pursued by the Split Lake Cree. Numerous changing conditions have affected the extent and success of these activities. However, as far as Split Lake Cree First Nation is concerned, it is Manitoba Hydro's projects that have affected these activities most negatively. The effects are hard to determine scientifically because of the limitations of available data, in particular the lack of indicators to measure real, but as yet unassessed, impacts. Given the continuing and even increasing use of wildlife and fish resources by Split Lake Cree, and the probability of future impacting hydroelectric projects, a major challenge for both the Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro will be to develop baseline information which will allow for the monitoring of existing impacts and for the discernment of anticipated impacts from future development.



## Appendix 2

### Summary of Northern Flood Agreement Benefits

#### Overview

Various dimensions of the substantive provisions and implementation process of the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) have been discussed throughout this study. Even though any categorization of these matters may well be inadequate, there is a reasonably sensible division that can be made by looking both at the experience related to the original Northern Flood Agreement, dating between 1975 when Manitoba Hydro first made compensation payments and 1992, and at the experience since the 1992 NFA Implementation Agreement. The other sections of this paper have addressed in some detail the process related to negotiating the two agreements. The following is a brief summary of the substantive terms of both agreements, including the payments made.

#### 1975 to 1992

Beginning in 1975, Manitoba Hydro began to institute compensatory and remedial measures to offset the adverse impacts of its hydroelectric development projects on the Split Lake Cree. The informal basis of these early payments was replaced with a contractual arrangement in 1977/78, the Northern Flood Agreement.

The NFA obliged Manitoba Hydro, Canada and Manitoba to take a broad range of actions, in the form of remedial, compensatory and developmental measures, in return for the use of Cree reserve lands for the Manitoba Hydro projects, and for the damages expected to be caused to First Nation rights and interests, including those of the Split Lake Cree. Entered into by the governments and Manitoba Hydro as a result of pressure from the First Nations of the Northern Flood Committee, the NFA promised that appropriate actions would be taken by these parties to deal with any concerns of the signatory First Nations that might arise and which were attributable to the projects.

The agreement was couched in quite broad language leaving very significant room for differences of interpretation. Binding arbitration provisions were written into the NFA to deal with any disputes which might arise. The NFA arbitrator was given very broad plenary power to fashion equitable remedies leaving no party worse off than if the projects had not been built. Perhaps not surprisingly in retrospect, given the matters at issue and the potential financial liability of Hydro and the governments, the agreement proved to be incapable of effective implementation. Arbitration cases proliferated to the point that even the extensive powers of the arbitrator could not hope to resolve the many matters in dispute.

Without trying to attribute responsibility for this impasse, it needs to be pointed out that the NFA itself actually made provision for all of the matters about which Split Lake Cree and the other First Nations were concerned. At no time did Split Lake Cree, or the Northern Flood Committee on its behalf, seek more extensive measures than were contained in the original agreement. Nonetheless, by the late 1980s all of the parties to the NFA were convinced that a new comprehensive negotiation was in order to arrive at mutually agreed terms for its implementation.

From 1975 up to the time that the Split Lake Cree NFA Implementation Agreement was signed in June 1992, each of the other parties had paid significant money to Split Lake Cree, as is set out in the financial schedule to the 1992 agreement. Specifically, Canada had spent \$11,860,000 inclusive of the Article 6 water and sewer initiative; Manitoba had contributed \$1,240,000; and Manitoba Hydro some \$3,160,000; for total payments of \$16,260,000.

### Mitigation Programs

The following are some of the main compensation and remedial measures included in the Manitoba Hydro payments:

- The 1975 to 1983 trapline compensation program helped Split Lake Cree trappers to attain pre-diversion trapping returns by providing cash payments, as well as covering incidental expenses for cabin construction and transportation improvements. According to Manitoba Hydro, the program covered 15 traplines, with 33 trappers participating, with total payments between 1975 and 1983 of \$194,441.85.

- In 1989, in a six year settlement of Claim 32, Manitoba Hydro, with the support of Manitoba, provided \$239,325.77 as trapping compensation retroactive to 1984, and an additional \$735,000 to fund a trapping development program between 1989 and 1995. This included a capital component, grubstake funding, equipment assistance, access improvement and management costs. Manitoba Hydro also spent \$225,000 to clear trails and improve access in the Split Lake resource area.
- As a partial settlement of Claim 97, Manitoba Hydro funded a fisheries development program costing \$407,389.72. This was comprised of capital requirements and subsidies for costs incurred as a result of damage to equipment and nets, caused by debris.
- Manitoba Hydro also spent \$135,747.40 for remedial works at Split Lake, mainly for clearing debris and portage improvements.
- Between 1975 and 1992, Manitoba Hydro spent \$146,372.09 on compensation to individuals for damages to motors, docks and other property losses, and in a settlement for a drowning.

### 1992 Agreement

On June 24, 1992, Split Lake Cree First Nation, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba and Canada signed the Split Lake NFA Implementation Agreement, which provided for an agreed implementation of all terms of the original NFA, and the settlement of outstanding arbitration claims.

The financial terms of the agreement provided that an additional total of \$47,370,000 would be paid by Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. Hydro's share of the compensation was \$21,500,000 in bonds issued at yearly intervals between 1991 and 1995, advance payments of \$4,250,000 in cash, and \$4,170,000 in cash shared with Manitoba. Manitoba contributed \$1,700,000 in addition to the payment shared with Hydro. Canada agreed to make annual payments between 1992 and 1995 totalling \$15,750,000.

The First Nation settled \$41,420,000 in various accounts of the Tataskweyak Trust, which is held for the benefit of, and managed by, the Split Lake Cree. Of this total, almost \$12,000,000 was allocated for immediate development measures over the first several years following the signing of the agreement. The remainder of the funds, a total of more than \$29,400,000, will be held as continuing capital of the Trust, divided into accounts for the following purposes, in the following amounts:

- |                                   |              |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| • Implementation                  | \$3,858,000  |
| • Environmental Monitoring        | \$1,508,000  |
| • Resource Compensation           | \$10,857,000 |
| • Remedial Works                  | \$12,996,000 |
| • Economic and Social Development | \$12,201,000 |

The new reserve and titled lands under the agreement provide a significant amount of land located at strategic locations within the Split Lake resource area. The entitlement to new reserve land, which amounted to 6,231 acres under the original NFA, was increased to about 37,500 acres, consisting of two blocks, the larger along Assean Lake, contiguous to the existing reserve, and a much smaller block at Waskaiowaka Lake. The titled lands, which are held by the Split Lake Cree Land Corporation on behalf of the First Nation, consist of a total of 2,800 acres of land located in 38 separate parcels on 22 different water bodies within the Split Lake resource area. The total acreage of new reserve and titled lands amounts to about 40,300 acres of additional lands owned and controlled by the Split Lake Cree First Nation.

In addition to the financial and land provisions, the 500 page long 1992 NFA Implementation Agreement contained a variety of other provisions to fully implement the terms of the NFA. These include:

- the definition of the post project water regime on all hydro project influenced waterways in the Split Lake resource area, setting standards for monitoring and deviations, processes to deal with future deviations, and joint planning with regard to possible Hydro development of Birthday and Gull rapids including an environmental review of the effects of existing development;

- formal recognition of the Split Lake resource area, comprising almost 7% of the total area of the province, by Manitoba and Split Lake Cree, and establishment of a Resource Management Board to undertake joint planning and management of all lands and resources in the resource area;
- provisions for the establishment of a four party Environmental Monitoring Committee, and definition of roles with regard to continuing cooperative monitoring of effects of the Hydro project, including the establishment of the Tataskweyak Environmental Monitoring Agency;
- economic and social development measures, including personal compensation arrangements, and a definition of responsibilities providing the lead roles to Split Lake Cree through, among other vehicles, the Tataskweyak Development Corporation;
- resource compensation arrangements for commercial and domestic resource harvesters, including the establishment of an Elders' Tribunal to determine appropriate compensation for adverse effects;
- provision for the financing of necessary remedial works and measures, and the operation and maintenance costs related to such works;
- arrangements for the comprehensive implementation of the agreement, defining the lead Split Lake Cree responsibility and accountability standards to members, and establishing the ongoing four party Executive Implementation Committee;
- arrangements for dealing with those Indian moneys paid under the agreement for the taking and use of reserve lands, including the commitment by Canada to pass legislation to ensure that such moneys would be under the control of the Tataskweyak Trust rather than Canada;
- provisions governing assured continuing access by Split Lake Cree to normal program funding from Canada and Manitoba;
- arrangements to assure continuing good faith efforts by Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro, with the cooperation of Canada and Manitoba, to provide access to Split Lake Cree members and businesses with regard to future project employment, with agreement that if disputes arise such disputes will be addressed under the contractual provisions of the NFA;
- arrangements between Split Lake Cree and Manitoba Hydro to enable the future establishment of a Split Lake Cree electrical distribution company, if feasible;

- releases and indemnities among the parties, with respect to the original NFA provisions and outstanding arbitration claims, and definition of the continuing Manitoba Hydro liabilities under the terms of the NFA for:
  - a) personal injury and death caused by the project,
  - b) deviations from the post project water regime caused by the project,
  - c) unknown and unforeseen adverse effects caused by the project,
  - d) disabilities, injury or death resulting from eating mercury contaminated foods, and
  - e) future obligations of Manitoba Hydro related to project employment;
- mechanisms for settling any future disputes among the parties or within Split Lake Cree First Nation related to the 1992 agreement.

Even though the 1992 NFA Implementation Agreement is in its infancy compared to its total life, which will last as long as the Hydro project operates, all parties to the agreement are pleased with the implementation efforts to date. There have not yet been any disputes among any of the parties regarding the meaning of its provisions and attendant obligations. A further indication of its perceived success as a means to fully implement the 1977/78 NFA is that all of the other four NFA First Nations have either signed or are in the process of negotiating similar agreements with Manitoba Hydro, Canada and Manitoba.

## Endnotes

- 1 Split Lake Cree Elders and Adults interviews, translated into English from Cree, March 1995.
- 2 J. I. Keeper, Executive Director, NFC, *The Northern Flood Agreement as an Instrument for Social and Economic Equity*, Presentation to a Conference on the Environment, Montreal, November 1988.
- 3 Information in this section is substantially from Historical Resources Branch, Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1989, *The Oldtimers: First Peoples of the Land of the North Wind*, pp. 63, 75 and 76; and S. L. Hill, *Fox Lake First Nation Land Use and Occupancy: Living Memory of the Fox Lake Cree*, Practicum Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Natural Resource Management, University of Manitoba, April 1993, pp. 38-39.
- 4 Except where noted, information in this section is from Hilderman, Witty, Crosby, Hanna and Associates, *Split Lake Community Plan*, March 1985, p. 160; Hill, pp. 27-37; Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., *Keewatinook Okimowin: Mechanisms and Solutions*, A Presentation to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, November 1993, pp. 9 and 13; E. Ross, *Beyond the River and the Bay*, University of Toronto Press, 1970, Map 6; G. Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, University of Toronto Press, 1984, pp. 22-44.
- 5 J. E. Foster, *The Home Guard Cree and the Hudson's Bay Company: The First Hundred Years, Native People Native Lands*, Carleton University Press, 1992.
- 6 Information in this section is from Hilderman, Witty, p. 167; D. S. Tessier, *A Social and Cultural Study of Split Lake, Manitoba, With a Special Emphasis on Education*, 1979, pp. 29-32; Ross, pp. 97 and 111; Hill, pp. 38-39; and from Mrs. Rev. G. Cowley, 1950. *History of Split Lake Mission*, reprinted, Spring 1990.
- 7 Parts of this section dealing with the background to Treaty No. 5 are from Hilderman, Witty, pp. 164, 168 and 169; the paragraphs dealing with the terms of the treaty are from Indian and Northern Affairs, *Treaty No. 5 Between Her Majesty the Queen and the Sauleaux and Swampy Cree Tribes of Indians at Berens River and Norway House with Adhesions*, 1969, Queens Printer, pp. 15-16.
- 8 Tessier, p. 164.
- 9 Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is based on Split Lake Cree Elders and Adults interviews. Also see Tessier, pp. 161, 173, 176 and 215-260; S. L. Hill, *Split Lake Cree Traditional Land Use Mapping Project*, interview with Split Lake Cree Elders, February 16, 1994; and Cowley.
- 10 Hilderman, Witty, p. 169.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Treaty No. 5, pp. 20-23.
- 13 W. C. Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, University of Toronto Press, 1957, p. 325.
- 14 Dr. M. Clearsky, physician, Split Lake nursing station. June 1995. Personal communication.
- 15 G. Buckingham, *Thompson: A City and Its People*, 1988, p. 2.
- 16 Morton, p. 332.
- 17 Statistics Canada, 1921 Census.
- 18 Hilderman, Witty, p. 166.
- 19 Constitution Act, 1930, 20-21 George V (Imp.) c. 26.
- 20 Elders and Adults interviews; Tessier, pp. 215-260; Cowley.
- 21 Underwood, McLellan and Associates Limited, *Community Study for Split Lake Indian Reserve*, 1966, p. 14. Based upon 1966 population of 368, using a growth rate of 60% per decade.
- 22 The history of hydroelectric development in this and subsequent paragraphs in this subsection are derived from G. Cowie, *Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba: A Critical Analysis*, A Major Paper Submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Environmental Studies, York University, 1993, p. 8; Elders and Adults interviews; and Manitoba Hydro, *History and First Order Effects of Manitoba Hydro Projects in the Split Lake Cree Study Area*, prepared for Split Lake Cree - Manitoba Hydro Joint Study Group, 1996.
- 23 Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is based on Elders and Adults Interviews; Manitoba Hydro, *History and First Order Effects*; Cowie, pp. 9-12, 27.
- 24 Underwood, McLellan and Associates, p. 13.
- 25 Morton, pp. 331, 394, 401, 457.
- 26 Buckingham, p. 10.
- 27 Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is based on Split Lake Cree Elders and Adults interviews; and Manitoba Hydro, *History and First Order Effects*.

- 28 Reserve population is from Hilderman, Witty, p. 114.
- 29 *Commission of Inquiry into Manitoba Hydro*, Final Report, December 1979, p. 220.
- 30 Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is based on Elders and Adults interviews.
- 31 For example, see Hilderman, Witty, p. 196.
- 32 Information on the impact of these floods is from Split Lake Cree Negotiating Team, *Adverse Effects Related to Summer and Fall Floods on Split Lake*, November 1995.
- 33 Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is based on Elders and Adults interviews.
- 34 Usher and Weinstein, *Towards Assessing the Effects of Lake Winnipeg Regulation and Churchill River Diversion on Resource Harvesting in Native Communities in Northern Manitoba*, prepared for the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 1991, p. 5.
- 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-26.
- 36 D. J. Green and A. J. Derkson, *The Past, Present and Projected Demands on Manitoba's Fresh Water Fish Resources*, prepared for the Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Branch, 1984, p. 35.
- 37 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.
- 39 Environment Canada and Department of Fisheries and Oceans, *Federal Ecological Monitoring Program*, Final Report, Volume 2, Chapter 4, 1992, p. 9.
- 40 D. Ramsey and J. Patalas, *Impact of the LWR and CRD on Fish Populations in the Rat-Burntwood and Nelson River Systems*, prepared by Agassiz North Associates Ltd. for the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources, July 1992, pp. 86-87.
- 41 N. B. Hawthorn, *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada*, prepared for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 1966, p. 319.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 321.
- 43 S. Jamieson and H. Hawthorn, *The Role of Native People in Economic Development in Northern Manitoba, 1960-1975*, prepared for Committee on Northern Manitoba's Economic Future, 1962, p. 102.
- 44 Hawthorn, p. 320.
- 45 Usher and Weinstein, p. 54.
- 46 *Ibid.*, pp. 53 and 55.

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Diary by Cha-chay way te.  
May 1906-

2 of Nelsons River  
Tā-tā-que or Split Lake

La-pu-tche was tek gen

Wec-poo-hoo or Burnt wood river  
Boo cut tim L

Wec-chagan L

Nees too y daw L

Wep-pik can new L

Pik-wat as tau thake am mook r  
Chatham's  
Pretty prin a ut tom L

Bund  
Wec-pooe hoo L

Oo ta he on way Row th the am man  
Cliff's Ho.

Oo sis quay kam mo  
Pim mih in ine cap kay 2 miles  
Na ha sha um nit tpt too  
Deep asish  
Laylan Leths

Pish wop-pit com

Pit-tus-quay-quay-ha-gan

Pim mit chik oo mow

Seck a min na how win  
Mr. Charles

Wec-husk  
Robt's Spense

Mauch woss te quan

His is man lake bay  
Tide  
Little fish lake  
Portage Island  
Brook river

Red lake

2 mile easy

Hot to tit too

Min not pit tek quoo or nup  
Laylan lake

Pim river

Moore lake  
Laylan

Ethin ne oo toos quan

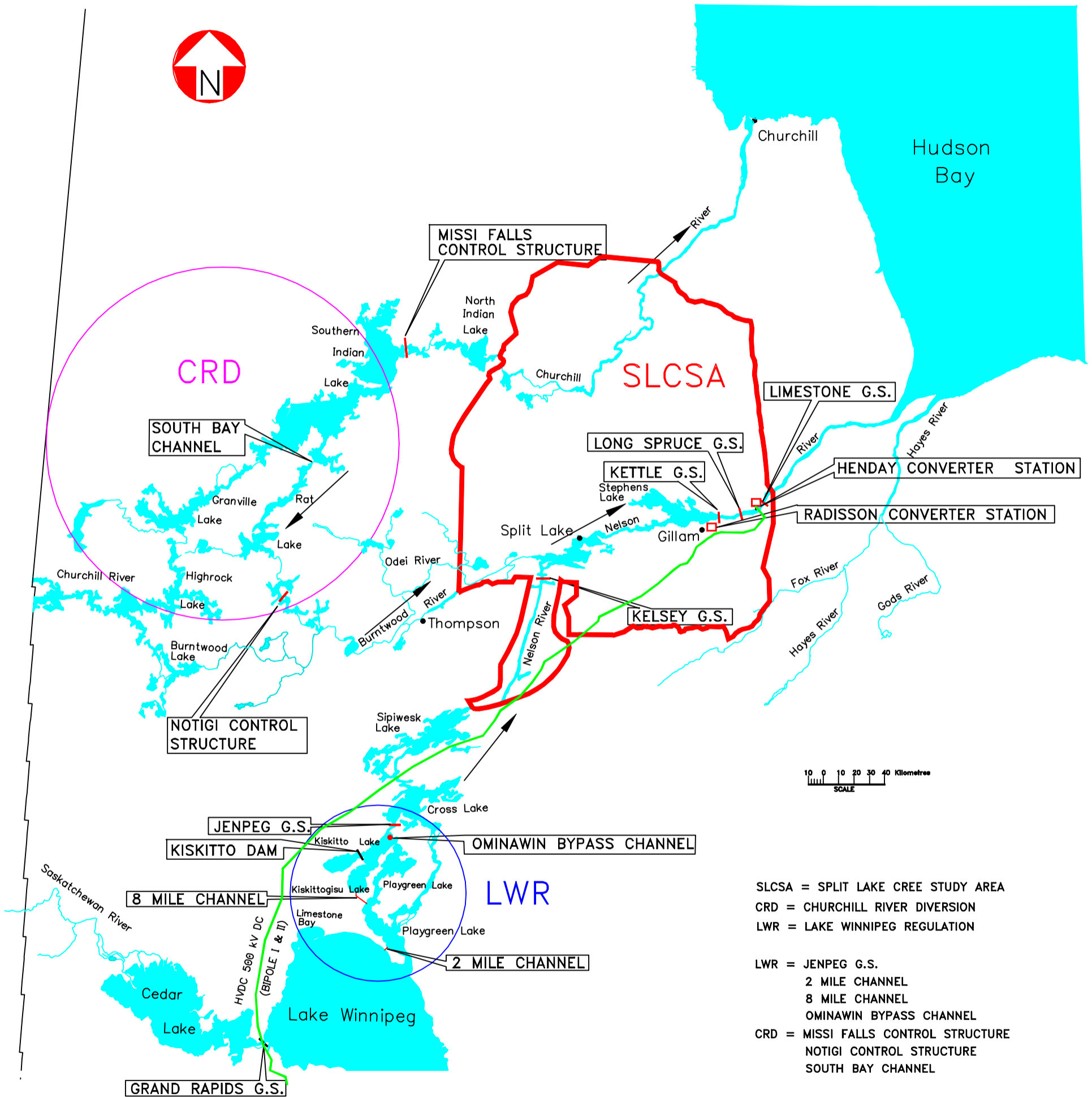
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Cranberry Portage  
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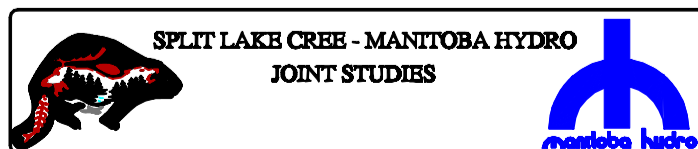
Combaland Ho

N Branch of Kati-huwan

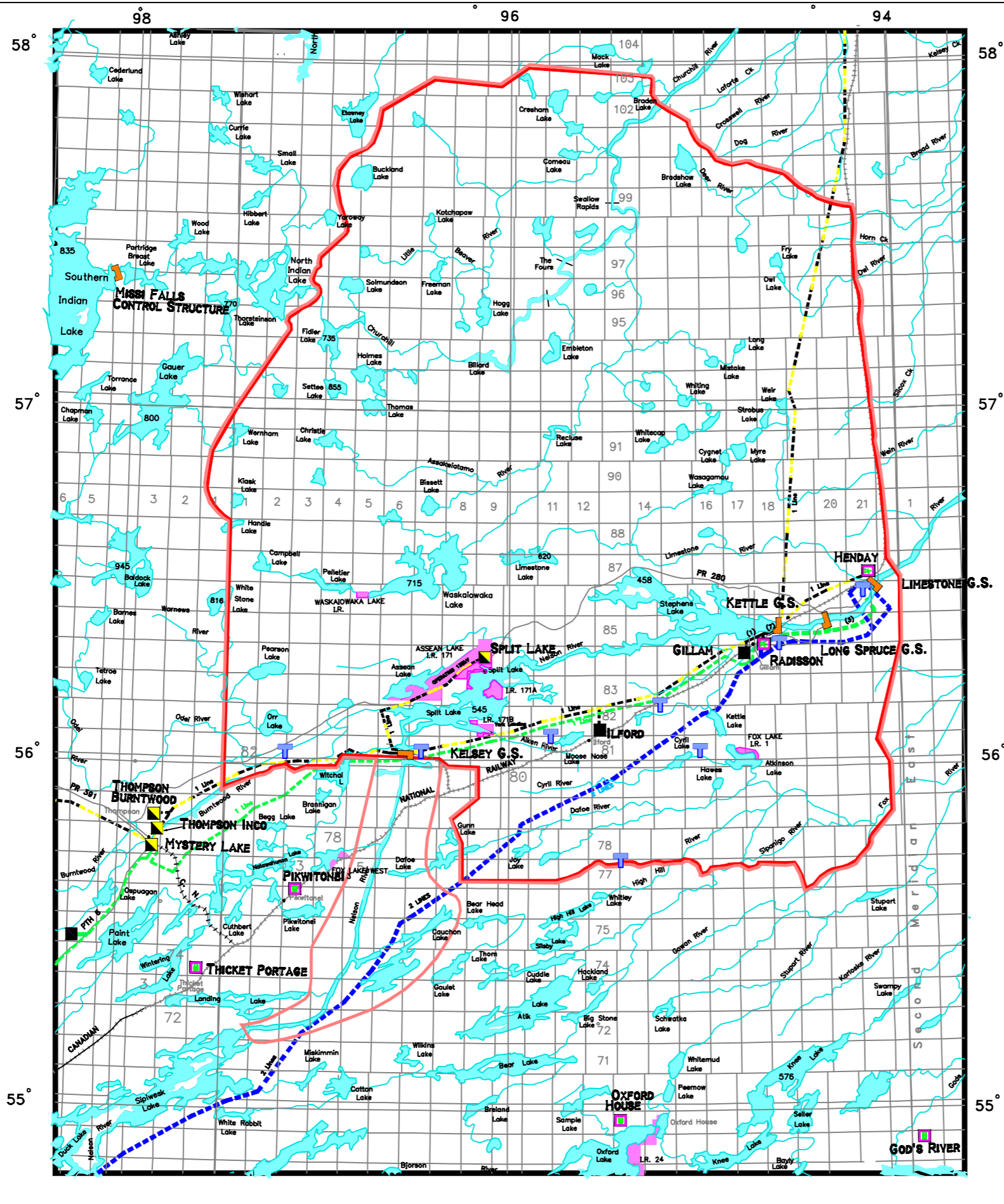
# Principal Manitoba Hydro Projects Affecting the Split Lake Cree Study Area



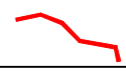
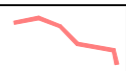











THIS FIGURE FORMS A PART OF THE REPORT "HISTORY AND FIRST ORDER EFFECTS OF MANITOBA HYDRO PROJECTS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES IN THE SPLIT LAKE CREE STUDY AREA - 1996"



00195-11110-0031\_00



LEGEND:

-  BOUNDARY OF SPLIT LAKE TRAPLINE ZONE
-  BOUNDARY OF STUDY AREA
-  HYDRO GENERATING STATIONS
-  DIESEL PLANTS
-  CONVERTER STATIONS
-  TRANSMISSION SUBSTATIONS
-  STANDARD SUBSTATIONS
-  500 KV DC TRANSMISSION LINE
-  230 KV AC TRANSMISSION LINE
-  138 KV AC TRANSMISSION LINE
-  INDIAN RESERVES ( I.R. )
-  CONTROL STRUCTURE
-  TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWER



NOTES:

- (1) BASE MAP FROM 1: 2,000,000 PROVINCIAL MAP
- (2) LOCATIONS ARE APPROXIMATE
- (3) SUBSTATION & TRANSMISSION LINE INFORMATION BASED ON 1994 MANITOBA HYDRO SYSTEM MAP

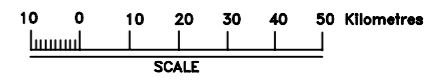
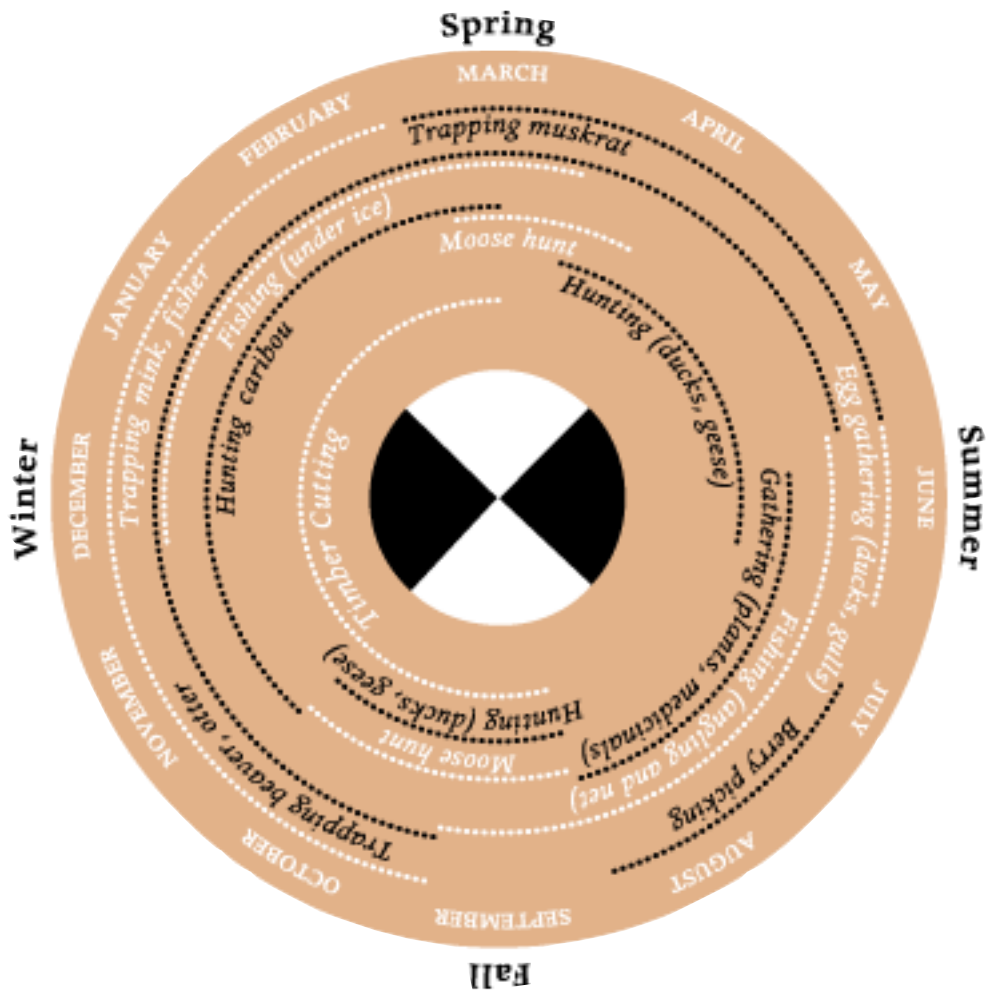


FIGURE 1

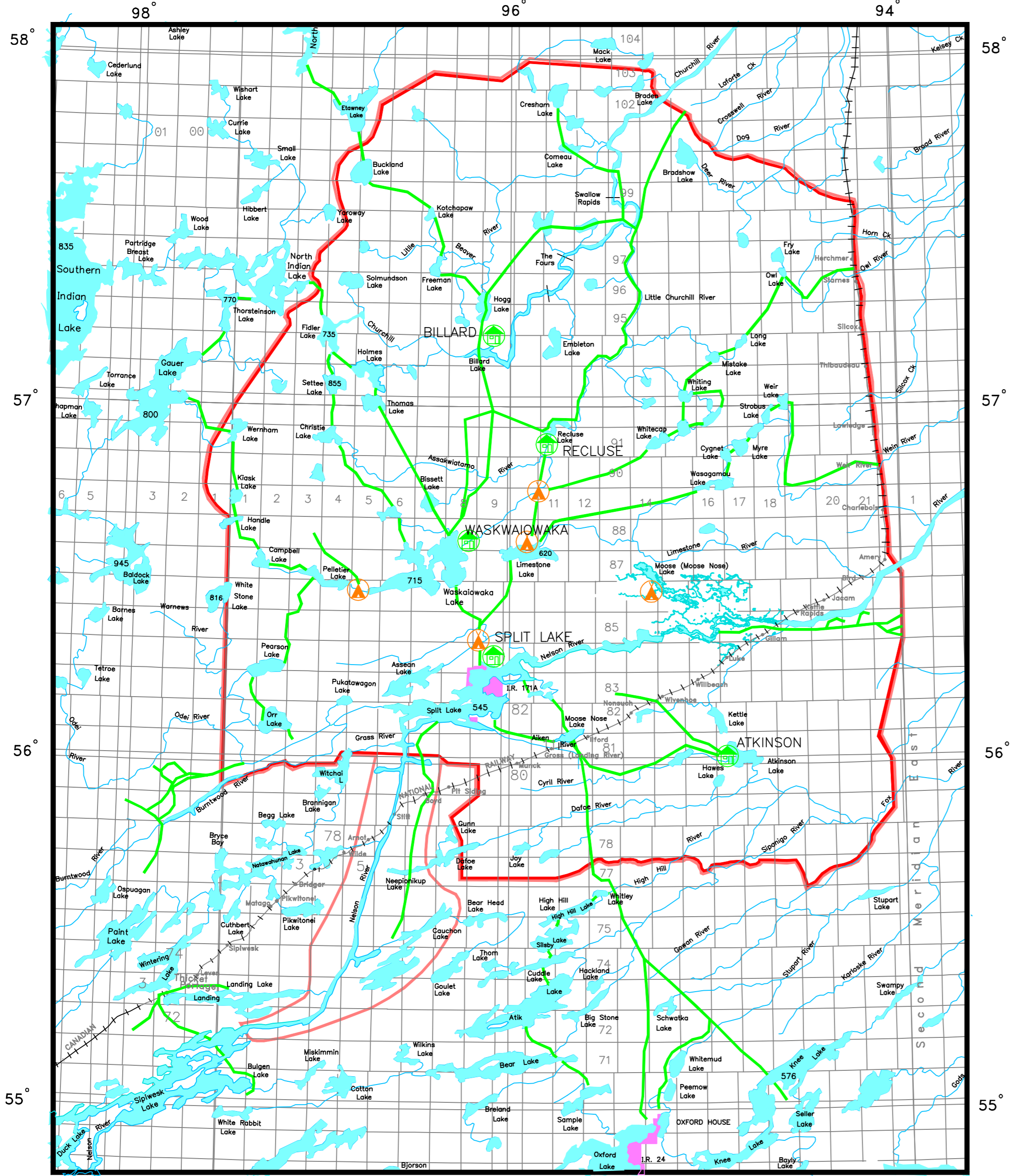
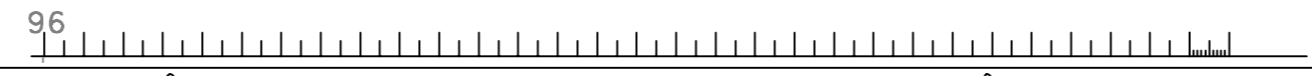
THIS FIGURE FORMS A PART OF THE REPORT "SPLIT LAKE CREE ANALYSIS OF CHANGE - 1996"

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GENERATION PLANNING DEPARTMENT					
POST-PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW MANITOBA HYDRO PROJECTS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES IN THE SPLIT LAKE CREE STUDY AREA					
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CHECK	G.N.C.				
SCALE	S.N.C.				
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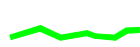
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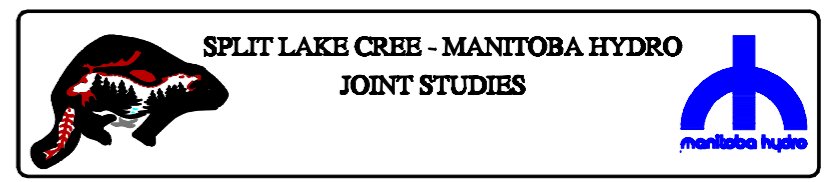
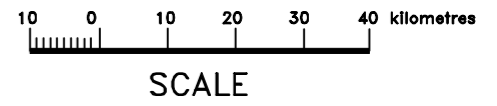


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**LEGEND:**

-  BOUNDARY OF SPLIT LAKE TRAPLINE ZONE
-  BOUNDARY OF STUDY AREA
-  INDIAN RESERVES ( I.R. )
-  MAJOR SETTLEMENTS OF SPLIT LAKE CREE (SUPPLY POSTS)
-  OUTCAMPS
-  MAJOR TRAILS/ROUTES



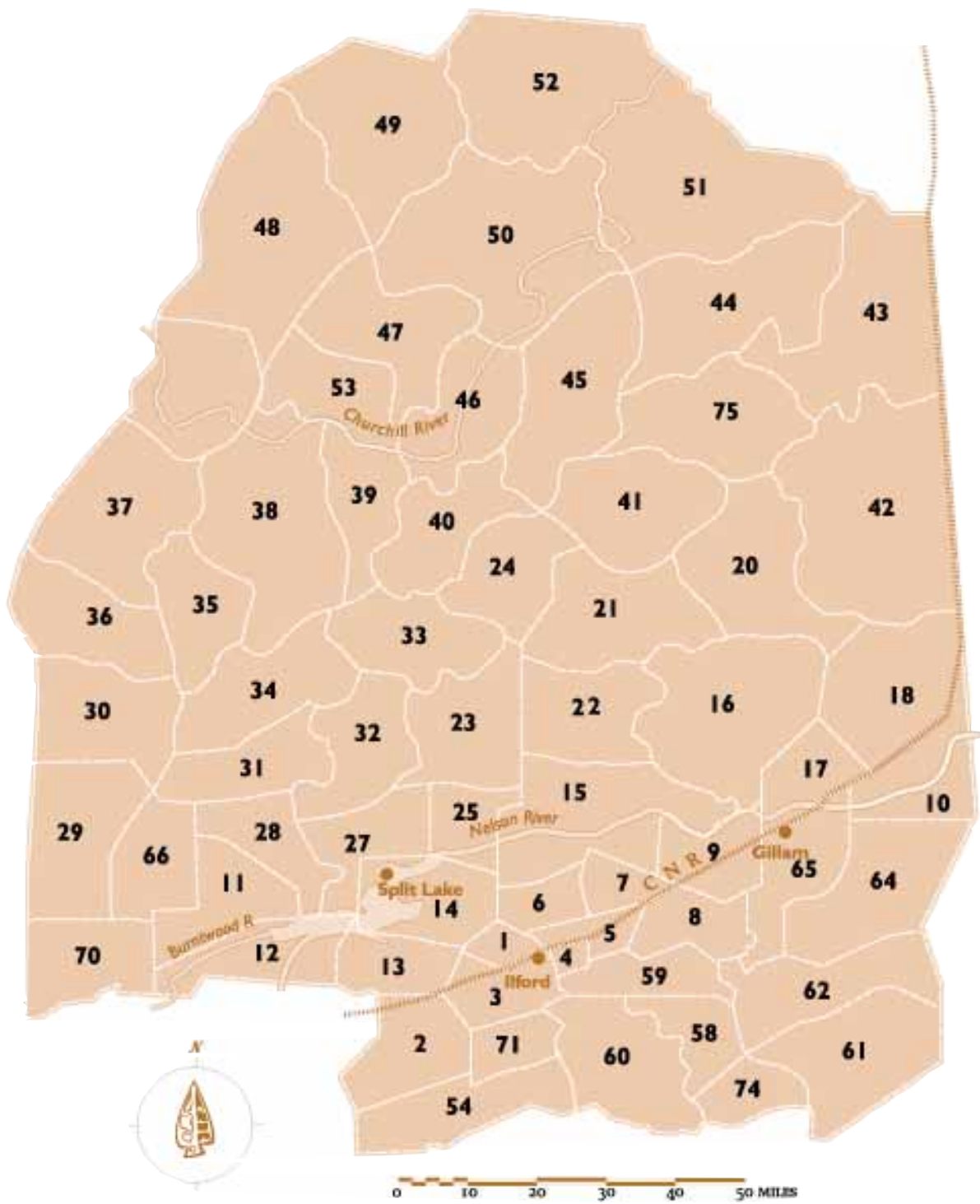
**NOTES:**

- (1) BASE MAP FROM 1: 2,000,000 PROVINCIAL MAP
- (2) TRAIL INFORMATION PROVIDED BY M. GARSON & J. GARSON OF SPLIT LAKE CREE

**FIGURE 6**

NOTED	NO.	DATE	REVISIONS	BY	CHKD.	APP.				
MANITOBA HYDRO POWER PLANNING & OPERATIONS DIVISION GENERATION PLANNING DEPARTMENT SPLIT LAKE CREE TRADITIONAL USE AREA MAJOR SETTLEMENTS, OUTCAMPS TRAILS AND ROUTES (CIRCA LATE 1920s)										
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THIS FIGURE FORMS A PART OF THE REPORT  
"SPLIT LAKE CREE ANALYSIS OF CHANGE" - 1996



*Split Lake Registered Trapline Zone*