

**THE FOOTPRINTS OF WASAHKACAHK: THE CHURCHILL RIVER
DIVERSION PROJECT AND DESTRUCTION OF THE NELSON HOUSE CREE
HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE**

by

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the archaeological community has been indifferent to First Nations world views and oral traditions as a complement for interpretation of the archaeological record. My underlying thesis is that aboriginal history is recorded in traditional landscape and only through oral traditions can an archaeologist understand the past and the relationship of people to the land. Because of the integral relationship of land and history, First Nations cultures are always seriously impacted by large-scale resource development projects which destroy or alter traditional landscapes. This thesis examines one such project, the Churchill River Diversion Project and its impact upon the historical landscape of the Nelson House Cree of north central Manitoba. While this project dealt with concerns for environmental, economic and archaeological impacts, it did not address the question of Cree heritage values, how they are superimposed on the land as named places, and the consequences of their loss due to inundation. It is also argued that the philosophical basis of a typical archaeological impact assessment cannot address such problems. Rather these projects must become a holistic endeavour, integrating both tangible archaeological remains and Cree traditional history.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Traditional archaeological studies aim at describing data according to three dimensions - time, space and form - and interpreting these dimensions within a materialist or ecological framework. The aboriginal past, therefore, has been reduced to sites and artifacts which are concretely manifested on the landscape and which can be ordered in chronological time. Although the discipline of archaeology does include the field of ethno-archaeology, the study of aboriginal culture as it pertains to the creation of an archaeological record, world view and oral traditions of First Nations peoples are commonly ignored in archaeological interpretation. Archaeological reports primarily address other archaeologists, and few of these studies have relevance to indigenous frameworks for history or considerations of First Nations' heritage. As a Cree, my feelings about an archaeology grounded in western philosophical traditions are ambivalent, despite my university training as an undergraduate and graduate student in archaeology. This disenchantment eventually led to my choice of topic - historical landscapes of the Nelson House Cree, their significance to traditional Cree culture and the effects of a hydro-electric development on both.

My underlying thesis is that aboriginal history, while transmitted through oral traditions, is recorded in a named historical landscape that serves as a mnemonic index for that history. While many of these named places may have tangible archaeological remains, many do not. Rather, they are natural features or landmarks at which some event in mythic

time or in the near past has taken place. Together these events are timeless in their characterization of the land, providing a recognizable cartography through which stories are remembered, and by which one interacts with the landscape. Because of this integral relationship of land and history, aboriginal cultures are always seriously impacted by large-scale resource development projects which destroy or alter traditional lands. The archaeological community, with its long-held belief that only tangible archaeological remains are worthy of recording and study under the scope of "mitigation", inadvertently exacerbates the problem. Through the concept of historical landscapes, it may be possible to bridge the gap and integrate these two views of heritage.

The central focus of this thesis is on the Nelson House Cree of northern Manitoba, the band to which I belong. Although partially integrated into a Euro-Canadian economy through the fur trade, and affected by missionaries, colonial usurpation of traditional lands and government policies on education and the like, the Nelson House Cree retained much of traditional culture and economy through the first half of the twentieth century, largely due to geographic isolation. This was abruptly challenged in the 1970s when Manitoba Hydro, with the approval of the governments of Canada and the province of Manitoba, diverted the flow of the Churchill River into the Nelson River and inundated much of the band's traditional territories. The purpose of this development was the production of electricity to be sold in the cities of southern Manitoba and for export to the United States. This inundation brought with it not only the loss of traditional economy and life-ways, but of the historical landscape in which these were rooted. Unrecognized in so-called "impact

assessments" of the day, the result has been the slow loss of Nelson House Cree history as elders no longer have the landmarks and places to call forth the past.

Having stated the intent of this thesis as an introduction, Chapter 2 provides a general background to traditional lands of the Nelson House Cree, an academic's view of our history, as well as a Cree view of that same past. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the Churchill River Diversion Project and political manipulations of the day in which Native peoples were ignored. It also outlines the results of environmental, socio-economic and archaeological impact assessments which allowed the diversion project to proceed. In Chapter 4, I provide an explanation of historical landscape as it relates to aboriginal conceptual frameworks for history generally, and the Nelson House Cree specifically. This allows me to outline the historical landscape of Nelson House and its cultural context. Finally, in Chapter 5, my conclusions summarize the principal arguments and place these within the realm and practice of archaeology and cultural resources management in western Canada. A number of the traditional named sites of the Nelson House Cree, as collected by myself in interviews with the elders, are identified and defined as an Appendix.

CHAPTER TWO

ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY AND COSMOS OF THE NELSON HOUSE CREE

My community of Nelson House is located in north-central Manitoba, approximately 800 km north of Winnipeg (Figure 1). Officially known as the Nelson House Band by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, it became legally defined through the adhesion of Treaty #5, signed on July 30th, 1908. The band actually comprises two communities, Nelson House Indian Reserve and South Indian Lake. The Nelson House Indian Reserve is situated in the Footprint River Basin on Footprint Lake some 65 km west of the city of Thompson. The South Indian Lake community is located on the narrows between the main body of Southern Indian Lake and South Bay, it being approximately 142 km north of the Nelson House Reserve. The location of both communities is within the boreal forest of the subarctic Canadian Shield, a low country characterized by expansive rock outcrops, muskeg, as well as numerous lakes and rivers. Two major river systems, the Churchill and Rat/Burntwood rivers cross this region and served as traditional travel corridors for Cree peoples and the European fur trade. The Churchill River flows northeast and drains Lake Opachuanau and Southern Indian Lake. The Rat River flows generally south from Issett lake to Threepoint Lake where it enters the Burntwood River; the latter flows northeasterly to join the Nelson River at Split Lake. Together, this system connects a major series of lakes including Karsakuwigamau, Pemichigamau, Rat, Misanagu, Notigi, Wapisu, Threepoint, Wuskwatim and Opegano as well as many smaller

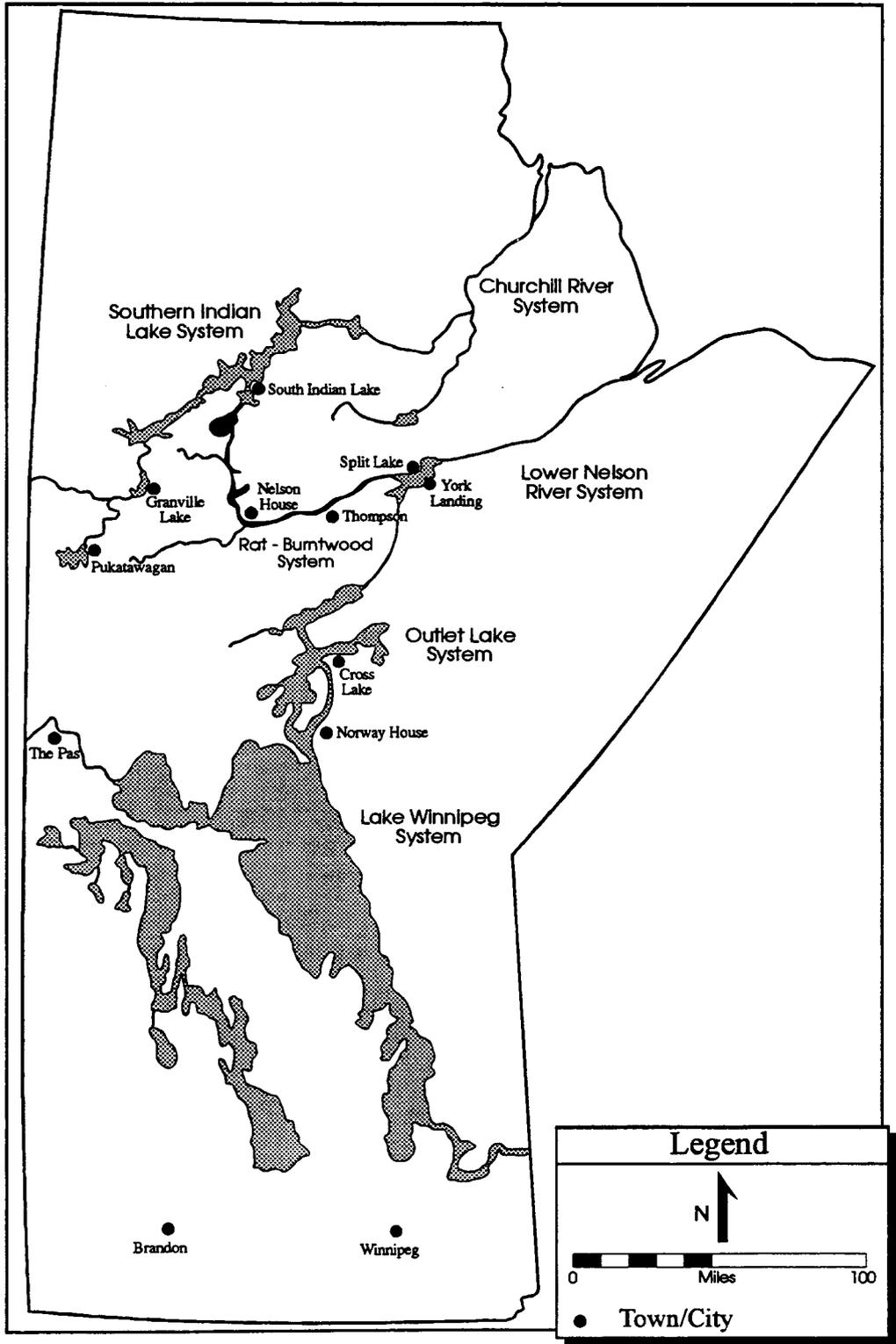


Figure 1: Location of Nelson House and South Indian Lake.

lakes and tributary drainages. This is the traditional lands of the Nelson House Cree that were affected by Hydro-electric development in the 1970s.

The boreal forest environment in which Nelson House Cree territories are located are dominated by long cold winters and heavy snowfall (for a climograph of Thompson area see Orecklin 1976). Vegetation patterns in this region are typically subarctic boreal forest but incorporate a diverse mosaic dependent upon ground water and other conditions. For the Nelson River region, Rowe (1972) states:

Stands of black spruce make up a large part of the forest cover, but proximity to the numerous and extensive swamps that lie back from the rivers is reflected in a restriction of growth. Where drainage is better as along the sides of rivers, on islands or on low ridges, good stands of white spruce with some balsam poplar, white birch, trembling aspen, and balsam fir are customary. ... Extensive and repeated forest fires have, however, fragmented all the forest cover, and large areas support small-growth trembling aspen, white birch, and scattered white and black spruce, or jack pine and trembling aspen, or grassy scrub on rocky barrens. Tamarack is present with black spruce in swamps; isolated occurrences of green ash and Manitoba maple are reported on some of the river banks (as cited in Kroker 1990: 28).

Natural food resources are varied, including 89 or more edible species of flora in the Southern Indian Lake area alone (Shay 1980; also Hanna 1975). Among these are bearberry, pinchberry, blueberry, cranberry, gooseberry, raspberry, strawberry, saskatoon berry, fireweed, Labrador tea, bunchberry, winter green and club moss. Dominant faunas for human exploitation include moose, caribou, bear, rabbit, many species of waterfowl and birds as well as lake and river fish. With its numerous

lakes and marshes, the region also has an abundance of fur bearers including beaver, marten, lynx and wolverine.

The earliest life-ways of the Nelson House Cree are now difficult to interpret given long term participation in the fur trade. As reported by Smith (1981: 259-261), the smallest unit of social organization included the nuclear family with the possibility for polygeny to occur. Kinship structures were bilaterally reckoned, allowing for a maximum number of relations upon which one could call for support. Several of these nuclear families came together to form a local band or hunting group for the fall, winter and spring. Hunting groups were traditionally led by a leader chosen on the basis of experience, abilities and spiritual powers. Various local bands belonged to a larger regional band that amalgamated during the summer, usually at convenient sites on the shores of major lakes. This system was highly adaptive with a continuous fusion, dispersement and regrouping of units in relation to seasonally differentiated resources.

Many of the technologies required by the Cree to live in the boreal forest, as will be emphasized in subsequent discussions, have their origins in early prehistory. Snares, dead fall traps, fish spears and nets were simply constructed but highly effective. Similarly, it is difficult to conceive of survival as a hunting and gathering people in the boreal forest without such basic necessities as snowshoes, toboggans, canoes and well-tailored clothing. The bow and arrow, as marked by distinctive projectile points in the late prehistoric period, was also being used for at least the last 2,000 years. With the coming of the fur trade, stone tools were replaced by those of metal, and metal traps and firearms became integrated into hunting strategies. The basic organization of life,

however, seems to have been little altered, dictated as it were by a necessity for population flexibility and movement between different areas within traditionally held territories.

The strong relationship of the Nelson House Cree to our land is emphasized in cultural traditions and patterns predating contact with the European fur trader, but continually redefined throughout the historic era. To illustrate this continuity of occupation and land-use, it is necessary to place the Cree into prehistoric, historic and cosmological contexts. This background is presented in the remainder of the chapter.

Archaeological Chronologies

Final deglaciation of north-central Manitoba took place no later than 8,300 B. P. (Teller and Clayton 1983: 129) but the development of Glacial Lake Agassiz, a massive glacial melt water lake inundating a large segment of northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, would have made immediate occupation impossible. Sometime after 8,000 years ago this situation changed with the drainage of glacial waters, the emergence of a system of lakes and rivers, and the area becoming viable for vegetational, faunal and human occupation. Although there have been no palynological studies conducted in the Southern Indian Lake region *per se*, Kroker (1990: 27) provides evidence for the immediate development of a spruce/birch forest. Warming trends of the subsequent altithermal climatic episode between approximately 6,000 and 7,000 years ago brought with it a greater amount of pine and alder but the forest largely retained its boreal forest character. Finally, the modern forest community appears fully established by 3,200 years ago. Since that time, fluctuation in

temperature and moisture regimes, forest fires, flooding and erosion have led to minor alterations in landscape and successional vegetation stages (see Kroker 1990: 26-34).

Archaeological evidence suggests an immediate incursion of southern Paleo-Indian "Plano" peoples into the post glacial landscape of northeastern Manitoba as soon as it was available for occupation; there has been a continuous occupation since that time. In writing for the subarctic volume of the "Handbook of North American Indians", J. V. Wright has argued both for continuity in adaptation and cultural homogeneity throughout the entirety of prehistory. He states:

In addition to cultural continuity through space, the prehistory of the Shield is characterized by cultural continuity through time. From this it is assumed that the indigenous determining forces acting upon the early historic occupants of the region also acted upon their prehistoric predecessors. These generalizations are, of course, oversimplifications, and spatial and temporal variations and discontinuities do occur; however, such variations and discontinuities are minor and frequently explainable and do not seriously detract from the general tenet. Indeed, the Shield region clearly represents a discrete and old culture area. The available evidence strongly suggests that the northern Algonquians at the time of initial contact with Europeans followed a way of life that had not changed significantly for more than 7,000 years. (Wright 1981: 86-87).

Canadian Shield prehistoric lifeways and those of northern Algonquians at European contact are homogeneous because of "a basic sameness" in the country's physiographic features, and the limitations these had for subsistence patterns and social organization (ibid.). More significantly, and presuming Wright's arguments are valid, present day Cree peoples of

northern and central Manitoba are the direct descendants of the region's first inhabitants.

Aside from work conducted by the "Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project" between 1969 and 1975, archaeological research in north central Manitoba has not been as intensive as in the plains and parkland areas. Presently, however, there are sufficient data to characterize prehistory and divide it into three periods for discussion - Paleo-Indian, Archaic (Middle Prehistoric) and Woodland (Late Prehistoric)(Figure 2). The Woodland period ends with the coming of the fur trade in the early 18th century. This summary is largely based on the works of Wright (1971; 1972; 1981), Dickson (1978, 1983), Kroker (1990), and Speidel and Syms (1993).

Paleo-Indian Period (8,000 - 6,000 B.P.)

It is believed that human occupation of north central Manitoba occurred approximately 8,000 years ago when big game hunters from present day south and southwestern Manitoba moved into a recently drained landscape of developing spruce forest with some birch (see Kroker 1990, Ritchie 1976). While no doubt utilizing whatever faunal or floral resources that were available, the location of sites at river fords suggests the focus of their economy continued to be big game, presumably bison in the south and caribou further north. Of the latter, Dickson (1978: 17) has even suggested that these people followed herds "out onto the tundra in the summer and [drifted] south with the herd as it moved toward its winter range in the forest". The archaeological remains of these hunters are distinguished by a particular type of late Paleo-Indian spear

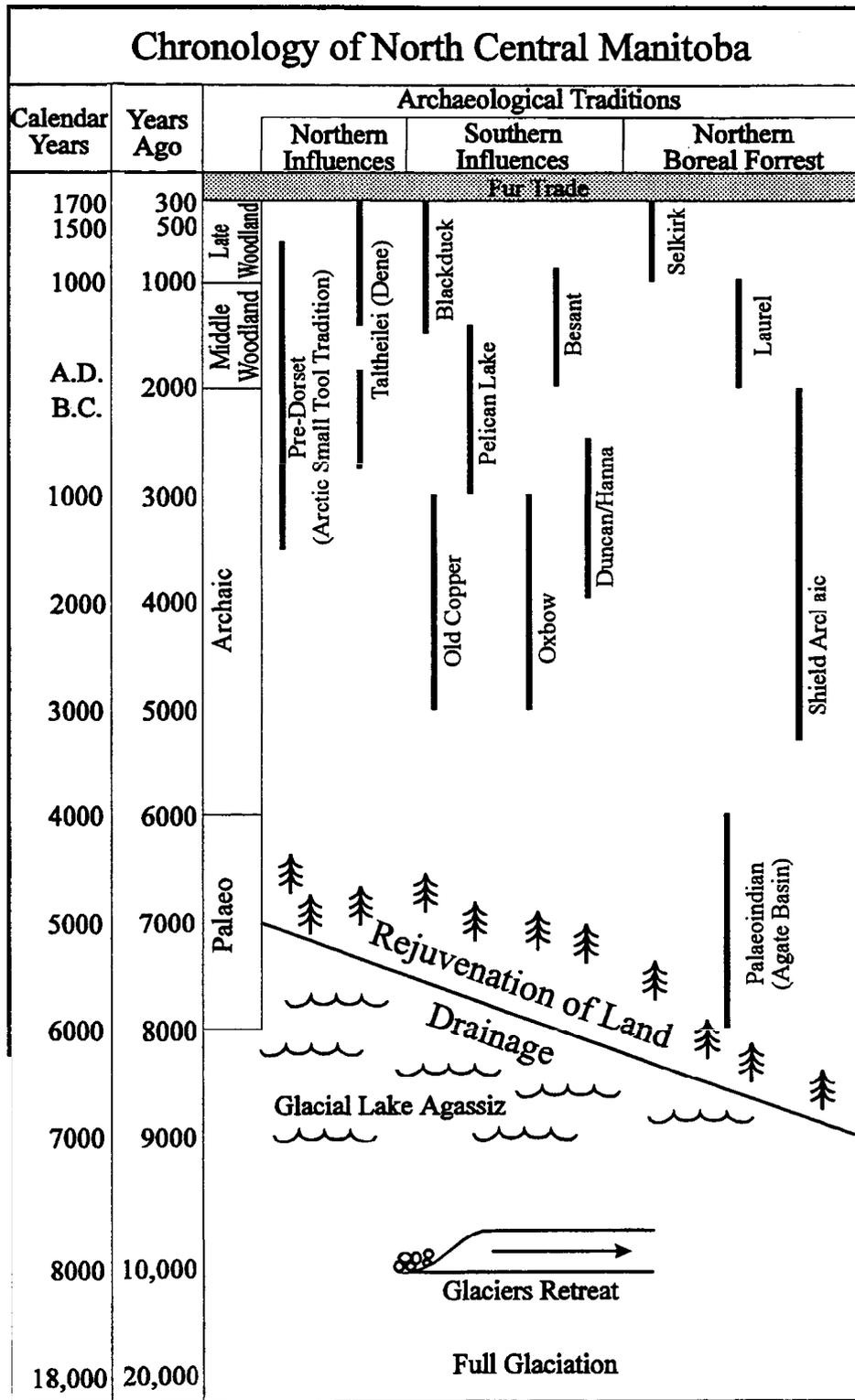


Figure 2: Archaeological Chronology of North Central Manitoba and Adjoining Area.

point, typologically referred to as Agate Basin. Agate Basin points are typically found throughout the plains, parklands and adjacent northern forests of North America and dated between 6500 B.C. and 7500 B.C. (Wright 1981:87).

Wright (ibid.) argues that in the "closed forests" of the Shield, forest cover and changing water ways make the discovery of Paleo-Indian materials a most difficult task. This certainly is apparent in the area surveyed by the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project crews. Only one site, GkLs 10, was associated with an Agate Basin point. This site, situated at *Wahpahnahkahk*, where the Rat River runs into Three Point Lake, was a significant hunting and fishing area for historic residents of Nelson House. Post-inundation surveys of the Churchill River shoreline between 1990 and 1992 has resulted in two additional finds of paleo-Indian lanceolate points of unspecified types (Speidel and Syms 1993).

Archaic or Middle Prehistoric Period (6,000 to 2,200 B. P.)

Wright (ibid.: 88) suggests that the differentiation of the Paleo-Indian from Archaic is "an artificial device formulated by the archaeologist in order to create manageable units of time". This may be true for the Shield country in general, but Kroker (1990: 149) and others (i.e.. Dickson 1978; Speidel and Syms 1993) clearly illustrate a complicated prehistory, with several overlapping archaeological complexes in north central Manitoba. Bison and caribou continued to be a central resource for human exploitation while in some areas archaeological data suggest economies were becoming more generalized, incorporating a broader range of subsistence pursuits (see Dickson 1978).

This long period of time referred to as the Archaic is predominantly characterized by several projectile point styles used for spears and as dart tips for the atlatl. Earthenware ceramics had yet to be developed and the acidic soils of the boreal forest do not normally permit the preservation of organic remains. Stone scrapers, bifacially flaked stone knives and stone flaking debitage dominate Archaic sites, not only in Manitoba but other boreal forest regions. In most cases, associated archaeological complexes suggest indigenous developments; in some, however, they imply influences, if not population movements from the outside. Of the former, what has been referred to as the Shield Archaic by Wright (1972; 1981) is most significant. Believed to have directly developed from a Paleo-Indian predecessor as a response to the challenges of life in the Canadian Shield, its characteristic assemblage incorporates a limited range of chipped stone tools, many of which are crudely flaked and difficult to define as a diagnostic form. This complex is found throughout the length of the Canadian Shield, from Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia to northwestern Saskatchewan. As such, it is suggested to be representative of "Proto-Algonkian" speakers, peoples who would later develop into Cree, Ojibwa and other members of the Algonkian language family (Dickson 1978: 21). Also important to note is that some Shield Archaic sites are situated on islands, potentially indicating the development of the birch bark canoe (McMillan 1988: 88); other technologies characteristic of ethnographic hunters of the boreal forest are also suspected.

The Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project recorded eight Shield Archaic sites located at Leaf Rapids, at the north end of Opachuanau Lake,

in the western portion of Southern Indian Lake, in the Kame Hills locality and on Wuskwatim Lake (Kroker 1990: 151-152). Several "unassignable" prehistoric sites were also suspected to be affiliated, as well as a number of others found in post-inundation surveys (see Speidel and Syms 1993). As Kroker (*ibid.*) illustrates, this is the largest number of middle prehistoric period sites in the region, and they "appear to be the first long-term human adaptation to the boreal forest environment".

That the Archaic period was not a single, unbroken, isolated cultural context, is evident by the presence of a diversity of other archaeological complexes in central and northern Manitoba. In surveys of the Churchill River Diversion project, a range of sites normally associated with plains and parkland archaeological traditions were reported. Identified by distinctive projectile point forms, these included Oxbow (2 sites), Duncan/Hanna (2 sites) and Pelican Lake (4 sites) complexes. Between 1990 and 1992, additional Oxbow sites were found at Wapisu Lake and Opachuanau Lake while Pelican Lake points were recovered from Southern Indian Lake and Wapisu Lake (Speidel and Syms 1993). If not population incursions from the southern boreal forest fringe in pursuit of big game (see Buchner 1981), the presence of these styles suggests some type of cultural interactions with peoples of the Shield Archaic tradition.

Two other influences during the middle prehistoric period are also of note. First, two artifacts were found that, tentatively, can be associated with the Arctic Small Tool Tradition of northern Manitoba (Kroker 1990: 152; also see Nash 1969). Second, in 1992, (Speidel and Syms 1993) an Old Copper Culture point (5000 - 3000 years ago) was recovered from Wapisu Lake. In this latter case, similar artifact types

have been found mainly in the southern part of Manitoba along the Winnipeg River and in the southern interlakes area. Three artifacts are little proof for intergroup contacts but they are suggestive nevertheless.

The Woodland or Late Prehistoric Period (2100 -300 B.P.)

The Woodland period, as is the case throughout the eastern woodlands of North America, is defined by archaeologists primarily by the introduction of earthenware pottery. In the northwestern plains region where pottery may not be present, another hall-mark for the late prehistoric period is the appearance of the bow and arrow, as represented by smaller sized projectile point styles. As was the case during the Archaic period, the archaeological record is complicated with a number of different complexes illustrating both indigenous developments and external influences.

The earliest archaeological sites associated with pottery in north-central Manitoba appeared by 2,100 B.P.. The pottery, distinguished by its coiled manufacturing technology and conoidal form, is referred to as Laurel (see Dickson 1978; Syms 1977). Decorative techniques, including stamped impressions, trailed lines, and punctates among others, have been used to define Laurel variants. How Laurel pottery arrived in Manitoba is open to question, but the origins of these ceramics appears to lay further to the east in northern Minnesota or northwestern Ontario (see Syms 1977). In so far as this pottery had little influence on either the earlier hunting and gathering adaptation, diffusion seems the most probable course (after Wright 1981: 89-90). Consequently, in northern Manitoba, individuals who were responsible for Laurel sites are also believed to be

ancestral to the Cree (Dickson 1978) and their economy "appears to be a well-developed boreal forest adaptation, with a strong focus on the reliable fish resources of the lakes and rivers of the Canadian Shield" (Kroker 1990:156). Ten Laurel sites were recorded by the Churchill River Diversion Archaeological Project at Wapisu Lake, South Indian Lake, Notigi Lake, Wuskwatim Lake, in the Kame Hills locality and at Leaf Rapids. In 1990, a cairn burial was discovered on an island in Wapisu Lake directly opposite one of the recorded Laurel sites (Speidel and Syms 1993). A radiocarbon age for this burial also associates it with the Laurel time period. This burial interestingly included an antler tine carved into the shape of a sturgeon, as well as a bracelet and headband.

The Laurel complex in north central Manitoba, as defined by pottery styles, ended by A. D. 1000. In its stead is a second ceramic tradition known as the Selkirk composite. The term composite is employed so as to incorporate several regional variations including Kame Hills, Clearwater Lake, Kisis, Pehonan, and Winnipeg River complexes (see Meyer and Russell 1987). No longer is coiling the dominant technique for pottery production and a range of new decorative styles, including fabric impressions, appear on the scene. Also present, and distinctive of Selkirk sites, are eastern triangular, prairie side-notched and plains side-notched projectile point types (Kroker 1990: 157). Wherever Selkirk sites are found, they are taken as direct evidence for prehistoric Cree peoples (see Hlady 1970; Dickson 1978; Wright 1981; Meyer 1981). In this respect, the origins of the complex would apparently lay within a later variation of Laurel, although only "equivocal" evidence supports this interpretation at present (Wright 1981: 94). What can be said with certainty is that this complex is

a northern Manitoba manifestation of the Woodland Cree and it represents a direct occupation continuity up to the historic period.

Over 40 Selkirk-related sites are now documented within the traditional territories of the Nelson House band (Kroker 1990: 158) and a majority of sites simply labeled as "Undifferentiated Woodland" are also believed associated. Several South Indian Lake sites have been excavated and these have produced a rich diversity of ceramic forms, including plates, cups and bowls. Dickson (1980) subsequently grouped these assemblages and has now defined the Kame Hills Selkirk variant as a result. Six pictograph sites have also been recorded in the region and these are thought to have been painted by Cree people associated with the Selkirk ceramic tradition. Pictographs incorporate various motifs ranging from thunderbirds to human forms to, as discussed subsequently, *Wasahkacahk's* footprints (see Kroker 1990: 135-140 for descriptions).

Three other archaeological complexes are present in the Churchill River region in the Woodland period and these form important indicators of the diverse influences acting upon peoples associated with the Laurel and Selkirk traditions. The first of these is the Taltheili Shale Tradition, an archaeological phase of the northern forest fringe and tundra, that begins in the middle prehistoric period and extends forward in time to European contact. As it has been defined principally around the Great Slave Lake area (Noble 1971), it is thought to be representative of proto-Athapaskan speaking groups. Four sites with Taltheili-like artifacts were recorded in the western area of Southern Indian Lake and in the Kame Hills locality by surveys associated with the Churchill River Diversion Project (Kroker 1990: 154). Between 1990 and 1992 additional finds were made

on the Rat River near Wapisu and at Wuskatim Lake (Speidel and Syms 1993). The recording of Athapaskan speaking Chippewyan peoples at Footprint Lake is also recorded in the Cree name for this area, *Chipohyanihwasahk*.

A second archaeological tradition seemingly representative of a southern influence in the late prehistoric period is associated with the Besant complex of the northern plains and parklands. Dating between the period 2000 and 1200 years ago, it presumably is representative of a communal bison hunting people who were making at least seasonal forays into the northern forests (Kroker 1990: 153). Distinctive Besant arrow points were initially located at sites in the Leaf Rapids area and Southern Indian Lake (ibid.). More recent surveys have also located Besant-like points at Threepoint Lake and Wapisu Lake (Speidel and Syms 1993).

Finally, several sites incorporating small amounts of Blackduck ceramics have been documented for Leaf Rapids, Opachuanau Lake, western Southern Indian Lake, Kame Hills, Notigi Lake, Wapisu Lake and Wuskwatim Lake (Kroker 1990: 156). The Blackduck complex is a widespread tradition covering the northern plains and parklands and extending eastward into southern Ontario. Artifacts recovered from Blackduck sites also indicate that these people were involved in an extensive trade network including Lake Superior copper, east coast marine shells and the like (ibid.). Traditional interpretations of the Blackduck complex has associated it with the Siouian speaking Assiniboine peoples (i.e.. Ray 1974: 3-4). However, this association is not without its problems and specific ethnic identities must be left in question (for example see McMillan 1988: 90-91). The small amount of Blackduck pottery in sites of the region might

also suggest "tradewares" or the presence of a small number of Blackduck potters who married into local bands.

The Written History of the Nelson House Cree

Much has been written of the history of Cree peoples of north central Manitoba as it spanned the period from first contact with the European fur trader through to the present. For the Shield/MacKenzie borderlands as a whole, Helm, Rogers and Smith (1981) divide this history into three eras of cultural impact : Early Contact Era (to 1821); Contact-Traditional Era (1821-1945) and the Modern Era (1945-present). Employing this tripartite division, the written history of the Nelson House Cree is briefly summarized, although greatest emphasis is given the initial two periods. Principal sources are Gaudin (1942), Ray (1974), Orecklin (1976), Grainger (1979), Helm et. al (1981), Russell (1982) and Hilderman et al. (1983).

Nelson House in the Early Contact Era

The first recorded European occupation in proximity to or on western Cree lands occurred in 1612 when Thomas Button arrived in Hudson's Bay and was forced to winter at the mouth of the Nelson River. It also was Button who gave the Nelson River its name, it being taken from one of his officers who died there. Perhaps incidental in terms of its impact on local people, Button's occupation not only prestaged other expeditions to the region but may have provided the Cree with their first glimpse of European material goods. As Russell (1982: 95) notes:

In the spring of 1613 he [Button] abandoned his "great ship" and returned to England in a smaller vessel. Visiting this site in 1631, Luke Foxe reports finding abundant evidence for the former camp including barrels "which had been iron bound ...

(and) sides of staved chests" (Christie 1894: 343). He also observed an abandoned native encampment whose inhabitants, it would appear were collecting iron from the site.

Russell also reports that a slightly later expedition in 1619 by the Dane, Jens Munk, had a similar fate. In fact the remains of Munk's camp, after it was leveled by an explosion of gun powder, served as a "scrap iron quarry" for decades to come (Russell 1982: 95-96, citing Jeremie 1926: 19).

The European fur trade was the single most significant factor effecting economic and other changes for the ancestors of the Nelson House Cree. Exploration, trade and expansion by the French had begun in the Great Lakes region in the first half of the 17th century and it is probable that at least small amounts of European goods were being passed westward through native exchange networks. Ray (1974: 12-13), for example, states that the Assiniboine and Western Cree had been linked to the Ottawa-Indian French trading network ...[and]... "were the most important suppliers of furs to that network during the middle of the seventeenth century". It was not until the second half of the century, however, that rapid expansion took place, driven in large part by competition between French and English interests that were drawn into larger concerns of the Empire (see Innis 1970: 43-83). The French trade was based on the St. Lawrence River and, through the Great Lakes and its drainage systems, persistently moved inland. The English had long explored the Hudson's and James Bay area and, with the formation of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, established their interests around the Bay. However, from 1682 to the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, English control was by no means secure. Numerous conflicts occurred and

this resulted in the various posts changing hands from English to French and, more often than not, back again (Russell 1982: 97-98).

The fur trade was first brought to the vicinity of Nelson House in 1682 when New England traders established a post 42 km up the Nelson River on "Bachelor's" or "Gillam" Island (Newman 1985: 112). Significantly in the same year, the French and Hudson's Bay Company established themselves respectively on the Hayes and Nelson Rivers. Newman (*ibid.*: 112-114) provides a colorful account of the interaction of these three competing entities over the winter that was to follow. From that time onward, the mouth of the Nelson/Hayes rivers came to form a critical link for fur trade commerce to interior peoples. The Hudson's Bay Company's York Fort, later named York Factory, eventually became the central depot for all of western Canada.

Under the conditions of the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, the English were given uncontested control of Hudson's and James Bay. Governor James Knight was sent in 1714 to reclaim York Fort, then known as Fort Bourbon under the French. In 1717, another Hudson's Bay Company post, Fort Churchill was established at the mouth of the Churchill River. By now, the Hudson's Bay Company had firmly established a "Bayside" policy where all Indian groups involved in the trade were expected to come to established forts along the shores of the Bay. In August of 1717, Crees from Southern Indian Lake met Knight at the mouth of the Churchill River, informing him that they would rather trade there than at York Factory due to the difficulty of portages along the Rat, Burntwood and Nelson River systems (Kroker 1990: 159 citing Kenney 1932: 165). According to Hilderman et al. (1983), the people of the South Indian Lake area were

considered to be part of the Fort Churchill trading group into the mid 1700s. These Cree groups, with direct access to trading posts on the Bay, became the middlemen, "interposed between European points of trade and more distant Indians" (Helm et. al 1981:148). Controlling access to the Bay, they passed on and controlled the distribution of various commodities at marked-up values (see Ray 1974).

Major competition to the Hudson's Bay Company came with the establishment of the North West Company by St. Lawrence traders in 1779. It was the North West Company that also established the first post in the territories of the Nelson House Cree, it being built on Three Point Lake and operated from 1789 to 1794 (Kroker 1990: 159). The earliest direct reference to the Nelson House area, and perhaps the Nelson House people, is derived from the North West Company surveyor David Thompson who was exploring the area in 1793 :

we set off from Chatham House on Wintering Lake and the 4th day June 2nd we entered the Wepooskaw River (Burntwood River) on June 6th we arrived at Neestawyans, or the three tracks at this place the water of the Musk rat river & another of no note disembarque into the Weeposkaw river, we saw there about 20 canoes of Northern Indians (as cited in Orecklin 1976:47).

Inland competition for the trade had forced the Hudson's Bay Company to abandon its Bayside policy in the 1770s, and it began to actively contest North West Company commerce in Nelson House band territories in the 1790s. This was accomplished by the establishment of a post at the mouth of the Burntwood River on Split Lake in 1790. Orecklin (1976) also states that there is evidence that William Sinclair operated a post at Nestoowyans, or "three points", called York House over the winter of 1794

to 1795. As Kroker (1990: 159) reports, the Hudson's Bay and North West company became involved in a "leap-frog" leading to the Hudson's Bay Company establishment of Indian Lake House on Southern Indian Lake between 1797 and 1800. In 1803-4 and 1805-6, this post or another in the area is also known to have operated during the winter months, leading the North West Company to respond in kind. This latter post, visited by David Thompson in 1805, continued in business until 1811. Still another Hudson's Bay Company opposition post was established on Southern Indian Lake and it was in operation between 1819 and 1824 (Kroker *ibid.*).

Between 1778 and 1784, Grainger (1979: 35) estimates that between 33 and 50 percent of the Cree population died from smallpox epidemics, reducing the number of hunting groups and possibly bands. These epidemics also rendered starvation upon survivors who could not hunt and fish to sustain themselves during the course of the disease (Helm et al. 1981:148). Ray (1974: 99-113) suggests that between 1784 and 1815, Cree, Assiniboine and Chippewyan not only were being reduced in population but this had a major affect on traditional territories, conflicts and interaction. The Nelson House people are not mentioned as such, but some displacement is certainly implied. Ray (*ibid.* 102), for example, states: " the district report [Cumberland Department] for 1815 stated that half of the 110 Indian families who traded at Cumberland House were newcomers from York Factory, the North River (Nelson River) and the 'Rat' country north of Cumberland Lake". As well, as the fur trade had moved westward to the even more productive fur lands of the Athabaska District, the Cree trading position as middlemen had become undermined and eliminated.

The Contact Traditional Era - 1821 to 1945

In 1821, the North West and Hudson's Bay Company amalgamated and began a program of restraint in which the number of forts in any one district was severely reduced. The company's trade in the New Churchill District, the country between the Nelson and Churchill River, was thus consolidated at South Indian Lake; at Nelson House; at Reindeer Lake; and at Split Lake (Grainger 1979). The earlier competition for furs had led to resource depletions in this and other areas of the boreal forest (see Ray 1974: 117-124). In 1824, Hudson's Bay Company Governor George Simpson acknowledged the severity of this problem in writing:

The Country between York & Frog Portage is much exhausted, indeed we did not see a single animal on the whole route exceeding the size of a Musk Rat & no so much as the vestige of a Beaver. The Indians however say that the latter was not entirely exterminated & that if the District was allowed to recruit for a few Years it would still be productive of Furs" (as cited in Orecklin 1976: 40).

By this time, Simpson had also introduced conservation measures leading to post closures. In 1822 Reindeer Lake was abandoned in favor of a wintering post at Three Point Lake. In 1824, the South Indian Lake post was abandoned and in 1827 the Nelson Lake post was closed, leaving only the Split Lake post (Grainger 1979: 39). In 1833, the Split Lake post was abandoned with regional trade now consolidated at "three points", about half way between Split Lake and "the point at which the Churchill and Nelson Rivers separate" (as cited in Orecklin 1976: 48). This post, known as Fort Seaborn, was established by John Tod (Grainger 1979:41). Fort Seaborn operated at the place known as *Otohowihnihk* from 1833 to 1878.

Permanent trading posts were established at Cross Lake and Split Lake in 1866 and 1886 respectively (Grainger *ibid.*). In 1878 Hudson's Bay Company operations moved Fort Seaborn to Footprint Lake on the northeast end of the present day Nelson House Reserve, the post then being referred to as Nelson House. In 1900, another permanent post was built on Pukatawagon Lake. Finally, Nelson House was again moved in 1937 to its present site on Footprint Lake.

In the post 1821 period of fur trade commerce, Cree peoples integrated and stabilized a trapping economy into their way of life while at the same time retained much of the earlier culture (see Helm *et. al* 1981: 149-150). The Cree were well adapted to the demands of a trapper's existence living in small groups over a large territory and it was this type of organization that facilitated continuity in social and political organization. Small pox occurred again in 1837 but its impact was less severe than the earlier epidemics (Grainger 1979: 42). As well, prior to 1839, European fur traders had little interest in "civilizing" or Christianizing aboriginal peoples, fearing its affects on fur production (Helm *et. al* 1981: 148).

In 1839, Hudson's Bay Company views toward Christian conversion apparently shifted. Sir George Simpson (as cited in Orecklin 1976) now believed that the converted Indian would seek to imitate Europeans, becoming more productive and seeking increased quantities of manufactured goods. Traders would also enjoy greater safety in travel through Indian lands, and could draw upon provisions at Indian communities. The Hudson's Bay Company, therefore, agreed to sponsor the passage of three Wesleyan missionaries and a school-master to northern

Manitoba, since education was considered to be the best method of furthering the aims of evangelism and civilization (ibid.). In 1840, the Methodist Mission at Norway House was established by Reverend James Evans (Gaudin 1942: 7). From the Norway House Mission, missionaries initially travelled by dog team and canoe to visit groups in the Nelson River area.

Despite the intense and often zealous efforts of missionaries, traditional beliefs were not eradicated immediately. As Helm et. al (1981: 148) note "... the aboriginal guardian-spirit complex and shamanistic curing and divination continued to exist throughout the contact-traditional era, if in attenuating form, side by side with Christian church affiliation and practices". This is emphasized by observations of the Reverend E. R. Young who, in 1869, described a scene on Threepoint Lake in the following way:

The hill had once been densely covered with trees, but about every third one had been cut down, and the stumps, which had been left from four to ten feet high, had been carved into rude representations of the human form. Scattered around were the dog-ovens, which were nothing but holes dug in the ground and lined with stones, in which at certain seasons, as part of their religious ceremonies, some of their favorite dogs - white ones were always preferred - were roasted, and then devoured by the excited crowd. Here and there were tents of the old conjurers and medicine men, who, combining some knowledge of disease and medicine with a great deal of superstitious abominations, held despotic sway over the people.

...Here on this hill top were all these sad evidences of the degradation of the people. I wandered around and examined the idols, most of which had in front of them, and in some instances on their flat heads, offerings of tobacco, food, red cotton, and other things. My heart was sad at these evidences of such degrading idolatry...(Young 1890: 84-85)

In the 1870s, the Reverend John Semmons erected a church on the very locale where Young had "found the stumps carved into idols". In a communication from Semmons to Young (1890: 88) he went on to relate that every conjuring drum had ceased and that all vestiges of the heathen life were gone. It was not until July 1891 that a missionary was appointed to Nelson House, this being the Reverend S. D. Gaudin (1942). In the following year he constructed a Church at Poplar Point, half-way between the Hudson's Bay Company post and *Otohowihnihk*.

Sedentism was now being encouraged both by the church and by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1895, however, the Poplar Point Mission at Nelson House had failed to gain a full time native residency, solely consisting of a church, a small dwelling house and a store room. In fact people continued to be dispersed in small bands with a few settlements clustered around the Hudson's Bay post two miles distant [near *Wahpahsihk*], another [*Omwahpihmihwihnihk*] being a mile across the lake, and still another two miles further on [*Otohowihnihk*](Gaudin 1942:64).

Concerned with the education of his mission charges, by 1900, Reverend Gaudin began sending Nelson House children to residential schools as far away as Red Deer. Nelson House peoples had not yet entered into treaty negotiation with the Canadian government, and this non-treaty status was making Gaudin's attempts at education somewhat difficult (see Gaudin 1942: 98-98). The benefits of a European education must also have been seriously questioned, when five of the eight children shipped outward to Red Deer died from tuberculosis (ibid. 83). In 1903,

Gaudin was successful in his attempts to have a local school constructed and instruction began in the following year.

By the early 1900s, Nelson House peoples had become heavily reliant on European goods, including many subsistence items such as flour, tea and lard. Individual rights to trapping areas were established, and missionary efforts promoting a sedentary life were also beginning to bear fruit. On the 30th of July 1908, the Nelson House people consequently signed the adhesion to Treaty #5 with the government of Canada. The names which appear on the Nelson House Treaty List are essentially the same names that appear in an 1893/1894 Hudson's Bay Company debt list for the Nelson House post, indicating a continuity between the trading post band and the government band (Grainger 1979). Even though this treaty placed the Nelson House people on a reserve, one can also argue that it preserved ethnic identity by maintaining familiar pieces of land that carried an "inner history" (after Axtell 1982: 37). In addition, white settlement had not yet penetrated this area to any significant degree and life after the treaty was little different than before it. In fact, as it will be later suggested, large scale disruption of lifeways in Nelson House did not come about until the 1960s with the opening of Highway 391 and the planning and later development of the Churchill River Diversion project.

European settlement and usurpation of northern Manitoba was gradual and stimulated by those seeking to reap economic benefits from natural resource exploitation. Between 1912 and 1929, the Hudson Bay Company Railway was built between Winnipeg and Churchill to facilitate grain export, thus providing ease of access to the north (Coates and McGuinness 1987: 104). Initially, this resulted in large numbers of Euro-

Canadian men coming to trap, stirred on by a scarcity of jobs in southern Manitoba after World War I and an increase in the value of furs. To accommodate this new business, the Hudson's Bay Company re-established a permanent post at Southern Indian Lake. By the 1930s the fur resources were in serious decline and it was at this time that the Nelson House people began to permanently settle on the reserve. It was also at this time that the South Indian Lake group split off to their present location.

Nelson House in The Modern Era

The modern era of the Nelson House people is dominated by the increasing control of Canadian government bureaucracies. Many specific events have occurred since the 1940s, from the establishment of a Nursing Station in 1943 to the introduction of air transportation allowing for a viable commercial fishery; listing these developments serves little purpose. It is noteworthy, however, that in the face of such substantial change, many Nelson House Cree were able to continue a traditional lifestyle. Much of the year was spent in movement between and at long-standing camp sites, and travel to Nelson House occurred only for special occasions and supplies. By the mid-1960s, government pressures and threat of incarceration did require children to enroll in residential and reserve schools, and this began to have an impact on settlement pattern. While many men continued to trap, hunt and fish in the bush, women remained behind on the reserve to tend the children during the winter months.

In 1969, Highway 391 was built to connect the mining communities of Thompson, Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids. This broke the relative isolation

of Nelson House and Southern Indian Lake and further contributed to a sedentary community with ease of access to all of the consumer goods of the period, including television. Traditional resource sites now were used on an interim basis with many families visiting them in the spring and summer during Christian and school holidays. These trips, nevertheless, continued to provide an important link to the land, cultural values, customs and natural foods. As will be examined in the following chapter, this came to an abrupt end in the 1970s as a result of the Churchill River Diversion Hydro-electric program.

A Cree View of History and Cosmos

In the preceding discussions, I have provided the European sense of Cree history, culture and relationship to the environment. While to a certain extent it is one shared and acknowledged by the Nelson House Cree Band today, it is not the complete story. As Cree, our history is defined through oral traditions which are passed on from elders to younger generations (Figure 3). Cree oral traditions include numerous stories about *Kiyahs*, the ancient past. Oral traditions provide an explanation for the creation of the land, its transformation to present form, and Cree relationship to land and landscape. To the Nelson House Cree, it is a history every bit as important, or more so, than the one written by historians of the fur trade or archaeologists.

History, as defined by western thought, is the chronological passage of time in terms of specific human experiences. These events are recorded as facts in a rigid sequence of years that has come to be interpreted as progress. In so far as the Nelson House Cree past is

<h1>Cree Oral History</h1>	
<h2>Cree Oral Traditions</h2>	
<h3>Náhithowá Acimówina Mina Acathokiwina</h3>	
Recent Past Anohciki	Reserves Trapping Fishing Gathering Treaties
Long Ago Kiyahs	Iskonkana Owunihikawin Pakitawawin Mawacicikewin Okimawewin Usutumakiwin
Ancient Time Mawac Kiyahs	Wasahkacahk Puts World Into Order For The Time When There Will Be People Wasahkacahk Ki-o-thastow Askiy Ispiykawi Ithiniskathik Wasahkacahk Tests The Earth's Size Wasahkacahk Ka-ki-nanatawitisahahk Ka-ispihcathik Askithiw Wasahkacahk Recreates the Earth Wasahkacahk Kitwam Ka-ki-osihtat Askithiw Wasahkacahk And The Flood Wasahkacahk Akwa Ka-ki-thiskipik Askithiw
The Beginning of Time Mimoci Kiyahs	Misipisiw Misipisiw Wasahkacahk's Contest With Wimithothaw Wasahkacahk Ka-ki-mahwinihat Wimithothwa Rolling Head Cicipistikwan Chakapis Shares the Sun Chakapis Ka-ki-nakwatat Pisimwa
<p>Supernatural Beings Interact With Ancient and Contemporary Worlds</p> <p>Acahwak Kiwaciwikonawak Anoch Akwa Mina Mimoci Kiyahs</p>	

Figure 3: Oral History of the Nelson House Cree.

academically defined as prehistory, something prior to European contact, there is the strong implication that we are a people without a past and that our elder's stories are a supernatural mythology without meaning. In examining the broader context of native versus European historical traditions, Deloria outlines the critical philosophical differences:

American Indians hold their lands--places--as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind. Immigrants review the movement of their ancestors across the continent as a steady progression of basically good events and experiences, thereby placing history--time--in the best possible light. When one group is concerned with the philosophical problem of space and the other with the philosophical problem of time, then the statements of either group do not make much sense when transferred from one context to the other without the proper consideration of what is happening (Deloria 1973:75-76).

Within Deloria's view, history is "something [which] is observed or experienced by a community, and the symbols and sequences of the mythology are given together in an event that appears so much out of the ordinary experiential sequence as to impress itself upon the collective memories of the community for a sufficiently long duration of time" (ibid.:84). The Cree concept of *Kiyahs*, a long time ago, is without calendrical years; it is a single time beyond living memory. It is a mythic time in which the creation story and subsequent history were acted on the landscape of north central Manitoba. As related by the elders, it was *mettunih kiyahs*, a very, very long time ago, when humans and animals spoke one language, and when everything had human form. These stories are validated by our elders and they are witnessed on the land.

According to Cree cosmology, the universe was created by *Kichi Manitou*, the Great Spirit, who is also referred to as *Opihmahcihihwew*, the Creator or the giver of life. The cosmos is divided into four parts on a vertical plane, consisting of the Sky World, the Earth, the Water World and the Underworld. Each of the four are occupied by sentient beings or spirits that interacted and continue to interact with one another. The Earth (*ahskih*) itself is made up of four orders including, *Ihthihnihwahk* (the people), *pihsihskiwahk* (animals), *kahnihtahwihkihwow* (flora), and *ahsihniwahk* (rocks and minerals). On the horizontal plane, the cardinal directions give symmetrical structure to space and each holds a symbolic meaning for the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs of human existence. For the Nelson House Cree, the center of this symmetrical structure must be our traditional territories on the Churchill, Nelson and other rivers; it is here that our traditions have context and substance.

In *Kiyahs*, everything was in human form. Today's natural entities - the landscape, animals, plants, human beings - were configured through transformation. Transformation was performed by *Wasahkacahk*, the great trickster of Cree cosmology. A conflict between *Wasahkacahk* and *Mihsihpihsew*, the powerful lynx of the water world, resulted in a great flood. After the flood *Wasahkacahk* sent several aquatic animals to try to retrieve some earth from the bottom of the sea. He found a small amount on the nearly drowned muskrat's paw and, blowing on it, made it into land, recreating the earth. *Wasahkacahk* then went about making the earth habitable and hospitable for the many generations of Cree people who were to follow. In the oral traditions of the Nelson House Cree, virtually every entity within our land has a history of transformation by

Wasahkacahk. Names, features and sites on the landscape stand as testimony to his presence and as a written narrative of the past.

The Nelson House Cree cannot speak of Paleo-Indian, Archaic or Woodland times as history, although we recognize these interpretations by prehistorians, and we are continually informed by archaeological excavation. We have no reference for some past migration since our oral traditions tell of a timeless presence on the land. Yet again, if modern Cree peoples are the ancestral lineage of Shield Archaic groups who lived in this area over 6,000 years ago, as some archaeologists have suggested (Wright 1981), should we expect such a story to have survived? Europeans, by contrast, were early in the Neolithic (New Stone Age) Period at this time, and the great Pharaohs of Egypt were still 1,000 years in the future. By either standard of historical reckoning, chronological time or *kiyahs*, the Cree have an undisputed claim to central Manitoba.

CHAPTER THREE

CHURCHILL RIVER DIVERSION, THE INUNDATION OF TRADITIONAL CREE LANDS AND AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS

The history of the Churchill River Diversion Project of northern Manitoba is a complex one, partially hidden in government documents, unpublished consultants reports, newspaper articles and similar forms of communication. As planned in the 1960s by Manitoba Hydro, its rationale was to provide "adequate power at the lowest possible cost" (McCullum and McCullum 1975: 107). Manitoba Hydro's "lowest possible cost", however, meant that the Cree of the Nelson House First Nation would pay the highest possible price - their land. As a consequence, and as it will be later argued, an integral part of our history and culture was also lost.

In 1930, the Canadian federal government transferred control of natural resources to the government of Manitoba. Beyond agriculture, the economic future of the province was intricately tied to natural resource exploitation. However, it was not until after World War II that development began to occur in the north, as the earlier fur trade economy became superseded by other capitalist ventures. In 1950, oil was discovered near Virden and this gave hope for economic prosperity.

Shortly thereafter, mines were opened in Lynn Lake, Snow Lake and Thompson. As Coates and McGuinness describe in their assessment of the emergence of modern Manitoba (1945-1969):

These new mines collectively added millions of dollars each year to the provincial economy. They were major employers, including in their personnel many recent immigrants. Perhaps more significantly, new road construction, railway expansion, establishment of public offices and development of service industries in the region hastened modernization of the north. Although many vestiges of the old order remained, the north had been fully and quickly integrated into the new Manitoba. (Coates and McGuinness 1987: 137)

With its many rivers and lakes, the hydro-electric potential of the northern part of the province had also been recognized and considered for use as early as the 1920s. Coates and McGuinness (*ibid.*: 139) further add that hydro-electric power was viewed as the single "most important energy sector in post-war Manitoba".

In 1948, a Royal Commission recommended to the Canadian government that the province of Manitoba be given a power monopoly so that the northern rivers could be harnessed for the generation of electricity. The initial purpose for this development was to service growth in the mining sector of the provincial economy and its associated communities. Later, with these needs filled, emphasis and rationalization for mega-project development of hydro resources shifted to meet the energy demands of southern Manitoba and for export sale to the United States. It was with these objectives that the Lake Winnipeg Regulation and Churchill River Diversion projects were conceived.

Churchill River Diversion Project Design and Construction

In 1966, officials from Manitoba Hydro, the Canadian federal government and the Conservative government of Manitoba under Premier Duff Roblin signed a formal agreement to proceed with the Lake Winnipeg and Churchill River Diversion Project. This was an ambitious and expensive (\$2.6 billion) program that would first divert the flow of the Churchill River into the Nelson River (Figure 4). Further supported by a regulated escapement from Lake Winnipeg and associated "outlet lakes", the Nelson River would then have abundant and excessive potential for power generation upon demand. An integration and expansion of interior rivers and lakes not only created excitement about the economic prosperity of hydro-electricity but numerous spin-off developments were also considered feasible. One of the more interesting included the construction of a major shipping route southward from Hudson Bay via the Nelson River and Lake Winnipeg towards the city of Winnipeg itself. So caught up in this possibility, government leaders of the day had "visions of ocean freighters and passengers tied up at the Alexander Street docks and the Selkirk wharves" (Commission of Inquiry into Manitoba Hydro, Final Report, December 1979: 73).

A 1964 engineering study by Gibb, Underwood and McLellan, a Winnipeg company, had originally assessed the feasibility of the diversion program and it was this study that led to the agreement of February 15, 1966. While the Churchill River was recognized as having the capability for hydro-electric development with a discharge of 35,700 cubic feet/second, development had already begun on the Nelson River and it was

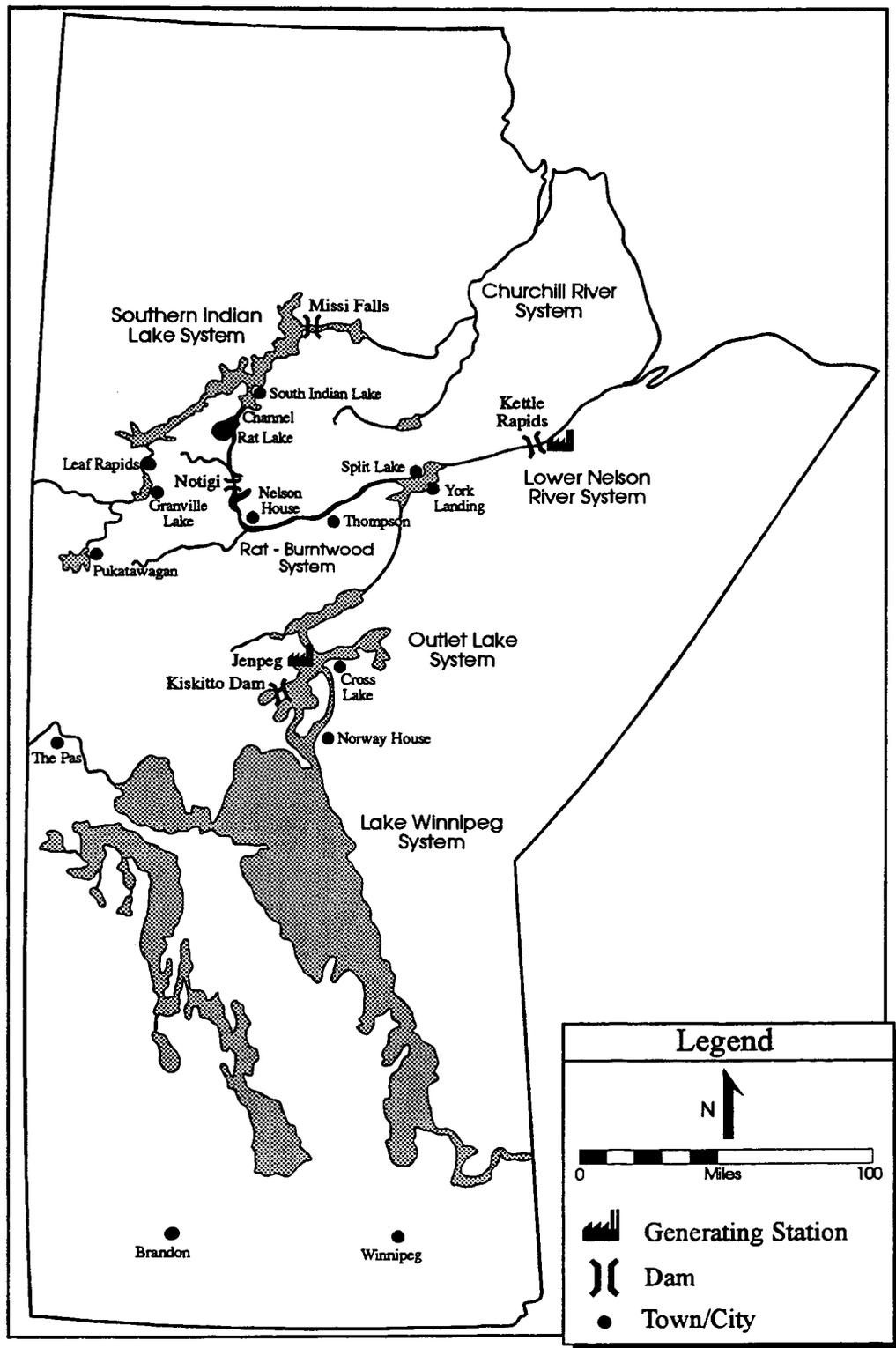


Figure 4: Generating Stations and Dams.

seen as "economically more attractive to divert a major portion of the Churchill River flow into the Nelson River than to develop the hydro-electric energy potential of the Churchill River" (Kroker 1990:10, citing Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board 1975: 22). The terms of the agreement allowed the government of Manitoba: 1) to construct a hydro-electric generating station at Kettle Rapids on the Nelson River; 2) to build a dam and related structures at the outlet of Southern Indian Lake into the Churchill River (Missi Falls) for the purpose of water storage in the lake; 3) to excavate a channel from South Bay on Southern Indian Lake to Issett lake for the diversion of water into the Rat/Burntwood River system; 4) to build a control dam at the outlet of the Rat River on Notigi Lake; 5) to build a dam and related structures at the outlet of Lake Winnipeg to regulate water levels of that lake; and 6) to develop a series of control dams, diversion channels and a generating station on the outlet lakes (Kiskitto, Kiskittogisu, Playgreen etc.) to further enhance and control flow into the Nelson River (Figure 4; see Kroker 1990; also Manitoba Department of Mines, Resources and Environmental Management 1973a,1973b). The Canadian federal government would also meet the expense of building a 560 mile long transmission line to southern Manitoba (Hilderman et. al 1983: 267).

As it was originally planned, water levels of Southern Indian Lake would have been raised to an elevation of 872 feet above sea level (later revised to 869 feet), 35 feet above its then existent shoreline. This high level pondage provided the necessary gravity flow for diversion southward by means of the excavated channel. However, environmental and social concerns of such a major inundation project forced Manitoba Hydro to

concede to a low level alternative, one leaving the lake approximately 10 feet (regulated between 844 and 847 ft) above the pre-development level. In the end, it was still possible to divert 30,000 cubic feet/second of water from the Churchill drainage, approximately two-thirds of its total flow. As well, and even with the low level diversion alternative in place, over 100,000 acres (40,470 ha) of shoreline were inundated directly, and many thousands of others affected by ancillary developments (Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Study Board 1975: 24).

Planning for Development and a Lack of Concern for Native Peoples and Culture

The conception of the Churchill River Diversion project, as previously discussed, was part and parcel of a post World War II vision of economic prosperity through the exploitation of natural resources in northern Manitoba. Like the Richardson Building, Winnipeg's first skyscraper, it was to be a symbol of Manitoba's confidence and optimism for the future. The impetus to proceed was pushed forward by pro-development legislators and business interests who emphasized the many positive benefits such a project would have on the provincial economy in general, and the north in particular. Cheap energy, roads, employment and prosperity, all leading to increased tax revenues, were the concomitant spin-offs to be accrued. Framed in a cost benefit context where only dollar input/outputs are concerned, Churchill River diversion promised much. Many of these legislators, however, lacked ties to the north nor did they recognize the legitimacy of traditional rights to land by Native peoples. In criticizing the decision to proceed with development, this was

best expressed by Dr. Robert Newbury, a Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Manitoba:

Nowhere is the cost of the loss of the Churchill River calculated. Its existence, aesthetics, native community options, ecology, and unique role of creating a livable environment in an otherwise harsh land are considered to be worthless in the energy budget (as cited in McCullum and McCullum 1975: 105).

Newbury went even further, questioning the economic viability and need for the project altogether:

For almost two decades there is sufficient Hydro-electric power ready to be developed on the already-committed Nelson River without touching the Churchill. The Nelson River power potential can meet Manitoba's needs until 1991.

The addition of Churchill water to the Nelson via the diversion will only add four years to the period for which Manitoba's power needs can be supplied by this river.

But Manitoban's can safely wait for another 17 years before being forced to decide whether four additional years of power is worth the loss of the Churchill River (ibid.)

To Newbury, and many others of the day, the Churchill River Diversion project was a primary example of southern engineers re-arranging a landscape without proper consideration of its implications. At the time, "this was a hydro engineer's dream and was embraced with enthusiasm by Hydro as the ideal and logical solution to the problem of supplying additional water to the generation station under construction at Kettle Rapids in time to meet a possible deficit of dependable energy in 1973" (Commission of Inquiry into Manitoba Hydro, Final Report, December 1979:74).

The Manitoba Conservative government of 1966 was aware that the project would have "some" impact on northern ecology and native communities but chose to ignore these, continuing to emphasize perceived benefits. Today, some of these benefits would be considered racist in their overtones. In a letter to Premier Duff Roblin regarding the advantages of the project, the then Minister of Health went on to state:

We have an excellent opportunity to erase a reserve, to erase a depressed area and to integrate a fair number of Indian people into the mainstream of Manitoba life and opportunities. They will benefit and so will we, and a pattern of long-range solution to our Indian and Metis problem formulated (as cited in Hilderman et. al 1983: 268).

Benefits, obviously, were in the eye of the beholder, although the integration of Native peoples as well as immigrant groups into the "melting pot" of Canadian society appears standard policy of the day (McCullum and McCullum 1975: 18).

On April 25, 1969 Manitoba Hydro applied for a license to proceed with the Churchill River Diversion and was assured by the Minister of Mines and Natural Resources that the project would not be delayed. In making this concession, there was a requirement that "several investigation programs be implemented", before the project could go forward (Commission of Inquiry into Manitoba Hydro, Final Report, December 1979:74-75). Consequently a study was carried out in the latter part of 1966 by the University of Manitoba (Duckworth Report) to outline the terms of reference for a major investigation of environmental, social and economic impacts of the high level diversion of the Churchill River system. Even before these studies could be initiated, however, this

confidential report called for alternatives to the project, or at the least, a project redesign to minimize the effects of impoundment on Southern Indian Lake and the South Indian Lake community. The Chairman of Manitoba Hydro, Dr. D. M. Stephens, responded with "disappointment with the lack of objectivity and rigor with which this latter study had been undertaken" and further suggested that "time was of the essence and that excessive delays and negative attitudes towards development, as expressed in the report, were not compatible with optimal use of the Province's natural resources" (ibid).

From its very conception in 1966, it was known that the high level diversion project would necessitate a relocation of the entire South Indian Lake settlement. In the 1969 public hearings, therefore, considerable opposition resulted. This opposition came from Church, environmental and university groups who were concerned with disruption of the self-sufficient South Indian Lake community, the lack of impact assessment studies and the Manitoba government's refusal to publicly release its own internal reports on development. When Manitoba Hydro was issued an interim license for the project before the conclusion of the hearing, legal counsel for the communities of South Indian Lake and Granville sought an injunction. Prolonged litigation was not in Manitoba Hydro's agenda and its legal counsel advised that "if the public interest requires that the validity of any permit that may be issued be established with certainty at an early date, this may be done by an Act of Legislature at the forthcoming Session" (ibid.: 75). Committed to move forward, the government circumvented the court challenge by introducing Bill 15 on March 10, 1969, to grant a license to Hydro for the high level diversion,

and to provide a mechanism for the compensation of persons affected by the flooding (ibid.: 76). Bill 15 was defeated in the Manitoba parliament and, with Churchill River Diversion becoming a political issue gaining in its opposition, the Conservatives lost the election of June 1969.

The new premier, Edward Schreyer, and his New Democratic government immediately reassured the South Indian Lake community and opponents of Churchill River diversion that the project would be subject to the closest scrutiny. As stated by Schreyer:

Manitoba Hydro surely cannot proceed without reference to all the human factors, and if the human, the sociological and the natural resource conservation factors weigh more heavily in the minds of my cabinet colleagues than the mill rate that Manitoba Hydro will have to charge, well then we'll have to reverse the present course Hydro is embarked on (as cited in McCullum and McCullum 1975: 107)

To appease opponents of the project, two outspoken critics, Professors Cass Booy and Robert Newbury were appointed to the Manitoba Water Commission to review plans and to continue holding public hearings. David Cass-Beggs was also appointed as a new general manager of Manitoba Hydro. For critics of the Churchill River diversion, the change in government seemed to indicate a change in philosophy regarding the north. That change, however, was short-lived. Engineering consultants to Manitoba Hydro proposed an alternative low level diversion project and this was accepted by the government. On September 20th, 1970, Premier Schreyer announced that Churchill River diversion would proceed and, in November, Manitoba Hydro was granted the necessary water license.

One can only wonder at the sudden change in Schreyer's attitude toward the project. Certainly, business and Manitoba Hydro interests were continuing to lobby in support of diversion. There also were influential New Democrats, a number being in cabinet, who wanted the project to move forward. Racist views, and the perceived need to integrate Native peoples into Canadian society, once again may have been a contributing factor. Thus, at a 1974 unofficial "Panel of Public Inquiry into Northern Development", Minister of Mines, Resources and Environmental Management, Sidney Green "gave his personal view that giving the Indian a special status a hundred years ago had been a mistake, for both the Indian people and the rest of us, and that the only real future for the Indian was to become totally integrated into the mainstream of Canadian life" (as cited in Hilderman et. al 1983: 268).

The Nelson House Indian band was not formally advised nor consulted about the impacts of the Churchill River diversion until the fall of 1973 - a full seven years after the first public announcement of Manitoba Hydro's intent. This was so in spite of the fact that this project would raise water levels in some areas as much 30 ft or more, inundating and otherwise altering reserve lands and traditional resource areas. The people of Nelson House were a minor concern, and certainly not an impediment (McCullum and McCullum 1975: 104). In July of 1974, legal counsel for the "Northern Flood Committee" advised Premier Schreyer of its intent to file an injunction against the project on the grounds that the government of Manitoba had no right to flood reserve lands. This committee had been formed in April of the same year to represent the communities of South Indian Lake, Cross Lake, Nelson House, Split Lake,

Norway House and York Landing. Part of the basis for the injunction were federal rights granted the Nelson House and other First Nations in their signing of Treaty #5; this guaranteed reserve lands against exploitation or expropriation under the British North America Act or the Indian Act. At least initially, this injunction was supported by the federal Department of Indian Affairs.

Schreyer responded to federal concerns over the impact of the project on Native communities and reserve lands by reminding Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau that the Canadian government had been a signatory to the original agreement in 1966. Consequently, it was the Schreyer government's "legal position to hold the federal government responsible for any damages suffered by the people of Manitoba as a result of a federal action inconsistent with their contractual obligations" (as cited in Hilderman et. al 1983: 273). This led the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, Judd Buchanan, to withdraw support for the Northern Flood Committee's court challenge until he was satisfied that the Committee had made "an honest attempt ... to reach a settlement through negotiation" with Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba government (ibid.). Visiting Nelson House in October of 1974, Buchanan stated:

I'm sympathetic to the Committee's desires. On the other hand, you do have situations where the interests of the smaller group must be subordinated to the interests of the larger group (ibid.: 274).

In this speech, he drew an analogy between the sacrifices of Nelson House and other Manitoba communities to residents of his home riding of London, Ontario, where the latter were giving up the front 20 feet of their lots so the street could be widened. The sympathies of the Minister of Indian

Affairs clearly did not lie with Native peoples nor did he comprehend the nature of the problem.

The New Democratic Government of Manitoba began a promotional campaign that again emphasized the economic and other benefits of development to local communities. As indicated in a letter from Schreyer's office, some of these were seen in rather trivial ways:

Manitoba Hydro's activities have created a number of benefits. For example, because of Manitoba Hydro's microwave system between Winnipeg and Northern Manitoba, your community can now receive, or will soon be able to receive, direct colour TV broadcasts of improved quality, and has or soon will have direct dial telephone service. Similarly the power projects in Northern Manitoba have made it possible for your community to be connected to the provincial electrical grid, so that there is now no limit to the power available to residents of your community. This means that residents can now use many electrical appliances, such as stoves, refrigerators and TV's, which were not possible when the community was dependent upon limited diesel generated power (McCullum and McCullum 1975: 119).

The so-called benefits of a Canadian life-style, especially those associated with television, were in themselves a direct contrast with traditional contexts for culture; ultimately they would also help to facilitate a further erosion of Cree society and values.

The province of Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro, the Northern Flood Committee and the federal government of Canada, represented by the Minister of Indian Affairs, signed the "Northern Flood Agreement" on December 16, 1977, a year after the Churchill River Diversion was complete and in operation. This agreement promised to deal with the adverse effects of the project, as they had occurred and would continue to

occur on "the lands, pursuits, activities and lifestyles of the residents, individually and collectively, of the Reserves of Cross Lake, Nelson House, Norway House, Split Lake and York Landing" resulting from a "modification of the water regime" (Northern Flood Agreement 1977). Today this framework has become the guideline for community planning by the Chiefs and Councils of the affected reserves. Article 3 of this agreement also provides for land concessions in which inundated reserve lands were to be compensated at a ratio of 4 to 1. This did not, however, recognize the traditional use-rights to non-reserve lands that were similarly affected and upon which the Nelson House, South Indian Lake and other Native communities had transcribed their histories.

Identifying the Impacts

Manitoba Hydro's position with regards to the numerous impacts that its proposed development would have on the environment and people of north central Manitoba can only be described as indifferent if not callous. As stated in the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Manitoba Hydro:

Hydro had proceeded on the basis that the social and environmental consequences of its undertakings were of no great significance and took the position, in any event, that it was the responsibility of Government to deal with these intangibles. Hydro would, at best cooperate if asked or forced to do so. Even more surprising is the cavalier attitude, which in retrospect can only be described as irresponsible, towards several vital engineering aspects that would have affected the technical feasibility of the proposed project (1979: 355).

By public pressure and federal concern, the Government of Manitoba through the Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board did

fund impact assessments for environmental, socio-economic and archaeological considerations. Manitoba Hydro acknowledged its requirement to meet requests for mitigation and compensation arising from development and in 1973 began to provide funds for mitigation studies, including those associated with archaeological sites. A review of these programs, and particularly the ones associated with archaeological concerns, is in order.

Environmental and Socio-economic Impact Assessments

The environmental and socio-economic impacts for a project of the magnitude of Churchill River Diversion would, by modern standards, require numerous years of study and analysis before the issuance of a water license and approvals for construction. As it has been outlined earlier, this was not the case. Once the technical feasibility of the development was secured, for political and other reasons the project was guaranteed to go forward, regardless of its destructive effects or local opposition.

Anticipated environmental impacts were compiled and integrated by the Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board in 1974 (for example Ayles and Koshinsky 1974; Webb 1974; Webb and Foster 1974 among several). A wide variety of specific and secondary impacts were identified with the recommended solution being a long-term co-ordinated ecological monitoring and research program. Predicted environmental impacts ranged considerably, from erosional effects and shoreline instability to alterations of wildlife and fisheries habitats. As they

were to specifically impact upon the people and lands of the Nelson House Cree, these included the following:

- 1) Water levels were to increase in the upper portions of the Rat River channel by approximately 32 ft. and by approximately 50 ft. in the lower portions. This would impact upon shoreline marsh and willow shrub vegetation. It was also predicted that flooded stream valleys and embayments would take more than 50 years to stabilize. Embayments and other protected shorelines would also become congested with standing dead trees.
- 2) After the diversion of flows from the Churchill River and regulation at the Notigi control structure, the mean discharge into the Burntwood River would be increased nine to ten-fold. Lakeshore erosion would continue to occur until bedrock was reached.
- 3) The loss of marsh, shoreline and other features attractive to waterfowl would affect migration paths and use of the area.
- 4) Relative population sizes of different species of fish were expected to change considerably. Whitefish would not disappear but they would be greatly reduced. Streams suitable for spawning walleye were expected to become completely inundated and this species would also be reduced in numbers.
- 5) Shoreline inundation would result in the displacement of moose due to a loss of habitat. Fur bearers would also be displaced due to rising water. Finally, it was predicted that significant changes in water levels during winter would have an effect on caribou using the ice surface of lakes.

The Manitoba Department of Northern Affairs seconded full time staff from the Department of Mines, Resources and Environmental Management to prepare the social and economic impact analysis of diversion. The mandate for this report was "designed to provide a basis for establishing both a compensation and a development process which [could] be built upon as changes [occurred], potential [developed] and

further data collection and analysis [was] carried out" (Collinson et. al 1974: 2). Impacts were assessed by the four stages of development being implemented, by the nature of the community and by the character of a community's individuals. As this mandate implies, the report had little concern for social or cultural impacts, its focus being almost exclusively wrapped up in the economic effects of inundation on local people and industries, and how these might be compensated for. Categories eligible for compensation were defined as damage to livelihood, damage to infrastructure, and effects on the community generally. With the livelihoods of Native people focused on hunting, fishing and trapping, the report concentrated on the loss of income based on these activities. As it concluded for the Nelson House community *per se*, there existed 19 fishermen and 21 trappers who would be impacted (see Collinson et. al 1974: 127-129). These individuals were to be notified and informed of the possible effect of inundation on their livelihoods and given assurance that they would be compensated for the loss.

The quality and appropriateness of the environmental and socio-economic impact assessments must be severely questioned, especially given the negligible effect they had on either development planning or design. As later described by Hilderman et. al (1983: 293) the eventual destruction of wild life habitat and other features had substantially greater impact than predicted, not only for those whose livelihood was directly affected, but for the communities as a whole. Among these impacts were a loss of " ... access to traplines, loss of muskrat trapping, inability to reach beaver along flooded shoreline, inability to hunt moose along affected shorelines, increase in sediment in drinking water, change

in taste of fish, problems of mercury in fish within the affected lakes, floating debris in fish nets, slush conditions on ice affecting snowmobile use, motor and boat damage due to debris, inability to utilize old campsites due to flooding, debris and erosion, loss of cemeteries to flooding and loss of swimming beach sites" (ibid.). As well, the threat of this project was not only to income, but to the very survival of a way of life focused upon on the land. As for the socio-economic study:

Collinson's (1974) so-called 'social' report, has not treated the history of the community; it did not treat the desiderata employed by the first residents in selecting the site, it did not mention a religion, it did not treat Indian value systems; it did not describe, define or quantify income distribution, it did not deal with family structure of inter-family ties, it did not treat inter-community relations, it did not describe or quantify the service sector of the economy nor indicate source of services ... it, is then, something less than adequate (Hilderman et. al 1983: 292).

At present, it would be an understatement to suggest that the full determination of environmental, social or economic impacts have yet to be understood (e.g.. Kroker 1990: 183-193; MacLaren Plansearch Inc. 1986).

Archaeological Impact Assessment

In 1969, concerned individuals within the archaeological community felt that a concerted effort had to be made to rescue archaeological sites as they were to be threatened by inundation and erosion of the proposed diversion project. As described by Kroker (1990: 14-24), this led to the formation of the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project. This was to be a joint, multi-institutional program including the University of Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature

and the Manitoba Archaeological Society. An initial support grant of \$53,000.00 was awarded by the Manitoba Department of Tourism and Recreation for a rock art survey along the diversion route and for shoreline survey of Southern Indian Lake. While the first year of this work was limited in duration, it illustrated the scale of the task that needed to be undertaken. It resulted in 138 site locations including "prehistoric campsites, pictographs, ceremonial sites, quarry sites, trading posts, burials and cabins (Malory 1970). Between that field season and 1976, the last for which funding could be secured, the number of sites increased to 297 and excavations were undertaken at several of these.

In the end, the total cost for archaeological research was in excess of \$870,000, of which Manitoba Hydro contributed \$450,000 for mitigative work between 1973 and 1975. The remainder of the monies were forthcoming from a variety of sources including various departments of the Manitoba government (Cultural Affairs, Parks, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature), the Lake Winnipeg, Churchill and Nelson Rivers Study Board, Student Temporary Employment Programs, the Winnipeg Foundation and private donation. During the course of the project, many Manitoba archaeologists, student or otherwise, received gainful employment in the field, with a smaller number hired on over the winter months to catalogue collections and write reports. With the Churchill River Diversion going into operation in 1976, Manitoba Hydro refused further funding and the project came to a halt. As much of the recovered data continue to remain unanalysed or in some cases unreported upon, this lack of continued

funding has had a significant influence on the final assessment of successes and failures.

Kroker (1990) provides an extensive overview of the individual programs that were implemented between 1969 and 1976, a summary of the recorded data, and a listing of published and unpublished reports. The areas to be affected by both Churchill diversion and Lake Winnipeg storage and regulation were divided into no less than ten study regions and each of these was given varying degrees of coverage. Of particular note for a discussion of the Nelson House Cree is the archaeological examination of the Churchill diversion route running along the Rat River from Isset Lake south to Wapisu Lake as well as coverage on the Burntwood River from Footprint Lake to Wuskawatim Lake. Of the Rat River survey, 39 archaeological sites were recorded, the majority of which were found on Wapisu Lake; two were subsequently chosen for excavation. As Kroker (1990: 114) notes, this survey coverage appears less than adequate and the 39 sites "must be considered only a small percentage of the heritage resources locations that actually occurred". As well, artifacts from the 37 sites without intensive excavation "have yet to be examined, interpreted or published" (ibid.: 116). A similar situation characterizes the archaeology of the upper Burntwood River where only 26 sites were located with one on Wuskwatim Lake excavated. Analysis and reports on recovered materials are also nonexistent. This latter survey did record two sites of importance to later discussion, the "Wuskwatim Lake Dancing Circle" and the "Wisakichak Footprint" pictograph on Footprint Lake.

Aside from its lack of survey coverage, the greatest failing of the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project was the inability of project

personnel to complete the data analysis and bring individual projects into a published format. For example, of the 30 "published" reports listed by Kroker (1990: 245-248), less than half are anything more than a preliminary research note (several in local Newsletters) and even fewer offer substantive insights into the work that was accomplished (examples of the latter include Dickson 1980, 1983; Jones 1981; Wood 1983; Kelly 1982). If one were able to translate the over \$870,000 research fund into cost per readable page, this problem cannot be denied. Perhaps more important than the lack of communication to the professional archaeological community was the failure of project personnel to make the results available to local people in an understandable format. This, combined with a failure to record traditional use and named sites, denied the Cree of north central Manitoba their ancient and more immediate past.

Since the dissolution of the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project in 1976, archaeological materials continue to be curated at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. According to Kroker (1990) analysis continues on a part time basis as funds become available. Between 1991 and 1992, additional surveys were carried out along the inundated shorelines of Southern Indian Lake and the southern diversion route. Kroker's earlier concerns that recorded sites represent only a small proportion of what was present previously has been clearly illustrated. Indeed, an additional 272 localities have now been documented by artifact finds of a wide range of types (Speidel and Syms 1993). Most of these, unfortunately, represent eroded or otherwise disturbed sites with little value for our understanding of lifeways or peoples in the region.

Summary

The Churchill River Diversion project from its very outset was a guaranteed development, and concerns for environment and Native peoples were non-existent. The politic of the day saw the north as an economic zone from which Manitoba would take its place as a prosperous province within the Canadian confederation. Hydro-electric generation within this overall scheme was a critical component. Through the preceding chapter I have outlined the extent of this development and attempted to trace the history of the project from initial planning stages through to implementation. In this history, the Nelson House Cree are all but invisible, being a minor impediment to Manitoba Hydro and the attainment of its goals. Even within the associated environmental, socio-economic and archaeological impact assessment studies that were undertaken between 1969 and 1976, Cree peoples remained a minor component that could easily be compensated, disregarded or relocated. In the chapter to follow, I attempt to outline one of the real consequences of Churchill River diversion that continues to be ignored. This is the loss of traditional land and its impact upon Cree history and culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICAL LANDSCAPES AND THE NELSON HOUSE CREE

Cree culture and our world view teaches us that we are an inherent part of our land, connected to it spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically. We are not separate from the land, and whatever affects the land must also affect us. In speaking today of the Churchill River Diversion Project, elders lament of *Machi Manitou*, the evil spirit: "*Machi Manitou*, Manitoba Hydro, it has flooded us; *Machi Manitou*, Manitoba Hydro, it has drowned us; *Machi Manitou*, Manitoba Hydro, it has destroyed our souls". In the summer of 1992, the extent and significance of this lament was brought home to me while raspberry picking along the Footprint River with my parents and a close relative, Arabella Spence. While we were having tea, Arabella commented:

Machi Manitou, Hydro. It has not only flooded our land, it has destroyed it even further by crushing the rocks. *Kichi Manitou* never appointed Hydro as custodian of this land. *Machi Manitou*, Hydro. It has destroyed us.

Arabella was referring to the crushed rock used to reinforce the new shoreline which had been created by the diversion project; a shoreline that was ineffectual in the flooded areas as it was being continually eroded.

In the preceding chapter, I have outlined the various impact assessment projects carried out in response to the Churchill River Diversion project. While, obviously, there was an expressed concern for socio-economic and archaeological effects of the project on the Nelson House Cree and other groups, the studies failed to identify an impact considered so great that it threatened the very soul of the community. This was the effect that a destruction of the land would have on traditional Cree history and culture. Through many centuries of use and interaction with the land, the Nelson House Cree had transcribed their history onto it. This was our historical text and the landscape was an affirmation that the past had really occurred. In the following sections, I first examine the theoretical concept of a historical landscape, its meaning, and its place within a social science/humanities framework. I then move on to speak of the historical landscape of the Nelson House Cree specifically.

Theoretical Arguments for Historical Landscape

My arguments that a named landscape forms the equivalent of a historical text for the Nelson House Cree is neither unique nor novel. The use of cultural landscape as a central unit of analysis characterizes a number of contemporary disciplines, most significantly including folklore, historical geography and environmental design (among several Lynch 1960; Lowenthal 1975; Meinig 1979; Rapoport 1982). Place name research, something known as toponymy, is also accepted as a study with considerable significance for historical interpretation (see Taylor 1909; Stewart 1975). These fields of inquiry have illustrated that landscapes

and place names are multidimensional phenomena, and that they may be perceived and read in different ways by different peoples.

As they are frequently treated within folklore and geography, landscapes are foremost a symbolic construction (i.e. Rapoport 1982: 137; Meinig 1979: 202). They are given cultural meanings that are shared by a group, and that serve to solidify group identity through common experience. In supporting this interpretation, Lynch has provided the critical framework for my thesis of historical landscape:

The landscape plays a social role. The named environment, familiar to all, furnishes material for common memories and symbols which bind the group together and allow them to communicate with one another. The landscape serves as a vast mnemonic system for the retention of group history and ideals (Lynch 1960: 303).

However, for the Nelson House Cree, these landscapes are not only the "mnemonic system" that calls forth place names and history - they serve to validate history (also see Cruikshank 1990). An explanation of the landscape itself, its form and its features, is an integral component of several historical narratives. The landscape is the way it is because of the event that took place. We know that the event must have taken place because its consequences continue to be marked on the landscape.

Euro-Canadian society, including those individuals involved in heritage matters, has had a difficult time understanding the significance and meaning of land and landscape to Native peoples in general, particularly as it relates to culture and identity. At the heart of this misunderstanding are differing world views and cosmogonies (see Altman and Chemers 1980: 20-23). As recent "colonizers" of western Canada,

Euro-Canadians are disconnected from the land, viewing it as a wilderness that is to be controlled, exploited, commodified or feared (after Nash 1967). The impact studies of the Churchill River Diversion project stand as testimony to these statements; land and its loss were treated solely within the framework of cost benefits analyses, economy and financial considerations. To the Euro-Canadian, it is the mastery of culture over nature that is the essence of civilization. Consequently it is the culturally constructed environment that forms the critical symbols of "place" and "history". This is evident in the significant effort that Canadian society has invested in the historic preservation of buildings, streetscapes and other monuments of its past. It is also evident in Manitoba Hydro's willingness to pay large sums of money to archaeologists to collect the "tangible" remains of culture, the thousands of artifacts that now litter eroded shorelines throughout the region. The artifacts are of interest, but to the Nelson House Cree it is traditional land and its features that incorporate history. It is the landscape, not Laurel or Selkirk pottery, that forges our sense of identity, place and roots.

The disconnection of land and historical meaning is not solely a characteristic of Euro-Canadian settlement in western Canada. It has been documented as a feature of colonialist regimes throughout the world. Daniel Corkery (1941 as discussed in Lowenthal 1975) provides a highly similar situation in his characterization of the English colonization of Ireland and the usurpation of Irish lands:

These O'Connells, O'Connors, O'Callaghans, O'Donoghues - all the Gaels- were one ...with the very landscape itself To run off the family names ... was to call to vision certain districts

- hills, rivers and plains; while contrariwise to recollect the place-names in certain regions was to remember the ancient tribes and their memorable deeds. How different it was with the Planters [English] round about them. For them, all that Gaelic background of myth, literature and history had no existence The landscape they looked upon was indeed but rocks and stones and trees (as cited in Lowenthal 1975: 8).

The Irish were "rooted in a valued past"; the English were "perched in an isolated present" (ibid.).

Discussions of Cree cosmogony in Chapter 2 have outlined still another fundamental difference between Euro-Canadians and people of the Nelson House reserve - the concept of lineal time versus *kiyahs*, or ancient time. In developing the framework for a Cree historical landscape, it is critical that this once again be stated. The concept of *kiyahs* is not a history with chronological order, at least one that can be differentiated beyond the creation myths themselves. Rather, it is a series of synchronic events and transformations, and in this regard it must be viewed as a history in the spatial realm. The stories of *kiyahs* were acted out over the extent of the landscape and the totality of the landscape is required for a telling or deciphering of the past. A loss of land, therefore, becomes analogous to the removal of individual chapters from a temporally ordered history book. Some sense of understanding may be gained, but a complete comprehension becomes impossible. Deloria (1973:75) has also commented upon the importance of the spatial dimension for indigenous histories in North America.

With the preceding as its justification, I argue that the history of the Nelson House Cree is in large part superimposed on the landscape of our traditional territories. These lands were created and transformed in

kiyahs, and the geographical features of the landscape bear testimony to that fact. As these features are encountered as one moves throughout the territory, they serve as the mnemonic system by which the event is remembered and is told to others. These stories provide a shared and coherent history that has been passed from generation to generation. They represent a Cree cultural identity that merges past with the present. The historical landscape of the Nelson House Cree is a subject worthy of documentation in its own right, whether it leads Euro-Canadian archaeologists to a more "scientific" understanding of the past or not.

Within a western sense of scholarship and history, there exists other reasons for a documentation of Cree place names and narratives. Place names, for example, form a critical record of the past in their own right. Toponymy, as Taylor (1909: 1) states, can provide a "geographical entymology" as an aide to ethnology. Names trace emigrations and immigrations, record events that may be absent in written histories, conserve the more archaic forms of a living language and, in describing the physical features of the landscape, provide clues to geological development or other natural contexts (*ibid.*). As Barber (1994: 17-18) has also illustrated, toponymy has the potential to reveal many other types of information as well (also Stewart 1975).

Ethnographers have also viewed traditional landscape names, narratives and myths as a multi-referential set of messages in which cultural strategies for survival are implicitly and explicitly encoded. Rowntree and Conkey (1980: 461) have gone so far as to liken this body of knowledge to an "environmental archives". As they state, cultural landscapes function as a narrative, "a symbolic legacy conveying, if not

realizing, information from one generation to another, information about subsistence ways, cosmology, territory, or historical position" (ibid.). For the ethnographer, ethnohistorian or cultural geographer, they form a text through which insights may be gained into cultural forms no longer being practiced (i.e. Hanks and Winter 1986). They are an important and significant source of ethnographic data that cannot be overlooked. As will be illustrated, many of the place names of the Nelson House Cree act in just this manner.

The Historical Landscape of the Nelson House Cree

Cree history is a continuum of experiences on the landscape and these are recorded in place names and oral traditions. With this recognition, I set about trying to record as many narratives and named locales as I was able to document in the summer of 1992. The subject of my inquiries were Cree elders from the Nelson House reserve, many of whom are personal relatives. These elders are the most tangible links to the past, either when *Wasahkacahk* walked the land or more recent times after the coming of the fur trade and missionaries. Interviews were recorded on tape, and named sites or locations, as best as could be determined, were plotted on a map (Appendix A see Figures 5 and 6). I have recorded the information as described, no matter how trivial it may have seemed. The details of this cartographic project are given in Appendix A. Where I have been able to cross reference historical information or family associations for a particular place, these too are provided.

I must admit that the historical landscape that I was able to document is highly fragmentary. In part this is a consequence of the preliminary nature of my survey, one limited by time, and by my abilities to elicit appropriate responses about names or sites that have long been inundated. The number of elders holding traditional knowledge of the pre-diversion project landscape has also been severely reduced over the past two decades and this has had an obvious impact. Yet, and in spite of these limitations, I was able to record a range of places that I believe are supportive of my theoretical arguments for historical landscape and Cree culture history. That many of these sites continue to be remembered at all, in spite of their current situation beneath several metres of water, emphasizes their importance to sense of place and sense of identity for the Nelson House people.

Several of the most important sites relate to events of *kiyahs*, either documenting the activities of *Wasahkacahk* or describing some other event or association. Other sites refer to specific events of more recent times, and still others are named for some geographic marker or natural resource for which they are renowned. All, however, are part of Cree cartography that defines a past relationship to the land. It is difficult to put this information into a synthesis with any degree of coherency. My principal goal, therefore, is to illustrate how this history exists as a part of the landscape. I begin in most recent times and move backward into *kiyahs*.

The territorial core for the Nelson House people is *N'sihcah-wahahsihk*, the place where three rivers (Footprint, Burntwood and Rat)

meet. *N'sihcahwahahsihk* provides a sense of place, a collective identity that differentiates the *Ihthiniwahkh* (people of) *N'sihcahwahahsihk* from other Cree groups. We also refer to ourselves as *Ahsihnihschow Ihthiniwahkh*, meaning rock people, a name in obvious reference to the geological context of the Canadian Shield. The Nelson House band has long standing historical relations with the people of Southern Indian Lake, Granville Lake, Pukatawagan and Wabowden. Our shared experiences incorporate the landscape called *Mihstih Nihpih* (Big Water, the Churchill River system) and each of the other tributaries and lakes in this part of Manitoba.

Some of the names and locations associated with recent history document specific events. *Ihskonihkahnihk*, the Nelson House Reserve, literally translates as "place which was left over", a reference to the signing away of Cree lands in the treaty process. *Kahyasihkompanihk* is the site near *Wahpahsihk* (the Narrows) where the Hudson's Bay Company established itself in 1873. Without the previous experience of a trading store as brought by the fur traders, the word *kompanihk* (company) was adopted from English to refer to these places. *Notogiwo-sahkahihkahn* (Old Women's Lake) was the location where women would look after the children while the men traveled to York Factory to trade for furs or when the men worked as freighters for the Hudson's Bay Company. *Chipoyahnihwahsahk* refers to the site where Chippewyan people would come to camp at sometime in the past. *Pahkwahihsihk* (place of the French), currently called Roman Catholic Point, is the site where the Catholic Missionaries established a residency in 1930. The English Methodist missionaries, and their converts, were called *Ahkahthahsihwahk*. Their mission was

established in the 1890s at *Mitosihnihahk* (point where poplars grow). And in more recent times, *Aphihtowihkosihсахnihk* (place of the half-sons) was used to name the Métis settlement, it being established by the Manitoba government in the 1970s to accommodate non-treaty peoples .

Other names mark less specific events of history but provide an important message to those who use the area. *Ahtihmonihstahpowiwinihk*, for instance, is the place or point where dogs drowned, referring to the difficulties of crossing the ice immediately after freeze-up. The dangers of *Notogiwo-powihstihk* (Old Women's Rapids) are implicit in the story of two old women upsetting their birch bark canoe and drowning here. *Kahmihnih-stihkowciwahk*, the forked rapids, connotes an identical meaning while the spirit at *Mahntonakos* (Spirit Island) creates winds, if anyone points at the island, to make a crossing of Wuskwatim Lake a most difficult task.

Equally significant as historical places are referential names to sites at which traditional ceremonies or rituals were formerly held. The place where people danced in a circle, *Wahskahsilmohnahnihk* alludes to our annual aggregation for the Goose Dance ceremony or some other major event. Richard Bonner, now in his 90s, recalled the Goose Dance at the Dancing Circle at Wuskwatom Lake, where *kiyahs* took his backpack off and began dancing and singing as he crossed the portage near the site. *Thikwahahskahnah* are the locations of burial sites at Poplar point, Catholic point and others that are now under water. *Pahskawahtihnahk* , the place empty of trees, is the site where people “feasted upon dogs”, and where medicine rituals were carried out as described by the Reverend E. R. Young in 1869. It was covered with *kipochihkahn*, carvings at which

offerings were left by travelers to ensure good weather, success or luck. *Kipoc-ahsihnih* marks a specific location at Rat Lake where a rock “has a face” like a *kipochihkahn*. *Omwahpihmihwihnihk*, the place where fat is eaten, also denotes a traditional feasting ground.

There are many other recorded names of the Nelson House Cree that simply refer to natural features of the landscape, and in this respect seem descriptive as opposed to historical. Even these, however, are an important part of Cree geography. These places stand as landmarks to people in conversation, as guideposts for those receiving travel instructions, and as a reference to which one can attach personal stories of adventure or misadventure. To the elders of Nelson House, these names also have become synonymous with the families who formerly lived there, or the individuals who used the area for specific purposes. The families of Amos and Elizabeth Spence, John and Susan MacDonald and Matthew Linklater are always associated with *Tahkotahmahtihnihk* (at the top of the hill) at Poplar Point. The David Flett family, who now lives at *Pahkwahishsihk* (Place of the French) is formerly associated with *Opowahkahsihk* (Bay with Small Sandy Beach). Similarly, *Pahsahk* (place of gully which is shaped like *Wasahkacahk*'s “Gluteus Maximus”) is associated with the Wellington Moody, R. Linklater and Lazarus Spence families while *Wahkahskwasihk* (lake that is bent) is the traditional camp of Ruby Spence and his family.

There are still other names that record an abundance of natural resources at particular locales, and these have long standing recognition. As Rowntree and Conkey (1980: 461) suggest, this group of names forms an “environmental archive”, one with critical importance for survival.

Osihko-sipih and *Osihko-sahkahihkahnihk* document the lake and river of saw bill ducks. *Wahpihsihwo-sahkahihkahnihk* is the lake of swans while *Oskotihmo-sahkahihkahnihk* is the lake of many beaver dams. One picks berries by way of *N'tahwihmini-sipishis* (river to look for berries). Birch trees are found in abundance at *Wahskwio-sahkahihkahnihk* with poplar groves at *Mitosihnihahk*. Other sites such as *Ahtihko-sahkahihkahnihk* (lake with many caribou), *Wahcasko-sipih* (muskrat's river) and *Otohowihnihk* (place where waterfowl alight) not only designate specific foods, but their origins or histories are explained within the traditions of these lands. It is the latter narratives which bring *kiyahs*, the ancient past, into the realm of the recent past and the present. Accordingly they serve as an affirmation of Cree history and culture.

It is said that in *kiyahs*, that there were many beings that are different from today. The *Mimikwisihwahk* were the water people who could go through rock. Their house and canoe was located at *Wahskahihkahnihk awka Cimahn* and here they continue to reside. There was *Mihsihpihsew*, the water lynx and *Wasahkacahk*, the transformer. A conflict between these two beings resulted in a great flood over the land. Muskrat then brought *Wasahkacahk* a dab of dirt on his paw, and from this he recreated the earth and made it livable for Cree people. In gratitude, *Wasahkacahk* gave muskrat a special place to live, a river (*Wahcasko-sipih*) and a lake (*Wahcasko-sahkahihkahnihk*). Muskrat's relatives continued to be found here in great numbers until inundation by the Churchill River diversion. *Wasahkacahk* then began his travels, changing the animals and the land into what they are today. In his journeys, he was always hungry and continually tried to trick other animals into becoming his meal. At

Otohowihnihk he got the waterfowl to dance in a circle with their eyes closed, then strangled them one by one. At *Ahtihko-sahkahihkahnihk* he was able to convince caribou to run in a circle so that he might practice target shooting with his bow and arrow. Most importantly, however, as *Wasahkacahk* continued his travels through the land, he left behind marks of his passing so that future people would know of his presence. At *Wasahkacahk-otitahpihwihh* he sat and thought, and in this way he left behind the impression of his posterior in the rock on which he was perched. And at *Otitiskiwihnihk* he left his footprints in the cliff, giving rise to *Otitiskihwin-sahkahihkahnihk*, the Lake of the Footprints. It is on Footprint Lake that the Nelson House peoples have now chosen to reside.

The few examples that I am able to provide are but a glimpse of how past and present histories are formed and merge, and how the Nelson House Cree interact with their traditional landscape. It is a source of cultural identity and a prescription through which people can survive in this boreal forest environment. It is a narrative that needed full treatment and consideration in impact assessments long before the Churchill River Diversion project was developed. That this has only now been initiated, some twenty or so years after the landscape was forever altered, is a tragedy of proportions for the Nelson House Cree.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

**ON THE INTEGRATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL
AND NATIVE HISTORIES IN HERITAGE PRESERVATION**

We misunderstand myth by interpreting it as flawed history. For hunters, it is appropriate to place human life within nature. For historians, human life is inevitably placed within the stream of history. For hunters, dreams and visions validate and explain the past in terms of present experience. For historians, the past is validated by documents rather than by personal experience. When historians attempt to write the history of hunting people they must find ways of recognizing the validity of personal experience without violating their own scholarly traditions of obtaining valid information about the past. Historians must be wary of dreaming up other cultures, but they can, perhaps, dream into the rich store of information that hunters have given us about themselves (Ridington 1987:135).

In speaking of the Beaver Indians of northeastern British Columbia, anthropologist Robin Ridington has isolated a fundamental dichotomy between the structure of Native American histories and those academically penned. What he has not stated is that the documents that are so critical to a "scholarly" history are often as "flawed" with hidden ideologies and agendas as are the "mythical" histories that are transcribed onto the landscape (for example Trigger 1989; and just about every historian who has ever discussed the documentary record). In attempting to write a narrative explanation of the events and human impacts surrounding the Churchill River Diversion project of north central Manitoba, I employed this dichotomy as a central thematic structure. In

this conclusion, I wish to restate several of the principal elements of this argument and ground them within an archaeological conceptual framework for the conservation and protection of heritage. It is my contention that, if North American archaeology will ever be relevant to the people it studies, the dichotomy must be resolved.

The Churchill River Diversion project was the largest and most expensive mega-development ever undertaken in the province of Manitoba. It was planned and implemented in an era of Canadian optimism for the future and was but one of several similar projects undertaken in western Canada in the 1970s. Prosperity would accrue from construction employment; prosperity would result from a long term harnessing of a renewable energy resource; and prosperity would come through a further opening up of the north for exploitation of its natural resources. The technology existed to build dams, diversion channels, transmission lines and other facilities; the result would be an unending source of cheap energy for the industries and consumers of southern Manitoba. This vision of the future, one shared by provincial and federal governments, was ratified in the 1966 signing of a formal agreement to proceed with the Lake Winnipeg Regulation and Churchill River Diversion Project. Nowhere in this vision was there a concern for environment nor the Cree people whose lives would be forever altered. These were recognized as impediments but ones that could be easily resolved for the larger good. As stated in the earlier quote of Sidney Green, such a resolution was seen to have an even further advantage in forcing Native peoples into an integration with mainstream Canadian society (as cited in Hilderman et. al 1983: 268).

Throughout the entire process of development, Manitoba Hydro's position was resolute - their role was capitalist without social or moral conscience. They were providing the benefits of development and, while they would be willing to compensate individuals or communities for tangible losses if forced to do so, it was not their position to worry about or even determine the impacts of the project. For the Nelson House and other Cree bands whose lands were about to be inundated, it was the intangibles that were of critical importance. These were the attachments to land and landscape that had been forged over millennia. These attachments were not simply an economic commodification of land as Manitoba Hydro had assumed, they were historical and cultural links. Cree history and world view are defined by the land. Through sites, place names, features of the natural environment and other contexts of landscape, the Cree merge ancient history, *kiyahs*, with events of more modern times; in so doing the world becomes a meaningful place in which to live. The historical landscape of these Cree groups was a principal mechanism for cultural transmission and cultural survival.

Here I need not restate the lengthy archaeological and historical record that provides the Cree with an indisputable right to claim stewardship of the land. This has been outlined in detail in Chapter 2. What is significant is that Manitoba Hydro, as well as the government of Manitoba, ignored this right and failed to integrate Cree peoples into the planning process or inform them of the project's consequences until the intricacies of development were already final. What is also significant is the total lack of consideration for Cree cultural values as they relate to land. This not only occurred in the socio-economic impact assessment

funded by the Lake Winnipeg and Churchill River Study Board, but is blatantly manifest in the seven years of archaeological studies that were undertaken between 1969 and 1975. The Cree people of the Churchill, Rat, Burntwood and other rivers of central Manitoba were acknowledged by archaeologists as the end product of a cultural chronology, but it was only through "scientific" archaeology that history could be stretched back in time to prehistory. The delineation of prehistory, in fact, became another of the falsely perceived benefits of the diversion project as promoted. Thus, Interdisciplinary Systems Ltd., a Winnipeg-based consultant firm, went on to suggest that because of these archaeological surveys, "many sites have been found which may not have been found for many years" (1976: 40). The writing of prehistory was being expedited, even though it was also recognized that the "archive" would be eventually destroyed through inundation.

It is easy to criticize the programs and archaeologists who participated in the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project for their lack of ability to penetrate the past. Many were students who were seeking summer employment, others were avocational archaeologists who held peripheral interests, some were consultants concerned about profit margins, and still others were university academics pursuing limited research goals. In the end, and fully acknowledged in Kroker's (1990) summary report, only limited survey coverage of the region was attained, very few analyses were ever completed, and the production of meaningful reports and publications was dismal relative to the total amount of money that was spent. Equally important, prehistory was treated as a subject divorced from a human host and certainly not as an extension of the Cree.

Prehistory was a series of ceramic types or projectile points that could be salvaged, named, catalogued and curated, and most of these were claimed to originate from some other location (see Chapter 2). Trigger's (1989: 316) statement that North American archaeologists have a difficult time interpreting and treating "the past as a record of native American history and culture" is clearly evident. In this context it is not surprising that one of the few publications written for popular consumption (as listed by Kroker 1990: 246), and available to the local community of Nelson House, is titled "Prehistoric Northern Manitoba" (Dickson 1978). This title superimposes provincial sovereignty into the realm of *kiyahs* while at the same time it divorces the Cree from time depth in historical development.

The theoretical discussions of Chapter 4 have developed the concept of historical landscape by contrasting Euro-Canadian and Cree perceptions of land and world view. As recent immigrants to the land, Euro-Canadian society marks its place and history through cultural constructions; Cree people identify with the land, explain its configuration by oral tradition, and structure history through landscape names and associations. Beyond the alternative versions of history that may be derived, these differences are important for other reasons. They illustrate basic definitions of heritage that are in opposition. The original goal of the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project was to "rescue heritage resources" (Kroker 1990:14). It was the Euro-Canadian version of heritage, however, that defined what was to be rescued and what was to be ignored.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the field of Archaeological Resource Management arose in North America as part of a growing concern for

environmental protection in the face of ever increasing urbanization and mega-project development (see Fowler 1982). Governments initiated policies and legislations requiring detailed impact assessment and mitigation programs in an effort to salvage what was recognized as a "nonrenewable" resource (Spurling 1986 provides an exhaustive overview for western Canada). This led to a large scale expansion in the discipline of archaeology, and the literal creation of an archaeological industry. As its organizing theme, and intrinsic to the title itself, archaeological resource management holds that heritage resources are equivalent to other resources in the natural environment and that they can be managed (Schiffer and Gummerman 1977). To manage something requires that it is measurable, that it can be counted, and that it can be manipulated. Archaeologists have defined the concept of site as the unit of management; a bounded space incorporating artifacts and features of the past. Where decisions have to be made as to research documentation, preservation or destruction by development, the relative merits of sites for scientific research are weighed against each other. Depth, stratigraphy, chronology, spatial extent, integrity, artifact types, uniqueness and other measurable attributes are applied in this process (see Burley 1982; 49-65). This was foremost the philosophy, if not approach, of the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project. By its very definition, landscape histories and the significance of landscape to the Nelson House Cree fell outside the realm of archaeological resource management and were ignored.

The problems of archaeological resource management as an objectification and commodification of the Native past are not unique to

Churchill River Diversion. Winter (1984: 40), for example, has argued that archaeological resource management is a "continuation of the centuries-old conflict" between Euro-American and Indian cultures and that the Euro-American perception of "Indian cultures and sites as objects of study all reflect definite cultural biases". Perhaps the most relevant comparison that can be drawn here is Mohs' (1987) examination of Sto:lo spiritual sites on the Fraser River of British Columbia. Faced with the destruction of many of these sacred places by proposed railway development, Mohs found it difficult if not impossible to have these resources recognized as having a "significant" cultural value. Only rarely did these places correspond with the archaeologist's concept of site as defined earlier and, thus, they could not be conceptualized for heritage preservation purposes. Yet, as Mohs also noted, "there are few native heritage sites the Sto:lo would consider more important" (1987: 134).

Over the past decade, the archaeological community has become more sensitive to Native concerns of heritage and Native peoples are being integrated into the decision making process relative to salvage archaeology and archaeological resource management. While this has been so, few archaeological projects have actually incorporated Native heritage values or information into their programs, continuing to focus solely on a scientific study of the past through sites and artifacts. The implications of this approach have also been summarized by Mohs:

The question of what we as anthropologists and archaeologists do or do not do, say or do not say, observe or do not observe, record or do not record can become a matter of ideological, political, moral and legal concern when our professional observations, interpretations, opinions and actions affect the cultural integrity and/or rights of those we study. Because of

our past performance, many Indians currently hold rather cynical views with regard to our theories, speculations and postulations and they question our professional intentions and objectives. As a result, a growing number of Indians and Indian organization refuse to accept our self-proclaimed right to study their cultures (Mohs 1987: 157-158).

For Euro-Canadian archaeologists, the message in this statement should be obvious.

A resolution of the heritage dichotomy requires Euro-Canadian archaeologists to recognize that alternative versions of the past exist, and that they are marked on the landscape in substantially different ways. The lesson to be learned here is not simply one of placating Native peoples by recording myth and "non archaeological" sites. Rather, it is a lesson of respect, a lesson of cultural sensitivity, and a complementary lesson in Cree history. Perhaps in the process, the archaeological community might even learn something of the cultures they are investigating. Archaeology must become "indigenized" and only then will First Nations peoples become interested in and accept the histories and prehistories that are being written.

As a final note to this thesis, I emphasize my observations of a dichotomous past by presenting the scenario in which the destruction of *Wasahkacahk's* footprints took place. To the elders of Nelson House, this event marked a lasting symbol of cultural degradation from which the modern community must emerge.

The Destruction of *Wasahkacahk's* Footprints

It has been noted in Chapter 2 that several pictograph sites were recorded in the early years of the Churchill Diversion Archaeological Project (Steinbring et. al 1978). Individually and collectively, the elders refer to these sites as *Kiyahs Ithihnihwahk Omahsihnaihkiwihna*, pictures that the ancient ones made. These sites occur on rock which is the oldest order of the universe in Cree cosmogony, it also representing the permanence of the land. These pictographs were well known before the archaeologists recorded them, and they were treated with the greatest of respect. These sites formed a highly visible link between *kiyahs* and the present. *Otitiskiwihihnik*, the place where *Wasahkacahk* left his footprints, was among these.

Given the number GkLr-1 by archaeologists, *Otitiskiwihihnik* was described by Kroker (1990: 140-141) in the following way:

The site is located on a vertical granitic rock face which rises straight from the water. Two horizontal red lines have been painted throughout two depressions which resemble human footprints, or moccasin prints, in general outline. Each of the painted lines intersects the centre of a footprint. Two small, faint patches of pigment occur between the footprints.

The site is unusual in that the structure of the bedrock is integral to the painting. Also, a local legend is associated with the site. The depressions "are said by local Native people, to be the footprints of Wisakichak, the traditional Cree and Ojibwa culture-hero.

Associated with the "Footprints" is a natural feature called "Wisakichak's Chair".

With respect to this site, Kroker (ibid.) goes on to state that "discussions concerning mitigative procedures are ongoing".

The discussions regarding *Otitiskiwihnihk* came about because of the fearful concerns of the Nelson House elders of the consequences of diversion. When the waters rose in 1976, these consequences were realized and the footprints and chair were inundated. The Nelson House band consultant, a former white Indian agent, recommended to the band and Manitoba Hydro that *Otiitskiwihnihk* be removed from its location, be restored, and be relocated to an appropriate locale. This was agreed upon by a band resolution and in 1977 divers cut the site from its rock face, removing it in several sections. *Otitiskiwihnihk* was subsequently shipped to the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature in Winnipeg where it was reconstructed. In 1978 it was then sent back to the community of Nelson House and put on display as a "memorial" outside of the "Footprint Cafe".

Even though agreed to by the Nelson House band, this display of *Otitiskiwihnihk* occurred within the framework of a Euro-Canadian perception of heritage. The panel was a tangible artifact of culture worthy of concern and display. Out of its context on the landscape, however, *Otitiskiwihnihk* had lost its meaning. As the elders were later to lament, this removal brought destruction on the community through increased alcoholism, loss of traditional cultural values, loss of language and loss of respect from the young. Indeed, even *Otitiskiwihnihk* itself was subject to vandalism and graffiti. As a symbol, if not cause of cultural degradation, the band returned *Otitiskiwihnihk* to its original location at the request of the elders. Now situated on a shore above high

water, *Wasahkacahk's* footprints once more mark a spot of *kiyahs* for the Nelson House Cree.

APPENDIX A

RECORDED SITES AND PLACE NAMES OF THE NELSON HOUSE CREE

The following list of names and stories was in part collected from elders of the Nelson House reserve and from personal knowledge. Where historical references or family associations could be found they are incorporated. The Cree name and its English translation are provided as a heading. Numbers preceding place names are plotted on the accompanying locational maps of Figures 4 and 5.

Ihskonihkahnik. Place which was left over. [*ihskonihkahn*, what is left over].

Refers to the land on which the Nelson House Reserve is located (see Figure 5). This name appear in reference to the loss of Cree lands with the signing of the Treaty Adhesion of 1908.

B. Thikwahahskannah. Burial sites [*ahski*, earth; *thikwa*, to cover]

A general term to refer to burial sites such as those at Poplar Point, across Footprint Lake at *Wahpahsihk* and at Catholic Point. It also refers to inundated sites at Catholic Point, near *Wahpahsihk* on Footprint Lake, on the Footprint River close to *Otohowihnik* and on the Rat River.

Feasts for the dead were celebrated at grave sites, expressing the spiritual connection with ancestors and those who had gone before. At these feasts, men usually served the women and children. Food was handled with extreme care. Children were instructed not to drop any crumbs on the ground. To ensure that no food fell to the ground, a cloth was placed over each lap and all crumbs and left-overs were burned. If food was not handled with great respect, the dead might go hungry and would not look upon the people with favour. The people in turn would go hungry if the spirits of the dead did not aid them in their subsistence pursuits.

1. **Kiyasihkompanihk.** Place where the Hudson's Bay Company had a post a long time ago [*kiyas*, long ago, *kompanihk*, company].

The Hudson's Bay Company post designated by archaeologists as GkLr-4.

2. **Pahsahk.** Gully. [*pahsahk*, shaped like Wasahkacahk's "Gluteus Maximus"].

Located near the Old Hudson Bay Post. The Wellington Moody, R. Linklater, and Lazarus Spence families lived here. R. Linklater later moved his family to Poplar Point to work for the Nursing Station. Felix Moody (ancestor to present Moody families) moved to *N'sihcawahsihk* from Norway House.

3. **Pahkwahihsihk.** Place of the French [*Pakwahis*, French].

Converts to Catholicism were classified as *Pahkwahihsihk* meaning French. This implies that Catholic missionaries were always French. The Roman Catholic Church established a mission here in 1930 and the site is now referred to as Roman Catholic Point. Catholics from *Pahkihtahwahkahnihk* [Place where people fish] would travel to *N'sicawahasik* to attend mass and would set up tents around the mission. Jerome Linklater was a well-known medicine man who came from *Pukitawakanik*, met his wife Priscilla on one these trips and opted to become a member of the Nelson House Band.

Within the Roman Catholic patent land parcel, the Lazarus Spence, Samuel C. Linklater, and Mihscapihow (R. Hunter) families resided. Conflicts with the priest would arise when Sam C. would make moose juice. One day the priest told him that he would have to leave *n'taskik* [my land] if he persisted in making and drinking the brew. In the priest's French accent, *n'taskik* sounded like "*n'caskik*" [my anus]. This humorous incident would thereafter be recalled along with the legend of *Wasahkichak* and why the tip of weasel's tail is black.

4. **Wahsahsihk.** Bay with small sandy beach [*wahsahak*, beach].

The Nicholas and Alex Hart families lived here.

5. **Ahtihmonihstahpowiwinihk.** Place where dogs drowned [*ahtihm*, dog; *nihstahpowiw*, to drown].

At this point the water is deep and does not freeze as quickly as the rest of the lake, particularly if there is a heavy snowfall immediately after freeze-up. A team of dogs fell through the ice and drowned near this point at some time in the past. The Spences, Linklaters including Maskosis (Little Bear) and Harts lived here. This was one of the original communities that came together to form present day Nelson House

6. Kihpocihkahnihk. See #40.

7. Opohnahpihwihnihsikh. Little Wintering Camp [pihpohn, winter; ahpihwihnihk, place to sit].

Isabel and Abraham Macdonald moved here from Otohowihnihk.

8. Mitosihnihahk. Point where poplars grow [*mitos*, poplar; *nihahk*, point].

This is present day Poplar Point, where the majority of the reserve population now lives. At *Mitosihnihahk*, the *Akahthahsihwahk* [English/Protestants] set up a mission in the 1890s. Rev. S. D. Gaudin (1942: 64) describes the location as follows:

In 1895, Poplar Point Mission, Nelson House, consisted of a small dwelling house and a store room. There was as yet no native homes near, but during two of the summer months a goodly number of people camped backed of the Mission. The location of the church had been decided on a vote of the Indians and it was near the centre of the settled people as was possible. The Hudson's Bay people, and a number of families were two miles distant on one side, while a mile across the lake was a little settlement, and two miles further on was the Oo twa hoo win community.

9. Tahkotahmahtihnihk. At the top of the hill [*tahkoc*; top].

Matthew Linklater, Amos Spence, John Charles Macdonald, Felix Macdonald, Laban Spence, and Lawrence Spence lived here.

10. Pahskwahtihnahk. Place empty of trees [*pahskwow*, bald].

When Isiah and Mary Spence's only daughter died, I was "given" to this family to replace the sister that George, Henry and Rodney had lost.

When my aunt Mary also died, our grandparents, Sandchisis (Little Sandy) and Annie, looked after the boys and myself, at *Paskwatihnahk*. Other families in this area were the Harties, Donald Spence, ;Robinson Spence.

11. Ihspahtinahk. Up the hill [*ihspow*, high].

My great aunt, Susanna Thomas lived here. Her husband, William, came from Cross Lake. The Moores, Bonners, Thomas Linklater, Wellington Spence families resided here.

12. Nihonahnihk. Travelling along side sharp point of land [*nihonahn*, to travel by canoe parallel to land].

Also known today as Hart's Point.

13. Wahskahihkahn awka Cimahn: The House and Canoe [*wahskahihkahn*, house; *awka*, and; *cimahn*, canoe].

This site was located along the Footprint River. It is said to have had the house and canoe of the *Mimikwisihwahk*. These were water people who could go through rock. One of the elders, Richard Bonner, describes them as having bodies similar to human beings, but instead of noses they have gills which enable them to breathe under water.

Mimikwisihwahk were evasive. My great aunt, Sarah McRea, who died when she was 113 in the 1950s, told my mother that she knew of one incidence when the *Mimikwisiwak* were seen. An old man, who had fallen asleep on a rock cliff near the house, awoke to see the them stealing fish from his net. When the *Mimikwisiwak* noticed the old man spying on them, they bowed their heads to hide their faces, paddled away and disappeared into the rocks.

The *Mimikwisihwahk* are given credit for the Cree's knowledge of medicine. Although they were rarely seen, they could be summoned by a medicine person. The medicine person must be someone whom the *Mimikwisihwahk* [*kahkikihtihmahmithihmahcik*] chose to guide in the knowledge of medicine.

The *Mimikwisihwahk* have not been seen for a long time. People believe it is because their house and canoe have been disturbed by the Churchill River Diversion Project.

14. Otitiskiwihnihk: Place of the Footprints [*otitiskiwihn*, footprint].

This name refers to a pictograph site in which *Wasahkacahk's* footprints are represented. With typical Cree humour, Joseph Linklater told me that *Wasahkacahk* left his footprints here as he scampered up the rock face when he was discovered "bothering" the women of a camp he had happened upon. While this site is not associated with a particular legend of transformation, it is taken as affirmation of *Wasahkacahk's* presence in *kiyahs*. These Footprints were significant not only to the people of Nelson House, but to the surrounding Cree communities of Pukatawagon, Granville Lake and South Indian Lake.

Although long known about, the site was first recorded by archaeologists during the Churchill River Diversion project archaeological impact assessment. As described by Kroker (1990:140-141), it was positioned on a vertical granitic rock face rising straight from the water. Two horizontal red lines have been painted through two depressions which, in general outline, resemble human footprints or moccasin prints. Each of the painted lines intersects the centre of a footprint. Two small, faint patches of pigment occur between the footprints.

15. Ihskonihkahn Sahkahihkahn. Reserve Lake [*ihskonihkahn*, left over; *sahkahihkahn*, lake].

16. Osihko-sipih. River abundant with sawbill ducks. [*osihk*, sawbill duck; *sipih*, river].

Today known as the Footprint River, *Osihko-sipih* is said to have had numerous sawbill ducks that people would hunt en route to *Wahpahsihk*.

17. Wahpahsihk. The narrows [*wahpahk*, narrow].

This is the channel between the Métis settlement and *Pahkwahihsihk*. It is an excellent fishing and camping area, especially in spring when the channel always has the first open water. Present day winter festival fishing derbies are held here.

18. Otitiskihwin-sahkahihkahnihk: Lake of the Footprints [*sahkahihkahn*, lake].

The Nelson House Indian Reserve No. 170A, 170B, and 170C [*Iskonihkahn*] is located along the shores of Footprint Lake.

19. N'tahwihmini-sipisihs. Small river which leads to berry picking area [*n'tahwihnah*, to look for; *minisah*, berries; *sipisihs*, small river].

One or more families would make day trips to this area for picking berries. In the fall, cranberries and blue berries were picked.

20. Chipoyahnih-wahsahk. Bay of Chipewyans [*Chipoyahnih*, Chipewyan]

Occasionally, the Chipewyans are said to have "come out of the bush" and camp here. The *ithiniwak* of *N'sihcawahsihk* were on friendly terms with them.

21. Omwahpihmihwihnihk. Place where fat was eaten [*omwah*, to eat; *pihmih*, fat].

This refers to a small settlement across the lake, opposite the Poplar Point Mission. It was noted as being present in 1895 by Reverend Gaudin.

22. Wasahkacahk Otitahpihwihn. Place where *Wasahkacahk* sat down. [*titahpihwihn*, place to sit].

Known as *Wasahkacahk's* chair, this rock is shaped like a chair with the indentation of what appears to be a human posterior. It is said that *Wasahkacahk* stopped to rest and contemplate here. Impacts on this site led to formal complaints by the local community to the Northern Flood Committee.

23. Opowahkasihk. Bay with sandy beach. [*wahsahk*, bay]

The Flett family lived here before they moved to *Pahkwahisihk*.

24. Ocoskwahnihsihk. Small Elbow. [*otoskwahn*, elbow].

Elbow bend along the Footprint River near *Otohowihnihk*.

25. Otohowihihk. Place where waterfowl alight [*twaho*, to land].

The grassy area of the Footprint Basin was good goose and duck hunting territory. It also was the site at which *Wasahkacahk*'s had an encounter with loon.

As *Wasahkacahk* was walking along the river bank, he spied upon thousands of ducks, geese and other waterfowl feeding in this area. After contemplating a little on how he could trick them into becoming his next meal, he grabbed his bag and wandered into the forest where he began collecting moss. He returned to the river bank and as he sauntered along, he pretended to take no notice of the fowl. One of ducks called out to him, "Brother *Wasahkacahk*, what are you carrying in your bag?" *Wasahkacahk* stopped and replied, "Oh! I didn't notice you there! What am I carrying in my bag? Oh, these are my songs." In a huge chorus, the waterfowl begged *Wasahkacahk* to sing his songs so that they could all dance. *Wasahkacahk* let the waterfowl plead with him for a few minutes and when he finally agreed, he said, "Alright, I shall let you dance to my songs; but first, I must build a *mikiwaph* [wigwam]." When everything was ready, *Wasahkacahk* called the waterfowl and told them they could now assemble in the *mikiwaph*. He began singing his songs and as the waterfowl came in, he instructed them to dance in a circle [*tahwahskasihmohnahnihwahn*]. The waterfowl were having a wonderful time dancing in a circle. Then Brother *Wasahkacahk* instructed them to dance with their eyes closed. *Wasahkacahk* began wringing their necks as they danced by him. When Loon decided that he would dance with one eye open, he saw what *Wasahkacahk* was doing. He shrieked and yelled, "Our brother is killing us!" As Loon was making his escape out the *mikiwaph* opening, *Wasahkacahk* kicked him in the rear and pushed his legs out of joint. To this day, Loon cannot walk very well on land.

My grandmother, Isabel Macdonald hunted, trapped, and snared here until she was 90 years old. This was good ptarmigan area as well.

Archaeologists have recorded a fur trade post in the area, GkLr 3. They believe it may be the first post established on Threepoint Lake in 1789.

26. Nahtahpihsihwonahnihsihk. Place to look for swans. [*nahtah*, to go get; *wahpihsihw*, swan].

Today this is called Honeymoon Lake.

27. Ahpihtowihkosihshahnik. Place of Half-sons [*ahpihtow*, half; *kosihsh*, son]

This Métis settlement was established in the 1970s by the government of Manitoba for non-treaty people. Before the settlement was established, the non-treaty people's self-designation was "half-breeds". The English term "half-breed" was more commonly used because the majority of the *ahpihtowihkosihshahnak* were of Cree and Scottish ancestry, deriving from Hudson's Bay Company employees. The people on the reserve jokingly refer to the settlement as the place where the "No-numbers" live.

28. N'sihcawahsihk. Place where three rivers meet [*nisto*, three; *cawahsihk*, opening].

Known as Three Point Lake today, *Wipohskwowi-sipih* [Burntwood River], *Wahcask-osipih* [Rat River] and *Otitiskiwihn-sipih* [Footprint River] come together here.

The settlement which developed in the vicinity of the Hudson's Bay Company Post, the Nelson House of 1873, adopted this name as the groups occupying the surrounding territory settled along the shores of Footprint Lake.

29. Wahpahsihk. Long and narrow lake. [*wahpahk*, narrows].

This is present day Leftrook Lake. It is renowned for its abundance of whitefish, pickeral and jackfish. It has not been affected by the flooding.

30. Wahpahnahkahk. Lake with large bays [*wahpahk*, large bay].

The large bay on present day Threepoint Lake across from *Otohowihnihk*. Abel Bonner had a camp here.

31. Osihko-sahkahihkahnihk. Lake of many sawbill ducks. [*osihko*, sawbill duck; *sahkahihkahnihk*, lake]

32. Wahpihsihwo-sahkahihkahh. Swan's Lake [*wapih*, white; *wapihsihwo*, swan; *sahkahihkahnihk*, lake]

Swans were said to be numerous on this lake.

33. Notogiwo-powihstihk. Old woman's rapids [*notogiw*, old woman; *powihstihk*, rapids].

I was told that two old women drowned in these rapids after upsetting their birch bark canoe.

34. Notogiwo-sahkahihkahn. Old woman's lake. [*notogiw*, old woman; *sahkahihkahn*, lake]

During the fur trade era, the men from Nelson House would travel to York Factory to trade furs. Later they would be hired as freighters in the York boat brigades which travelled to Norway House and Winnipeg carrying furs to the Hudson Bay Company Posts and bringing back supplies and passengers to the outposts. The wives and children of these freighters would be looked after by grandmothers. This was the lake where grandmothers would hunt, trap and fish for the families.

35. & 36. Wahcasko-sipih/Wahcasko-sahkahihkahn. Muskrat's River and Muskrat's Lake [*wahcask*, muskrat].

This river and lake were given to Muskrat by *Wasahkacahk*.

In order to remake the earth after the Flood, *Wasahkacahk* asked several animals to dive for some earth from the flooded land. The only one who was successful was the little rat. *Wasahkacahk* found a miniscule amount of earth on the nearly-drowned rat's paw. After breathing life back into the rat, *Wasahkacahk* blew on the tiny piece of earth to remake the world. As a reward, *Wasahkacahk* decided he would make the rat a very special place to live. This place was the Rat River and Rat Lake. Muskrats are still very numerous here. Thomas Linklater trapped in this area.

37. Wahcasko-nika hp. Muskrat's Portage [*wahcask*, muskrat; *onika hp*, portage].

It is said that muskrat used this portage to travel between Rat River and Rat Lake.

38. Kahpihmihcikahmahsisihk. Length of lake is in East-West axis. [*pihmihci*, east-west axis].

Territory where (Little) Matthew Linklater, Joseph Linklater and Isaac Hartie hunted, trapped and fished. It is spelled as Pemichigamau in provincial survey maps.

39. Kabsahkiwikahmahk. Lake which is long and narrow [*sakiwi*, to come from around a corner].

This lake is spelled Karsakuwigamau in the provincial survey maps.

40. Kipoc-ahsihni. Rock which is shaped like a kipoc. [*ahsihni*, rock; *kipoc*, to see in future].

The *Kipoc-ahsihni* was a rock "with a face", along the water (Rat Lake) route. It is now inundated. *Kipochihkahn* were anthropomorphic figures usually carved into a tree or into a tree stump next to travel routes. A traveller would leave a gift for *Kipoc*, usually tobacco, to ensure good luck, good weather and safe travel. At one time there was a *Kipochikahn* beside the "big bridge", on the road between Dog Point and Poplar Point. There is now a causeway here because of the flooding. It was these figures that the Reverend E. R. Young (see Chapter 2) referred to as idols.

41. Kahmihnihistihkociwahk. Forked Rapids [*mihnihistik*, island; *kociwahk*, to flow around].

An island situated in the middle of the rapids.

42. Mahskosihskowih-sipih. River abundant with grass [*mahskosih*; grass].

Grassy River.

43. Mahskosihskowih-sahkahikahn. Lake abundant with grass. [*mahskosih*; grass].

My father and Richard Bonner trapped in this area. This lake, now called Rusty Lake, contained very large whitefish.

44. Wahkahskwasihk. Lake with many bent willows. [*wahkah*, bent]

Present day Mynarski Lake. This is the traditional camp of Ruby Spence and family. Willows were important for smoking fish and meat and for making snowshoes.

45. Opohnahpihwihnihk. Wintering camp [*pihpohn*, winter; *apihwihnihk*, place to sit].

This area had plentiful caribou and fish. Cree of the present day community of South Indian Lake wintered here before settling on the reserve.

46. Ihthihnihwih-sahkahihkahn. Lake of the Cree. [*Ihthihnihiw*, people/Cree].

This is today known as Southern Indian Lake. People from Nelson House hunted as far north as Southern and Northern Indian Lakes, *ihtikahpahskwahpihskahk* [where there were no trees on the rocks], and into the upper Churchill River area.

47. Ahtihko-sahkahihkahnihk. Lake with many Caribou. [*ahtihk*, caribou]

Hunters and trappers from the Nelson House area travelled to this area to hunt caribou. This also is the location where *Wasahkacahk* met caribou.

As *Wasahkacahk* was walking along, hungry as usual, he met a caribou. *Wasahkacahk* informs Brother Caribou that he has heard about an impending war and how he is concerned about his lack of ability with the bow and arrow. *Wasahkacahk* is afraid that he will not be able to protect himself and all his Little Brothers. Brother Caribou is very much concerned and asks how he may assist *Wasahkacahk*. *Wasahkacahk* ponders a moment, then suggests that perhaps Brother Caribou might assist him in his target practice by running around him in a circle. Brother Caribou is more than eager to assist *Wasahkacahk* begins running in a wide circle around him. *Wasahkacahk* takes aim and misses him deliberately and widely on each run. When *Wasahkacahk* is down to his last arrow, he takes careful aim and shoots the caribou straight through the heart.

Henriksen (1973: 29) suggests this story incorporates the knowledge of a particular type of caribou hunting technique. When only one, two, or

three men are hunting, they often keep together. Their tactic is to shoot the lead animal as soon as the herd starts to move. If the men are well hidden and if the wind is blowing from the right direction, the herd will stop as soon as the first animal falls. Not knowing which way to go, the herd retraces its steps. Again the men shoot the first animals in the flock. If the terrain and the weather are suitable, one man alone can shoot a considerable number of animals by keeping the herd moving in a circle. The same shooting tactic is used when a larger group of men have surrounded the herd; that is, they get the herd to circulate within the pocket.

48. Wahskwio-sahkahihkahnihk. Lake with many birches.
[*wahskwi*, birch].

Present day Gauer Lake. My father trapped and fished here. Other trappers who used this area were my uncle Matthew Linklater, Zacheus Linklater, Stanley McLeod, Louis Baker and Abraham Francois.

49. Mahntonahkos Spirit Island [*mahnto*, spirit].

If one points at this island on Beaver Dam Lake, the spirit which lives here will cause the wind to arise and create huge waves, making the crossing of the lake unsafe.

50. Oskotihmo-sahkahihkahn. Lake with many beaver dams
[*oskotihm*, beaver dam].

Referred to as Wuskwatim Lake in provincial survey maps. Families who lived here included Jimmy Spence, Levi Hartie, Richard Hartie and Amos Spence.

51. & 52. Wahskasihmo-mohnahnihk. Place where people do round dance [*wahskasihmo*, dance in circle].

Refers to dancing circles on Wuskwatom Lake and Dancing Circle Island in Southern Indian Lake. The Dancing Circle Island site is now inundated. The Wuskwatim Circle is also threatened by a second phase of the Churchill River Diversion Project. These circles were part of goose dance ceremonies during the spring aggregation of regional bands. The goose dance involved a large meeting of Cree people at which there was feasting and singing. It was traditionally timed in the spring or fall to intercept the waterfowl migration. Meyer (1975: 15) provides an extensive summary of this festival.

53. Mihstih Nihpih. Big water [*mihstih*, big; *nihpih*, water].

Refers to the Churchill River.

54. Kahwahwihihahk Sahkahihkahn. Round Lake [*wahwihow*, round; *sahkahihkahn*, lake].

A shallow lake just north of the Reserve, it was not affected by the Diversion Project. It is now used for growing wild rice. This was also Isiah Spence's trapline area.

56. Okahowo- sahkahihkahn. Pickeral Lake [*okahow*, pickeral; *sahkahihkahn*, lake].

Pickeral were plentiful in this lake.

57. Mihsihpahskihow Sihpih. Big Forked River [*mihstih*, big; *pahskihow*, forked].

Today known as Odei River. This was the trapline of Louis Spence.

58. Sahpocih Sihpih. River running through. [*sahpoci*, run through; *sihpih*, river].

South Fork of the Odei River; spelled Sapochi River on provincial maps.

59. Ahyahmihowih Wahcih. Medicine Hill [*ahyamihow*, to talk; *wahcih*, hill].

A hill on the north end of Rat River which was used for religious purposes. The name refers to "talking to the Creator".

60. Wipohskowi Sipi. River of burnt wood [*wipohskow*, burntwood; *sipi*, river].

Known as the Burntwood River.

61. Wahpahcihwahnahk. The part of the Churchill River which flows very fast [*wahpahcihwahnahk*, fast flowing].

Today this part of the Churchill River is called Lake Opachuanau.

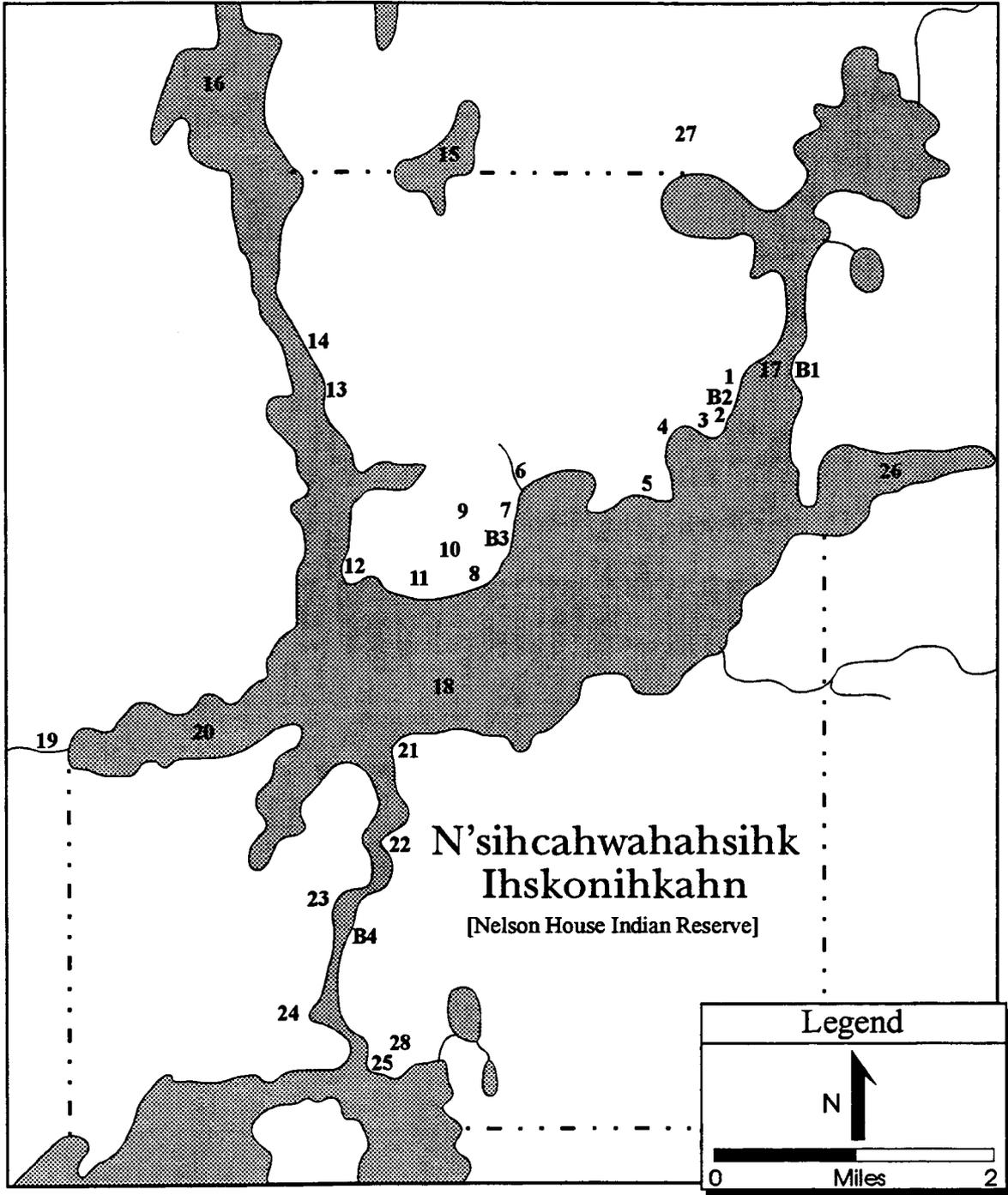


Figure 5: Named Environment: Nelson House Indian Reserve.

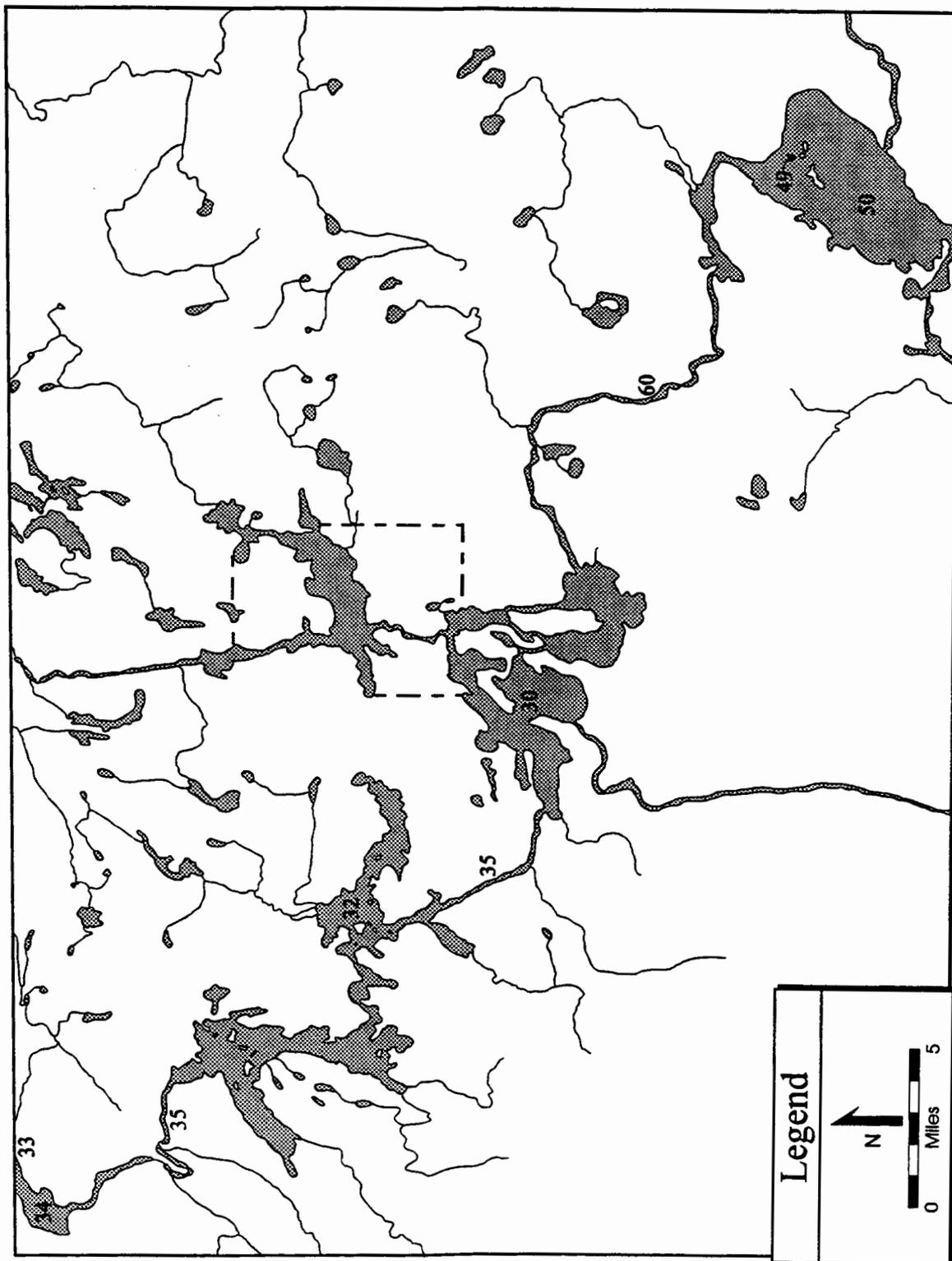


Figure 6: Named Environment: Surrounding Area of the Nelson House Indian Reserve.

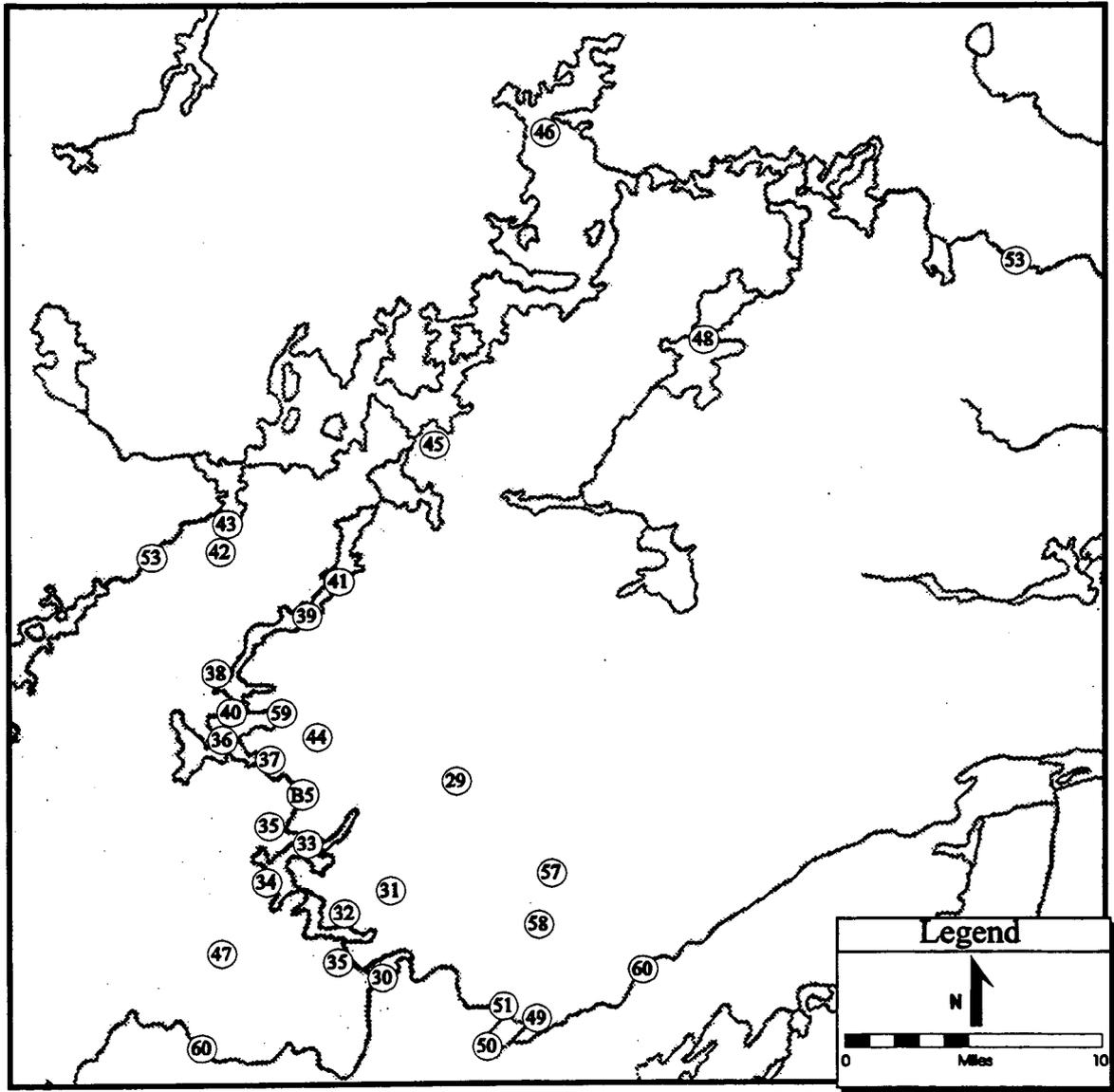


Figure 7: Named Environment: Rat/Burntwood Rivers Region.

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