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KAYTESIPIMOTATANWUK

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WECHAYWAKANTOWIN

**The Way Forward**





Roy Redhead and Wayne Redhead

## THE KEYYASK PARTNERSHIP

KEYYASK WE CHAY WA KAN TO WIN

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Arthur Beardy

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





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

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

## A PARTNERSHIP TO BE PROVEN

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



## BALLOT

### JOINT KEYYASK DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

As a voter of the York Factory First Nation:

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

YES

NO

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



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



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

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

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

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

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





Ballot for the YFFN referendum on the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement, March 26, 2009 (Cree Language).

newsletters, created a website, distributed full copies of the JKDA and AEA, and prepared our own 'plain language summary' of the JKDA to help our members understand the agreements.

In addition to the information meetings our members were encouraged to access our website and Future Development Office. Despite our attempts to simplify the materials at the community information meetings, understanding such agreements and reading these lengthy documents was challenging for many of our members. Bear in mind what we stressed at the outset - we are a people with an oral tradition.

*"They should write it easier for people to understand."*

*- YFFN Member*

 YFFN MEMBER

"We don't have information given to us to understand it, only a book and high-level information and it's not simple, direct answers to our questions. We got a big book to read and we can't take it in, so it's the same as not communicating."

 YFFN MEMBER

"We had to get a lawyer to understand the book [the JKDA]. They should write it easier for people to understand."

But at the same time, it was an important process for our community to go through. With the assistance of our legal advisors, we worked hard to inform ourselves, understand and



clearly communicate content and meaning of the JKDA and AEA.

 DONNA SAUNDERS

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

 AMELIA SAUNDERS

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

 TED BLAND

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

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



Johnson Saunders, Roy Redhead, Martina Saunders, Bonnie Redhead



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



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

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

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

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

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



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



Ten Shilling Creek.



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



Ten Shilling cabins, 2009.

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

## THE STORY OF OUR ADVERSE EFFECTS AGREEMENT

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

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





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

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

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



*We failed to achieve the Adverse Effects Agreement that we sought*



Marion Beardy, Elizabeth Beardy, Modena Beardy, Madeline Ponask

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

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

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

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

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





Sweat Lodge, York Landing (Kawechiwasiq).

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

☞ TED BLAND

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

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

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

☞ EVELYN BEARDY

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

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



Yvonne Beardy and Jaime Redhead







Low tide at York Factory.

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

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

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

## MAKING THE PARTNERSHIP WORK – RECONCILIATION

 WAYNE REDHEAD

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





Riverbank in front of Silver Goose Lodge, Hayes River.

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



Obediah Wastesicoot (left) and Ted Bland

☞ DONNA SAUNDERS

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

☞ ROY REDHEAD

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

☞ MARTINA SAUNDERS

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

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

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

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



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

☞ WAYNE REDHEAD

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

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

☞ OBEDIAH WASTESICOOT

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

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

☞ ROY REDHEAD

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

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

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

*- Roy Redhead*



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







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

☞ TAMARA BEARDY

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

☞ MARTINA SAUNDERS

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

☞ NELLIE REDHEAD

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

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

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

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

☞ ROY REDHEAD

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

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



Marion Beardy cooking a beaver tail.

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

*- Obediah Wastesicoot*



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

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

 WAYNE REDHEAD

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

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

## PREPARING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE – IDENTITY

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

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

 ANNETTE ELLS

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



☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

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

☞ RHIANNON BEARDY (AGE 13)

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

☞ WENDY SAUNDERS

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

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

☞ JOE SINCLAIR

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

☞ JIMMY A. BEARDY

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

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

*- Joe Sinclair*



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



Christmas Pageant at George Saunders Memorial School.





Kids preparing Labrador Tea

☞ WAYNE REDHEAD

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

☞ RODDY OUSKAN

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

☞ EVELYN BEARDY

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

☞ ERIC SAUNDERS

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

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

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

*- Eric Saunders*



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





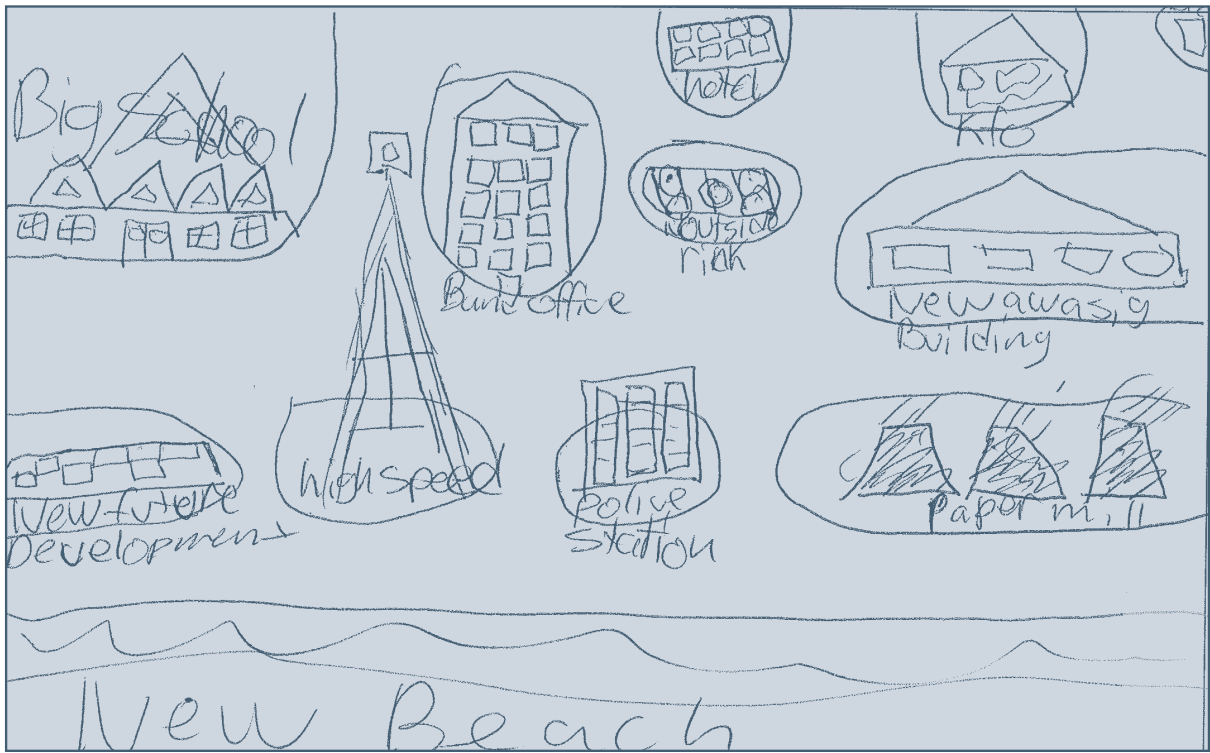
Ashley Beardy, Grade 4

## *Our wishes for the*



Miranda Moose, Grade 8





Nicholas Beardy, Grade 8

## future of York Landing



Dylan O., Grade 8











New cabins at Ten Shilling Creek, 2009.



Isaiah Saunders



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

# OUR HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS

KIPAKOSAYNIMOWINANA

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

 YVONNE BEARDY

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



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

 ROY REDHEAD

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

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

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



Dillon Saunders



Caroline Miller

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





Children at Goose Camp.



Delbert Saunders



Hailey Beardy and Clarissa Saunders

 MARTINA SAUNDERS

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

 DONNA SAUNDERS

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

 TED BLAND

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

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





Freda Saunders at Goose Camp.

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

 DONALD SAUNDERS

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

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

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



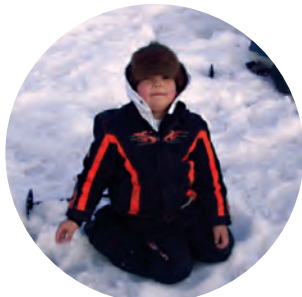
Wayne Wavey



Flora Beardy and Johnson Saunders



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



Logan Beardy, (above). Goose Camp.

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

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

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

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

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

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



# RECONCILING OUR EFFECTS ON THE LAND

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

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

## TED BLAND

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

## FLORA BEARDY

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

## WAYNE REDHEAD

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

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

*- Wayne Redhead*



Elizabeth Beardy, Doreen Saunders, Nancy Williams



*Our Cree language  
is very important  
to us*



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

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

## ENSURING A ROLE FOR CREE LANGUAGE, VALUES, AND KNOWLEDGE

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

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

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





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

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

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

 FLORA BEARDY

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

 ERIC SAUNDERS

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



Marion Beardy at Ten Shilling.



Learning Institute Graduation,  
York Factory Youth.





Wayne and Nellie Redhead

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

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

## ENSURING ROLES FOR OUR ELDERS, YOUTH, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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

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

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

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



 TAMARA BEARDY

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

 NELLIE REDHEAD

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

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

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

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



Dorothy Redhead and Marion Beardy

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



 TED BLAND

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

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

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

## MOVING FORWARD IN PARTNERSHIP

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



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

 ERIC SAUNDERS

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

 TED BLAND

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



Isaiah Saunders, Mary Saunders and Madeline Wastesicoot

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

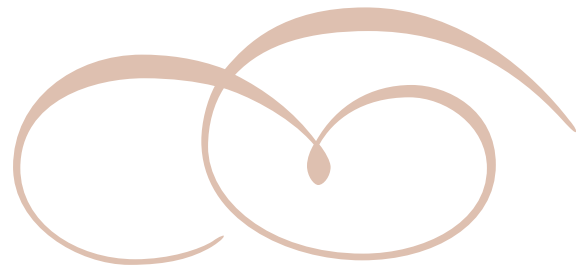
 MARTINA SAUNDERS

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

 EMILY KEMATCH

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







Edwin Neepin



Salome and George Beardy



Evelyn Beardy and Russel Beardy





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



Canada Day Celebration



Janice Ouskan, Tara Beardy, Alexi Contois and Bailey Saunders



Obediah Wastesicoot and Family.



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



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



Simon and Modena Beardy



Elizabeth and Thomas Beardy



Boat at "Welcome Inn" cabin.



Bradley and Darcy Wastesicoot



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



Jeffrey Beardy



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



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



Marion and Thompson Beardy