



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



Isaac Beardy's Cabin.

CHANGE AND DAMAGE TO THE WATER, LAND AND PEOPLE

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

 WAYNE REDHEAD

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

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

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

 WAYNE REDHEAD

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



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

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

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

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

We have struggled to adapt to ongoing changes in the land



We expect Keeyask to add to the changes



Connor Merrick

FLORA BEARDY

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

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

DONNA SAUNDERS

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

WAYNE REDHEAD

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

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

EVELYN BEARDY

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



 DOREEN SAUNDERS

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

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

WATER – THE QUALITY OF WATER AFFECTS EVERYTHING

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

 EDWIN BEARDY

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



Phillip Beardy

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

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



Madeline Wastesicoot

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

 DONNA SAUNDERS

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

 EMILY KEMATCH

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

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



CHURCHILL RIVER DIVERSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

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

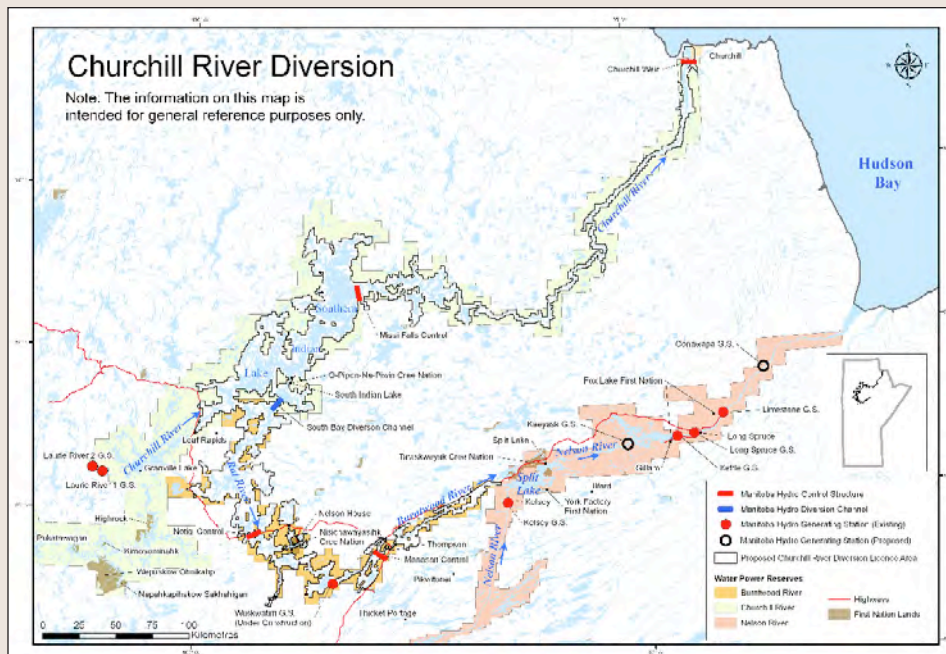



Photo: Government of Manitoba (http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/licensing/pdf/crd_map_web.pdf)




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

 DOROTHY MORAND

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

 LISA ANN SPENCE

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

 FLORA BEARDY

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





Children at Goose Camp, Cheryl Flett (right).

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

 YVONNE BEARDY

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

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

 TED BLAND

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

 THERESA BEARDY

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

EMILY KEMATCH

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

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

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

ERIC SAUNDERS

"The quality of water affects everything."

LOUISA CONSTANT

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

LATISHA ANAKA (AGE 14)

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

YFFN YOUTH

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

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



Darcy Wastesicoot

FISH AND FISHING

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





Snaring Pickerel at Aiken River portage.

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

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

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

 DOROTHY REDHEAD

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

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

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

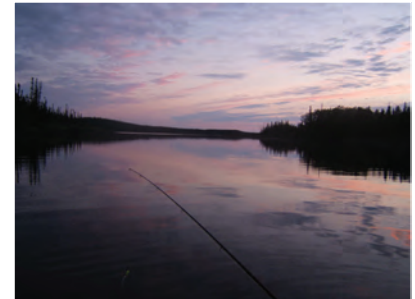
 RODDY OUSKAN

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



 YFFN YOUTH

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



 ISAAC BEARDY

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

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

 TED BLAND

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

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

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



SAKAHEGAN NUMA'O (LAKE STURGEON)



Stanley Spence

*"It is necessary
to take care of
this fish"*

- Obediah Wastesicoot


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

 GILBERT BEARDY

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

 ISAAC BEARDY

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

 OBEDIAH WASTESICOOT

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

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





John Saunders Jr.

BIRDS, ANIMALS AND PLANTS

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

 WAYNE REDHEAD

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

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

 DOUGLAS CHAPMAN

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

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



Moose

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



Caribou have been affected by past hydro-electric development

ATTIK (CARIBOU)

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

☞ EMILY KEMATCH

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

☞ YVONNE BEARDY

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

☞ ISAAC BEARDY

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

☞ GILBERT BEARDY

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

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



Hunting caribou at York Factory.



Isaiah Saunders showing kids how to skin a caribou.

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

 YFFN YOUTH

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

 DOUGLAS CHAPMAN

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

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

- YFFN Youth



Wekās

TRAVEL (PIMOTAYHOWIN) – ICE AND WATER

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

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

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

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

- Douglas Chapman

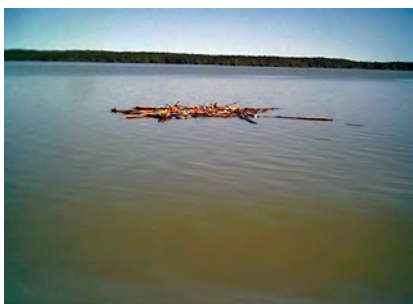




Trees falling along shore.



Winter Road.



Debris on Split Lake.

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

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

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

☞ JOHNNY SAUNDERS

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

☞ RODDY OUSKAN

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





York Landing (Kawechiwasiik) Shoreline.

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

 AMELIA SAUNDERS

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

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

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

 ERIC SAUNDERS

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



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

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



Pukituhokansik Sipi channel under low water conditions.





Bareass Beach, Present.

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

 DOREEN SAUNDERS

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

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





Bareass Beach, Past, late 1980's.

SHORELINE EROSION, ACCESS AND COMMUNITY PLACES

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

 WAYNE REDHEAD

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

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

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





Joe Ouskan's boat.

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

- Martina Saunders

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

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

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

 KIMBERLY DANIELS

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



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

 EVELYN BEARDY

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

 NELLIE REDHEAD

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

KEEYASK EFFECTS: PREDICTIONS, SKEPTICISM AND UNCERTAINTY

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



ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The Ferry Landing

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

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

Pukituhokansik Sipi

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



Ferry landing under high water.



Ferry landing under high water.



Pukituhokansik Sipi Under Low Conditions.



Pukituhokansik Sipi Under High Conditions.



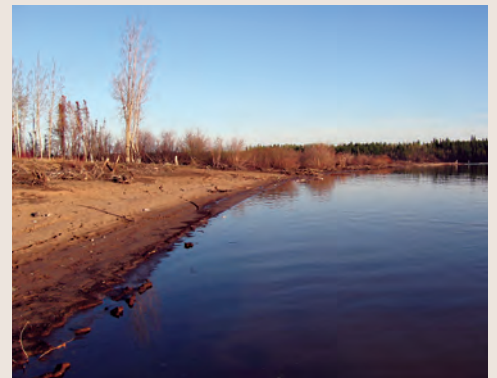
nets, pick berries, walk, canoe, and hunt waterfowl, moose and caribou. The vegetation and habitat in the river have been changed, cabins have had to be moved back from the shore and access has been disrupted by changing water levels.

Sandy Beach

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



Sandy Beach, low water.



Sandy Beach, high water.



Mucky ground at Sandy Beach.





Split Lake, Manitoba.

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

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

These predictions give us little to no comfort.

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

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



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

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

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

 WAYNE REDHEAD

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

 OBEDIAH WASTESICOOT

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

 JASMINE WASTESICOOT

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

 MIRANDA MOOSE, GRADE 8

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

 DOUGLAS CHAPMAN

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

"The Elders expect more flooding"
- Douglas Chapman

 CATHERINE BEARDY

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



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

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

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

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

