ABORIGINAL ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

THE HISTORY OF HYDRO DEVELOPMENT IN MANITOBA AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ATOSKIWIN TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT CENTRE IN NISICHAWAYASIHK CREE NATION

A Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence (ATEC) in Nelson House, Manitoba, and its contribution to Aboriginal adult education and the economic development of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN). The study examines ATEC within the larger history of NCN's relationship with its land, hydroelectric development in northern Manitoba, and *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows,* the 1971 alternative blueprint to the federal White Paper. I argue that ATEC has played a key role in nurturing a resurgence of the social and economic capacity of people in Nelson House.

The research approach used in this study is ethnographic, drawing on the researcher's lived experiences and relationships with the community and ATEC. Supporting qualitative data were collected through interviews with ATEC staff and students, allowing for an in-depth exploration of their experiences, perspectives, and the impact of ATEC on their lives and employment opportunities. The thesis examines the historical context of ATEC. It also explores the challenges and achievements of ATEC during two distinct phases: the initial phase focused on training for skilled and unskilled labourers during the construction of the Wuskwatim hydroelectric dam, and the subsequent phase after the dam's completion.

The research shows how ATEC has contributed to the economic and social capacity of Nelson House, analyzing its impact on community development and employment opportunities. It also points out the need for greater control, infrastructure and resources for Aboriginal adult education in rural and northern areas. The thesis concludes by discussing the findings and suggesting potential areas for improvement and growth in ATEC's programming and delivery methods.

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In fine, I thank my daughter Madeleine and my wife Amy for their patience and endurance through everything. Thank you.

Henk,

Thompson campus, Manitoba.

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1 Introduction

'It's an opportunity for NCN to add more revenue to our community and employ our people…'

Former Chief Marcel Moody[1]

"Education and training to employment" is a crucial concept for communities looking to improve their socio-economic status. At the Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence (ATEC) in the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), this phrase is more than just a motto; it's a mandate and a call to action.

The opening quote from Chief Moody emphasizes the need for increased revenue and employment opportunities in First Nations communities, as seen in the opening of a new gas station in the city of Thompson at the First Nation's urban reserve. By increasing revenue and employment opportunities, communities can provide greater services, break the cycle of dependence on federal monetary transfers, and reduce reliance on social welfare and federal child benefit payments. Ultimately, more jobs and local investment can increase the economic and social capacity of the community and the region as a whole.

[1] Kyle Darbyson, "NCN hosts soft launch of Thompson Gas Bar," *Thompson Citizen,* 4 May 2019. An interesting avenue of study is the emergence of band-owned business and service providers as an example of social enterprise, as opposed to that of private. One could argue that an original intention of the Indian Act, at least for the eighty years following 1870, was to inhibit the development of economic enterprise on reserve, at least as that economy deviated from the traditional hunter-gatherer type. Opposed to this model, in terms of contemporary investment in the city of Thompson and region, for example, NCN is one of the larger investors and employers in the local economy, an item of importance for a region that is receiving diminishing returns in the more traditional industries of rail, fishing, mining, and forestry/ pulp. It should be noted here that growing economic capacity in the North, in the view of this writer, is not a zero sum game, and that social enterprise like that exhibited by businesses/ services owned and operated by NCN, does not need to be viewed as an impediment to locally-operated private enterprise. In an earlier age, there was an ideological bent that social or public enterprise was communistic in its essence.

This thesis is the result of collaboration between myself as an educator and researcher, ATEC, and the Manitoba Research Alliance (MRA), with ATEC and NCN located in Nelson House, Manitoba, and the MRA based in Winnipeg. I taught at ATEC and lived in Nelson House from 2010 to 2017, when I moved to Thompson to teach at the University College of the North (UCN).

My thesis presents a narrative of Aboriginal[2] adult education at ATEC to understand ATEC historically, institutionally, and within the twin contexts of community economic development and Aboriginal adult education. ATEC's story is a testament to the resilience of the First Nations people who have adapted to significant disruptions in their ecological, economic, and social systems, particularly the construction of a large hydro-electric project. My colleague and friend Cheryl Linklater recently referred to ATEC's history as "Our Humble Beginnings," which is an apt way to describe the work that has been done in Nelson House and at ATEC over the past 50 years.[3] This work began with the rebuilding efforts after the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) and has continued ever since.[4]

The methodology used in this study is inspired by that of another recent dissertation that examined the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation's (NCN) relationship with hydroelectric development. [5] Both studies use an ethnographic approach (or one that describes the customs

[2] For the bulk of this dissertation, the term Aboriginal, or First Nations, is used as it is consistent with legal usage in the Constitutional Act of 1982, section 35, and local usage at present; I do acknowledge that federally and regionally, and in some First Nation circles, the term Indigenous is increasingly used in place of Aboriginal. At the University College of the North, the term Aboriginal is used internally in most programming and institutional documents though changing the term to Indigenous was referred to our Council of Elders, two years ago; to date, no consensus here has been reached.

[3] 50 years here back to the Churchill River Diversion.

[4] Cheryl Linklater, in conversation, June 4, 2019.

[5] Ramona Neckoway, "'Where the Otters Play,' 'Horseshoe Bay,' 'Footprint' and Beyond: Spatial and Temporal Considerations of Hydroelectric Energy Production in Northern Manitoba," PhD thesis, University of Manitoba. 2018, 1. Neckoway's thesis describes her approach as 'auto-ethnographic,' in comparison to this thesis.

of individuals and cultures) that draws on the researcher's lived experiences, this one from work over a ten-year period in Nelson House and Thompson. The research aims to be useful to ATEC, NCN, and the wider academic research community.

1.1 Context

> "Our starting point must be the establishment of trusting relationships in which research is guided by communities and all contributors are recognized for their strengths."[6]

Nelson House, Manitoba

Figure One. Map of the Province of Manitoba. Note the location of the province's capital, Winnipeg, in the south-eastern part. The red line winding north, Highway 6, leads to Thompson; provincial Highway 391 to Nelson House. The length of drive from Winnipeg to Nelson House is approximately 9 hours, https://gisgeography.com/manitoba-map/

[6] Shauna MacKinnon, "Introduction," in Shauna MacKinnon, ed., *Practicing Community-Based Participatory Research: Stories of Engagement, Empowerment, and Mobilization* (Vancouver: Purich Books, 2018), 4.

The community of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, at Nelson House, is located approximately 85 kilometres west of the city of Thompson, and about 900 kilometres by road from Winnipeg. It is situated on the shores of Footprint Lake and Threepoint Lake, and the rivers flowing into those two lakes are the Burntwood, Footprint, and Rat Rivers. The name Nelson House is a legacy of the community's history with the Hudson Bay Company trading post that was located at this place; *Nisichawaya*si is Cree for 'the place where three rivers meet'.

1.1.1 The Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre

The Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence (ATEC) was established by the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Manitoba Hydro as part of the implementation of the 2006 *Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement* (Wuskwatim PDA), as well as a Memorandum of Understanding from 2004.[7] Despite its short history, ATEC can be divided into two distinct phases: the first phase involved the construction of the physical building, with a mandate to provide training for both skilled and unskilled labourers for work on the Wuskwatim site and the construction of the dam, which took place between 2006 and 2011. The second phase began in 2011 to present, when funding from the Wuskwatim PDA was no longer available. This project originated from my interactions as an instructor with students and staff at ATEC over several years. Professor MacKinnon's view that a solid project requires "the establishment of trusting relationships in which research is guided by communities and all contributors" is particularly relevant here. I have deep relationships within the community, at ATEC, and in

[7] The 2006 *Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement* (Wuskwatim PDA) is an agreement between Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Manitoba Hydro, and the province of Manitoba for the building of a hydro-electric dam at Wuskwatim Lake, a lake situated on the traditional lands of NCN just west of the city of Thompson.

Nelson House. What follows is a narrative of the development and evolution of ATEC as an Indigenous educational institution. The narrative was shared with me by students, staff, community members, and friends over an extended period, within the context of the social and economic realities of Nelson House and historical obstacles faced by northern Manitoban communities affected by hydro-electric development.[8]

1.2 Research Problem

The goal of this study is to examine how can ATEC, a grass-roots organization located in a geographically isolated on-reserve community in Northern Manitoba, contributes to the economic and social development of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. This is particularly important because Aboriginal communities in Northern Manitoba face common issues related to housing, education, and other socio-economic factors, and it is crucial for them to develop effective economic and educational strategies to address these challenges.[9] Because of the separation of powers between the federal and provincial governments in regards to the *Indian Act* and Aboriginal affairs as a whole, policies concerning the welfare of Aboriginal people are frequently not executed effectively. As someone with an insider's perspective, I begin this research with the belief that ATEC is an organization that is not being utilized to its full potential and is not receiving the recognition it deserves, and that other First Nations could gain valuable

[8] The method of collecting stories and points of view itself took a number of years, the length of time it took to write this dissertation; because I was working and living in Nelson House, at ATEC, while the earliest drafts of this project took shape, my observations benefitted from the dialogue I shared with NCN community members and leadership at ATEC and with the band. I lived in Nelson House 2010-2017, teaching at ATEC for five of them.

[9] Here I am speaking to the provincial north of Manitoba; we might find socio-economic circumstances at NCN are similar to other aboriginal communities in the provincial norths across the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta; to understand the provincial norths, I find useful Ken Coates and William Morrison's *The Forgotten North: A History of Canada's Provincial Norths* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1992).

insights from their experiences.[10] Understanding the successes and challenges that ATEC has faced will contribute on scholarship in Aboriginal adult education, Canadian reconciliation, and Aboriginal educational institution building. As imagined for in key documents such as *Wahbung* (1971), The *Northern Flood Agreement* (1977), and the *Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement* (2006), an organization such as ATEC would be the type of institution that meet the repeated requests of NCN's community and leadership for locally controlled education, training, and employment opportunities.

Aboriginal workers in the Canadian labour market face both opportunities and challenges. The Conference Board of Canada predicted in 2012 that Canada would soon face a challenge of not having enough workers with the necessary skills to meet its labour needs. Additionally, Canadian businesses encounter difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified Aboriginal employees.[11] On the other hand, in order to enhance their economic and social well-being, communities like Nelson House must identify their labour demands and offer educational opportunities to their people. However, it is often the case that the community does not have enough resources to even recognize these demands or provide programs to meet them. Based on my observations, the creation of ATEC was a response to the immediate local and regional requirements of the Wuskwatim hydro-electric dam construction, reflecting

[10] I realize here and in the section previous I refer to myself originally as an "outsider" and, here, as an "insider." Recognizing the importance of place and relationships to research and lived experience, I see that over an expanse of some years, of living in a small community, and working within a small organization, my family and I gradually integrated somewhat into the NCN community, as much as a second-generation Canadian immigrant's family can. I am very grateful for the new friendships made living in Nelson House and Thompson.

[11] The Conference Board of Canada, *Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Metis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers* (Ottawa, 2012), 1, http://www.e-library.ca.

the community's needs at the time.[12] In this particular case, the NCN community has utilized the hydro-electric development to enhance their ability to offer educational and training programs to members of their local community. Furthermore, they have continued to pursue economic development efforts after the completion of the project. However, the issue is that ATEC does not easily align with the current provincial or federal policies for post-secondary education program planning and funding. The research and findings presented in this study suggest that organizations like ATEC may need to be included in such policies.

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of my research is to investigate how an Aboriginal training and employment center, specifically ATEC, contributes to the economic and social growth of a community like NCN. I use the concept of an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary to analyze how ATEC assists young people in enhancing their education and adapting to the dynamic local and regional job market. Through an ethnographic narrative, I also aim to highlight the achievements of ATEC as well as the challenges it has faced and still needs to address. The research objectives are:

1. To examine how and by what routes ATEC has enabled NCN to build economic and social capacity in Nelson House, in regards to programming, encouraging local employment initiatives, creating regional and inter-provincial partnerships, and participating in the local housing economy.

2. To analyse ATEC in the context of the Wuskwatim hydroelectric development. In particular, I examine how ATEC became an outcome intended to support and bring about the goals of Schedule E, one of the most important schedules of the 1977

[12] Similarly, the early institutionalization of my present employer, the University College of the North (UCN), and its precursor, the Keewatin Community College (KTC) in 1966, was later supplemented and enhanced with the Thompson campus; the Thompson campus, otherwise known as 'the Polaris' because of the buildings providing the physical structure, was built to take advantage of the Limestone Generating Power Station employment opportunities starting in 1976 but lasting intermittently until the middle 1980s. This institution, the Limestone Training and Employment Agency, was a regional precursor to ATEC, driven by a different project (Gillam) for a different community (Thompson).

Northern Flood Agreement, namely, the "eradication of mass poverty and mass unemployment and the improvement of the physical, social and economic conditions and transportation."[13]

3. To create a historical narrative that describes the institutional growth and development of ATEC as an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary within NCN.

4. To contribute to the awareness of the need for greater infrastructure and resources in Aboriginal adult education in rural and Northern areas.

1.4 Origins of the Research Project

In 2010, my family and I moved to Nelson House where I was employed by the local education authority to teach Grade Eight. In 2012, I was invited by ATEC to teach in their Mature Student Diploma Program (MSDP) for grades eleven and twelve. I worked for ATEC for five years and developed close relationships with the students and staff. This research project is rooted in these experiences and relationships.

When I first came to teach for the local school authority in Nelson House at 55.7840 deg. N 98.8868 deg. W, a community nestled among boreal lakes and rivers, I was struck by the landscape. The First Nation that lives there is Nisichawayasihk which is Nehetho, or Rocky Cree, for "Where Three Rivers Meet." I learned about the community's history from an earlier thesis

[13] Schedule E of the *Northern Flood Agreement* (NFA), 1977, https://www.hydro.mb.ca/community/indigenous_relations/pdf/northern-flood-agreement-1977.pdf. The NFA was a tri-level agreement between Ottawa, the province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro, and four of the five member communities of the Northern Flood Committee named in the agreement 'the Indian bands of Nelson House, Norway House, Cross Lake, Split Lake, and York Factory.' Schedule E was negotiated in the later stages of the agreement as an inducement to the member communities to sign in return for further commitment by the governments to reconcile Canadian economic prosperity with the poverty and lack of improvements found in the traditional lands of the flooded communities. Perhaps not surprisingly, Schedule E's promise to "eradicate poverty," or at least to alleviate some of the indicators thereof, never saw the light of day. The Schedule's promised committee, a 'community development planning committee,' and its deliverable in the form of a 'community development plan,' never once met over the ensuing nineteen years.

written by a community member, Eva Linklater, which emphasized the essential connection between the land and history, Aboriginal cultures, and the devastating impact of large-scale resource development projects that destroy or alter traditional lands.[14] As an educator with a passion for history, I was fascinated by two narratives that were shared within the community. The first narrative involved the community's deep connection with the water, which has been closely linked to the impact of hydroelectric development on NCN's ancestral lands over the last seventy years. The second narrative was centered around the community's relationship with the Crown, from the adhesion to Treaty in 1908, to the effects of residential schools, and the present-day impact of funding, land transfers, and power transfers between the Band and various federal and provincial governments.

E.H. Carr, in his study *What is History,* argues that the local is the foundation on which general histories are built. Since I began my work as a faculty member at UCN in 2017, most of my research revolves around local issues, including work around hydroelectric development and archiving and I hope to help build a more comprehensive general history.

1.5 Research Approach

Since this dissertation originated from my experiences and observations as a staff member of ATEC and an educator living in the NCN community, the research approach used is ethnographic in nature.[15] Concerning ethnography and ethnohistory generally, I have been

[14] Eva Linklater, "The Footprints of Wasahkacahk: The Churchill River Diversion Project and Destruction of the Nelson House Cree Historical Landscape," MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1994, 2.
[15] I use the term ethnographic here in that I lived in the community and much of my observations and understandings of ATEC's role in the community of Nelson House, and the impacts of hydro-electric development on this community, developed not solely as a result of reading 'the literature,' but rather by living with and listening to community members living their lives in the community.

inspired by the history and respectful teaching exemplified by the community of Stó:lō; the text *Towards a New Ethnohistory: Community-Engaged Scholarship Among the People of the River* is an excellent example of western Canadian academics working with community members in creating local history.[16]

The editors of the text explain,

> Ethnohistorians recognize the necessity of working "with" rather than merely "for," the people whose history and culture they study. And they appreciate that success will require working "in" Indigenous communities and "with" Indigenous people rather than merely "on" Indigenous topics. This "New Ethnohistory" appears in a variety of forms, but each requires sustained conversations over prolonged periods of time. It is dependent upon maintaining respectful and trusting relationships built over years upon a foundation of attentiveness and responsiveness. It is constructed through an investment of emotional labour that requires outside researchers to spend the vast majority of their time in Indigenous communities not conducting interviews but in demonstrating their commitment to being helpful.[17]

This approach characterizes the relationship I have developed with NCN and ATEC. My presence in Thompson at UCN maintains this tradition of sustaining relationships with NCN and other surrounding communities. To a degree, this project was born of conversations with NCN community members and my colleagues at ATEC. MacKinnon, in her edited collection on conducting community-based research in Manitoba, describes this research approach. Indeed, since I am very much not a veteran researcher, I find, too, that "although [we] use both quantitative and qualitative methods, the chosen method will ultimately allow us to tell the story that community members isolate as significant while also engaging the community in the

[16] Keith Carlson, John Lutz, David Schaepe, Naxaxahts'I, eds., *Towards a New Ethnohistory*: *Community-Engaged Scholarship among the People of the River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018),
[17] Carlson, Sutton, Shaepe, Naxaxahtl's, eds., *Towards a New Ethnohistory,* 4.

data-gathering process and analysis."[18] Very much, my research approach is adapted to local conditions and requirements.

MacKinnon argues that "*outreach* is not the same thing as community *engagement*. Outreach involves scholars engaging with communities to provide them with the benefits of their research, but does not necessarily mean that the community was meaningfully involved in identifying the research as a priority, let alone in the planning and conducting of the research and subsequent analysis or interpretation."[19] In contrast to outreach, engagement can be exhausting and requires long-term and constant connection with the host communities; this I think is important work that academics like those at UCN can engage in and support (growth in this field of local study is very slow right now); research capacity at UCN, like that of the North generally, is very low.

Last, qualitative data and information were sought through interviews with ATEC students and staff over a four-year period (2016-2020).[20] Interviews were conducted and transcribed with forty staff and students and ranged from 15 to 30 minutes in length (questions for this study listed in Chapter Four). Participants shared their experiences at ATEC and in the community, discussed their views on ATEC, their experiences in class or at work, their aspirations, and their relations to hydro-electric development. Students and staff were asked to identify whether and how ATEC assisted them in reaching life and employment goals. They were also asked to identify challenges and obstacles they experienced in their time at ATEC or

[18] This citation is also indicative of method: Shauna MacKinnon, "It's All about Relationships," in Mackinnon, ed., *Practising Community-Based Participatory Research: Stories of Engagement, Empowerment, and Mobilization* (Vancouver: Purich Books, 2018) 27.
[19] Carlson, Sutton, Shaepe, Naxaxahtl's, eds., *Towards a New Ethnohistory, 26.*
[20] Amongst the interviewees, I spoke with the Executive Director of ATEC and former chief of Nelson House, Jim Moore, and the Director of NCN Human Resources Development Assets, Leonard Linklater.

in work afterwards. This data allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of ATEC as an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary in the context of the literature on Aboriginal adult education.

In this qualitative and longitudinal approach of the study I seek to, as MacKinnon writes, "capture the richness that stories provide or the experiences and perceptions of those who are most affected by policy." Like MacKinnon, I tried to ensure that the interviews with students and staff were "guided by the awareness that historical conditions, systemic racism, and contemporary social and economic realities can be exposed through narratives." As well, when conducted through a critical framework, narrative research can complement quantitative measures, to ensure that, in our efforts to quantify through numbers and statistics, we don't lose sight of cause and context.[21]

The research was reviewed and approved by both the UCN and Trent University research ethics boards. The first research ethics board, that of Trent, I applied to in the fall of 2016 on returning to my program and in compliance with the requirements for the dissertation proposal. The second ethics review, that of UCN, I applied for not long afterwards, at the beginning of my employment there. The certificates for approval from the boards were renewed annually for the duration of the interview-collecting process. Both ethics applications included a letter of support from the chief and council of NCN, and a second letter of support from the director of ATEC. As well, I educated myself in the principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) and have attended workshops facilitated by the First Nations Information Governance Centre. The interview questions proposed for the project were

[21] Shauna MacKinnon, 'It's all about Relationships,' in MacKinnon, ed., *Practising Community-Based Participatory Research: Stories of Engagement, Empowerment, and Mobilization* (Vancouver: Purich Books, 2018), 28.

created by me and the program director of ATEC at the time, Mr. Jody Linklater. In devising the questions, Jody and I wanted to know what students and staff at ATEC thought about a number of themes that would prove beneficial for ATEC to know: what were students' experiences with Manitoba Hydro in the past (personal or familial); how did experiences at ATEC impact their current life experiences or their prospects for the future; what were positive experiences of ATEC, and what they thought of its supports; where they thought there was room for ATEC to improve.

This study explores the development of ATEC using many different kinds of data and approaches. The method, in this respect, stems from my desire to examine ATEC not simply as a result of educational policy decisions at the provincial and local levels but to also consider its existence within the larger narratives of First Nations and Crown relations, hydro-electric development by the province, and local aspirations for governance of education and economic and social capacity building.

To examine the larger context underlying ATEC, I reviewed key historical documents related to First Nations and Crown relations and the development of hydroelectric power in Northern Manitoba. These documents included the Interchurch Taskforce on Northern Flooding's *Report of the Panel Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development*, 1976; *the Northern Flood Agreement*, 1977; P.M. Larcombe's "Northern Flood Agreement Case Study in a Treaty Area," prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993; the Northern Flood Committee's *The Northern Flood Agreement: History of Negotiation and Implementation, and Recommendations for Improvement*, prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993; the *Northern Flood Implementation Agreement*, 1996, the *Wuskwatim Project*

Development Agreement, 2006; as well as the reports commissioned to evaluate ATEC itself, the 2013 Deloitte Report, and the 2010 Nordman Report.

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured into five chapters:

Chapter One

- This first chapter introduces the dissertation and important literature, including a summary of the findings.

Chapter Two

- The second chapter provides a historical context of ATEC within the larger history of NCN's ongoing relationship with its land, Manitoba Hydro, hydroelectric development, and northern Manitoba. Chapter Two includes a discussion of the importance of the historical policy document, *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows, the Northern Flood Agreement,* and other important documents.

Chapter Three

- The third chapter relates the experience of the creation of ATEC out of the 2006 *Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement* (PDA) and as a result of the building of Wuskwatim Dam in northern Manitoba. It examines the first phase of ATEC 2006-2011, during the building of the dam.

Chapter Four

- The fourth chapter examines student experiences at ATEC and how these experiences can help ATEC enhance or correct its programming and delivery methods.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five describes the story of ATEC as it is today, after the funding from the PDA ended, from roughly 2011 to the present.

Chapter Six

- The conclusion considers the findings of this study and discusses possible avenues for growth and improvement of ATEC's programming and delivery.

2 Document Review

The Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission include several that point to the need for education and training and to recognize the needs and rights of Indigenous peoples to access opportunities and overcome barriers to social and economic progress:

Regarding Education

- develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians
- provide sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation;
- improve education attainment levels and success rates; and
- provide funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.

Regarding Business

- commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects; and
- ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.[22]

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report has had an impact on Northern Manitoba. For example, in 2019 UCN held its third Truth and Reconciliation Conference in The Pas (alternating annually between The Pas and Thompson) and the attendance from towns and the surrounding communities grows as does the breadth of issues discussed each year, from Residential Schools to hydro-electric development to inequalities in education and social welfare, addictions, and generational trauma. I hope that my research contributes to the larger

[22] Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Ottawa, 2015).

political, social and academic discourse emanating from the TRC and the recommendations it makes.

The following is a timeline of some of the events and important documents featured in this review:

1969	*Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (The White Paper)*
1971	The publication of *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*
1973-1976	The building to completion of the Churchill River Diversion (CRD)
1977	The signing of the *Northern Flood Agreement*
1996	The signing of the *NFA Implementation Agreement*
2001	*The Wuskwatim Agreement in Principle*
2003	ATEC begins operations
2006	NCN membership ratification of the *Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement*
2006	ATEC physical building is complete
2006-2012	The building to completion of the Wuskwatim Dam
Fall of 2012	ATEC transitions to post-Wuskwatim operations

Drawing inspiration from the TRC, this chapter examines three main areas of literature that structure the dissertation, as indicated by the research objectives. The first area is to provide ATEC with a history that will help staff, students, community members and policy makers understand the role that this adult education facility plays in Nelson House. My experience teaching in northern Manitoba has helped me identify a thirst for public history at the institutional and local level. There is significant interest in local communities wanting to learn more about their own histories and to write local and regional histories of their own.[23]

[23] Here I am going to shine a light on Colin Gillespie's *Portrait of a People: A Study in Survival* (Winnipeg: Big Fizz Inc., 2017). This is a history of Pimicikamak (or Cross Lake Band), and it does a wonderful job outlining the resiliency of the community despite the experiences of colonization and economic development by others on their traditional lands. One of the main drivers to complete my dissertation is the desire now of NCN to develop such a text of their own; I hope I can help make this happen in conjunction with such great local historians as NCN's own Darcy Linklater (recently passed on), and the members of the Rocky Cree Elders Group. This work of reclaiming

The literature I chose to examine here is by no means an exhaustive one, many of the readings, including that of *Wahbung*, came to me through the process of developing a research proposal AND engaging in my teaching practice in Nelson House. In this sense, I did not develop a readings list *a priori* to the community engagement and work in the field; rather, the research and readings came about while I was engaged in living and working in the community. The luxury of this approach is that it happened organically, not so much in the study hall or at the campus library, but in the 'field'. Of course, the problem arose that I was removed from the typical campus networks a graduate student would normally have access to, such as Trent University's campus, university faculty, academic classmates, and the campus library.[24]

The second area is the political economy of the North which I read in the context of colonization and hydro-electric development generally. As classic and relevant now as it was when I was taught it so many years ago, and it still makes sense to my students, the Metropolitan-Hinterland thesis of Harold Innis, pertaining to Canada and the fur trade originally, still pervades the political and economic interactions between Manitoba's powerful south and its peripheral north.[25] This study of ATEC situates Nelson House within the political economy narratives of Innis, James Waldram's writing on Easterville and hydro-electricity, Frank Tough's on the economy of northern Manitoba through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Ramona Neckoway's and Peter Kulchyski's work on hydro-electric development in northern Manitoba, and John Loxley's large opus, a collection of which has recently been

local history is important because at present it is closely attached to the primary objective of language preservation; this I have been taught by William Dumas and the Rocky Cree Elders.

[24] I came to this research project late in my degree, the four years I spent on Peterborough campus was over a decade previous to my teaching in Nelson House.

[25] Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

published as *Aboriginal, Northern, and Community Economic Development: Papers and Retrospectives*.[26] My understanding of hydro-electricity development in Nelson House is to look for signs of resilience and how, to use a metaphor coined by former NCN chief Jim Moore, Nehetho remove the "layered shrouds of colonization" to create their own sovereignty. The approach of Kulchyski and Neckoway, in contrast, is more critical of the neo-liberal attempts to coerce and cajole First Nations to "buy in" to economic development. Rather, the approach informing this study has been to look at ways that communities can work within the existing system, as unjust as it may be, to grow.

Thirdly, this study seeks to contribute to a growing literature on Aboriginal adult education. Inspired by the work of Shauna MacKinnon and her work with grassroots organizations in the north-end of Winnipeg, I shine a light on the fact that, as MacKinnon points out, "Aboriginal people continue to be overrepresented among those who measure poorly on a number of social and economic indicators."[27] Shifting the focus away from Aboriginal training to employment in an urban environment such as Winnipeg that MacKinnon studies, I describe the environment of training to employment in a reserve community. In this context, the institute must navigate not only the difficult terrain between band policy and the Crown, it must also deal with the logistics and difficulties mired in geographic isolation and the troubled space in policy created by the Indian Act, between reserve, the province in whose jurisdiction

[26] John Loxley, *Aboriginal, Northern, and Community Economic Development: Papers and Retrospectives* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010).
[27] Shauna MacKinnon, *Decolonizing Employment: Aboriginal Inclusion in Canada's Labour Market* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 2.

education sits, and the federal ministry responsible for registered Indians (i.e., the Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, INAC, AANDC, or the newer iterations thereof.)

2.1 The Development of Lands and First Nations in Canada: A Political Economy

The existing literature on the development of lands in Canada for economic development, and the conflicting claims and interests of First Nations in Canada is vast. The Keystone Pipeline, the related development of the Oil Tar Sands in Alberta, the Mackenzie Pipeline in the Northwest, the development and exploitation of hydro-electricity potential in Manitoba and Quebec, and the fracking taking place on traditional territories in New Brunswick are just a few examples of the different issues dividing various governments in Canada and First Nation peoples. For examples specific to hydro-development, the collection of essays edited by Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec*, does an excellent job in comparing debates around hydro development between the two different contexts of Quebec and Manitoba. The work of Ken Coates and William Morrison, specifically *The Forgotten North: A History of Canada's Provincial Norths*, is also a wonderful example of historians analysing the competing visions of First Nations, federalists, and the provinces, and the problems in trying to find a consensus between such stakeholders in developing a plan to integrate the north into existing Canadian structures (political, economic, social).

This literature review shows some of the main issues and concerns arising from discrepancies in development between First Nations and Canadian settler society, in terms of political power and enfranchisement, economic mobility and development, and social

improvement and First Nations welfare generally. In the political realm, First Nations peoples have long fought to be included in the general civic culture that represents government and citizenship in Canada. Regarding the livelihoods of First Nations peoples on and off reserve, there is a robust literature outlining why and how First Nations peoples have been systematically excluded from the economic benefits of a confederation with the Canadian Crown through the Treaty relationship. Lastly, there are many underlying reasons yet fewer proffered solutions why and how First Nations can improve their wellbeing in a society where they are over-represented in terms of poverty, violence, addiction, and dependence on social forms of welfare.[28]

The history of Canada's First Nations, writes Harold Cardinal, is a "shameful chronicle of the white man's disinterest, his deliberate trampling of Indian [sic] rights and his repeated betrayal of our trust."[29] Cardinal, in his *The Unjust Society*, goes so far as to compare the curtain separating mainstream Canadians from those of First Nations as one made "of buckskin." This image is reminiscent of the similar and concurrent 'iron' wall separating the east from the west of Germany through the twentieth century; a wall which, in Berlin, separated citizens with the trappings of wealth, power, and civic rights from those who had not. Such a policy, writes Cardinal, represents a "cultural genocide."

Cardinal's use of the term "cultural genocide" foreshadows the debates in Manitoba some forty years later in the portrayal of Canadian and First Nations relations as depicted in Winnipeg's new Canadian Museum for Human Rights. In a sense, many of the issues portrayed

[28] For a treatment on development, dependence, and Indigenous peoples in North America, see Calvin Helin's *Dances with Dependency: Out of Poverty through Self-Reliance* (Woodland Hills: Ravencrest Publishing, 2008).
[29] Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Toronto: Douglas and MacIntyre, 2011), 1.

by Cardinal in his writings are yet to be resolved, even in how they should be depicted in the civic cultures of politics and historical depiction in Canada's newest and most modern museum.[30] In terms of the Winnipeg museum, many institutions representing First Nations have insisted that, historically, the relation of Canada with its First Nations has been one portrayed as genocidal, as exemplified in Canada's deployment of Residential Schools, the 'extinguishing of land rights' using problematic and insincere methods, or the 'Sixties' Baby Grab' as examples.[31]

Of course, arguing that the Crown can speak or advocate on behalf of First Nations is contentious. Alan Cairns suggests that "the issue of who can speak for whom, and who can write for whom, is a major contemporary issue in the social sciences and humanities."[32] As a non-Aboriginal author, I am careful to position myself within the debates surrounding social, political, or economic issues pertaining to First Nations, or Aboriginal goals. The difficulty generally in discussing various topics pertaining to such are, "issues sociologically explicable in terms of the past treatment of Aboriginal peoples by the majority, and of how deep the Aboriginal/ non-Aboriginal divide has become as a result."[33] Regardless whether you speak using a macro-analysis of national issues and First Nations, or whether you are speaking locally

[30] David MacDonald, "Genocide is as Genocide Does." *The Winnipeg Free Press* 25 Sept. 2014, http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/genocide--is-as--genocide-does-277037251.html.
[31] The legacy of Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop (in the newspaper article here, referenced as a 'grab') is well documented; one resource I use in my own teaching on Residential Schools is the authoritative text of John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999); for a local assessment on the Sixties Scoop in a regional context, consider the experiences of survivors in Norway House, MB: Dorene Meyer, ed., *Sixties Scoop: Survivor Stories* (Norway House, MB: Goldrock Press, 2020).
[32] Alan Cairns, *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 14.
[33] Cairns, 16.

about the experiences of individual First Nations, or bands, it is important that you are sensitive to the different conversations that take place regionally or locally.

2.1.1 Hydro-electricity Development, Natural Resources, and First Nations

There is a great deal of literature on the impact of hydro and natural resource extraction on First Nation land in Canada generally and Manitoba specifically.[34] This section discusses historical and theoretical perspectives on hydro developments, the state, and First Nations. Second, I survey examples on the national scene in Canada. Last, I assess provincial and local examples in relation to the province of Manitoba and the north in general.

Many First Nation communities, who are too frequently excluded from federal and provincial decision-making, often aspire to move toward self-government or sovereignty-sharing arrangements in Canada. When First Nations are included in agreements signed between different levels of government, these agreements are often compared to the older Treaties signed with the Crown during the founding of Canada. The concept of the Modern Treaty or the "New Social Contract" is used to try to make modern-day agreements between First Nations and other levels of government conform or contrast with older models of relations between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown.

The prospects for re-imagining the relations between First Nations and the Crown are examined in Thibault Martin's article "Hydro Development in Quebec and Manitoba: Old

[34] For more on hydro and natural resource extraction, see articles included in Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016); also, Robert Bone, *The Canadian North: Issues and Challenges* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2016), particularly chapters five and seven: "Resource Development, Megaprojects, and Northern Benefits," and "Aboriginal Economy and Society," I use the Robert Bone text in teaching UCN's third-year-level course "History of the Canadian North" and it helps students better understand the economic and social impacts of such developments on the northern Manitoba region.

Relationships or New Social Contract?"[35] Martin compares the experiences of Cree people of Quebec and their relations with the province of Quebec with the experiences of Cree peoples living in Manitoba. Because each of the respective First Nations deals with their respective provinces, the experiences of each band, and the terms of treaty under which they live, will be correspondingly different. As Martin points out, some First Nations have been "able to turn hydro development projects imposed on them into instruments of greater economic and political autonomy."[36]

The opportunities to improve conditions, however, vary across the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec. Part of Martin's analysis in comparing agreements between provincial governments and First Nations is to compare contemporary agreements in the context of their colonial roots and examine how these agreements have been challenged or questioned by the state.[37] Agreements signed between Quebec, for example, and the James Bay Cree, can on close inspection be held as exemplars of a "modern day treaty" in that the conditions and clauses in the agreement attempt to address long-standing inequalities and systemic shortcomings ingrained and tightly interwoven within earlier agreements between Cree nations and the Crown (which, in the time of their own making, were rife with inconsistencies and little attempt made for joint understanding between the parties involved).

However, in more contemporary agreements in Manitoba there is not so much an attempt to re-create or build upon existing treaties, but rather to invent a new method of

[35] Thibault Martin, "Hydro Development in Quebec and Manitoba: Old Relationships or New Social Contract," in Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008).
[36] Martin, 19.
[37] Martin, 19.

dealings between First Nations and the Crown (in this case the province) that operates 'better' in a greater, global market system. In terms of theory, many of the authors of the 2008 edited collection *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* agree on the need to approach the evolution of the new agreements signed or in progress between First Nations and hydro corporations in terms of how these relations have changed or diverged in contrast to their colonial roots. As well, they contrast the approaches used by different levels of government or corporate institutions in whether they seek to establish what some call a new social contract between the state and First Nations[38] as opposed to the more neo-liberal friendly and corporate approach of the "business-only partnerships."[39] An example of the former approach would be those agreements deriving from the 1975 *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* (JBNQA) and those of the latter from the *Northern Flood Agreement* (NFA) as exemplified by the June 2006*Project Development Agreement (*PDA) with the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, the province of Manitoba, and the Board of Manitoba Hydro.

Specific to northern Manitoba are the studies surrounding the flooding and hydro developments that have been published since work began on the Saskatchewan River in Saskatchewan/ Manitoba, and the Churchill and Nelson Rivers. James Waldram's study *As Long as the Rivers Run, Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada* was based on his earlier dissertation on hydroelectric development across the north.[40] Waldram's

[38] Romeo Saganash, "The *Paix des Braves*: An Attempt to Renew Relations with the Cree," in in Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 205.
[39] Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 3.
[40] James Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg Press, 1993).

comparative approach works well in establishing the similarities and differences between projects that range across the north of the two neighbouring provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan. In examining a series of Manitoba communities such as Cumberland House, Easterville, and South Indian Lake, he finds that strategies are used and/or adapted by governments and communities such as First Nations bands in the attempt to accomplish different sorts of ends. Waldram's work is especially important in my readings because he is concerned primarily with the social and economic consequences of hydro projects on Native communities.[41] Even in Waldram's initial assessments of such a project as that found in Easterville and its Grand Rapids Dam, he found that agreements drawn between the First Nation and the provincial government "looked surprisingly like a treaty."[42]

Building on his thesis at Easterville and moving his analysis to the history of the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) project in northern Manitoba, Waldram extended his observations to not only the socioeconomic effects found in the vicinity of Grand Rapids, but also to the political story.

2.1.2 Discussion on the Importance of *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*

Wahbung: Our Tomorrows, 1971, is a crucial document for understanding and conceptualizing community development in the north. It presents an alternative vision to the federal or provincial government policies of the 1970s. Aboriginal leaders in Manitoba at the time realized that federal policy for Indian affairs was not aligned with the future envisioned by Aboriginal

[41] Waldram, ii.
[42] Waldram, ii.

communities and leadership, particularly the policy recommendations found in the federal White Paper Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy *(1969)*. *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* was published in 1971 as an alternative blueprint to that proposed in the federal White Paper. It sought to correct past relations with federal and provincial governments. *Wahbung* was signed by all the band chiefs of Manitoba, including that of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. It is worth remembering that this position paper was not only written in response to the release and ensuing discussion around the federal government's own policy paper, but also in the context of the flooding that had been happening across much of northern Manitoba through the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Wahbung begins with an appeal to the past: "The history and past policies regarding the Indian people cannot and must not be ignored, for their effects are with us all in the present Indian fact. To deny the past and to refuse to recognize its implications, is to distort the present; to distort the present is to take the risks with the future that are blatantly irresponsible."[43] In a reflection publication almost fifty years later, *Our Tomorrows, Today: Wahbung 1971,* it was noted that the three main findings of *Wahbung* were:

1) …That the *Indian Act* should be reviewed, but not repealed. It should only be reviewed for future action when treaty rights issues are settled and if there is a consensus among Indian people on such changes regarding their historical and legal rights.

2) Indians rejected the concept of decentralizing services for Indians to the provinces.

3) The most progressive Indian policy in Canada was born from the Indian reaction against the White Paper; it was a shock to the government and it served as a rallying point for Indians. It was a watershed moment in Canadian history. The formation of

[43] Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (Winnipeg, October 1971), 1. The organization, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood (MIB), is the precursor to today's Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

> Indian organizations around the principle of Indian control over political reform and social and economic development began in earnest.[44]

Wahbung, then, seeks to reconstruct Aboriginal communities in the context of the *Indian Act* without the call to revoke it despite it having contributed historically to the situation that exists for many Aboriginal Canadians today, for better or for worse, and in response to the federal government's effort in 1969 to unilaterally change or revoke it. Points two and three which are about Aboriginal control over social and economic development and services, have significant implications for Aboriginal education organizations such as ATEC, because they are within provincial jurisdiction, and must reconcile local operation with calls to self-governance and the fight against devolution of control to the provinces. Point three has some importance to ATEC because it calls for local or "Indian control" over the important function of education and economic development. NCN received local control of education, over primary and secondary schooling, in 1982, likely as a result of advocacy arising from *Wahbung* through the 1970s, in the form of the Nelson House Education Authority (now the Nisichawayasi Nehetho Culture and Education Authority).[45] My study on ATEC and Aboriginal education attempts to situate the community-building and education philosophies motivating post-secondary activities in Nelson House within the context of the vision put forward by *Wahbung*.

[44] Dave Courchene Jr., Janet Fontaine, Kathi Avery Kinew, eds., *Our Tomorrows Today: Wahbung 1971* (Winnipeg: Manitoba First Nations Resource Centre, 2017), 7.

[45] The Nisichawayasi Nehetho Culture and Education Authority (NNCEA) has gone through a number of iterations in terms of naming conventions as the community reconciles past education practices with the ongoing urgency to preserve Nehetho cultural and linguistic heritage (found in the inclusion in the name itself). As we will find in Chapter Four, there have been ongoing attempts to fit ATEC into local control by subsuming it within the elementary and secondary local authority structure of the NNCEA. ATEC leadership and staff have not expressed support of this idea as the function of educating and training adults to employment is significantly different from the pedagogy of educating youth (further discussed in Chapter Four).

Wahbung is an important document. In the reflection piece, *Our Tomorrows Today: Wahbung,* several of the original contributors were asked in 2017 to highlight some of the key principles, or what might today be called 'Calls to Action,' that they saw as pertinent to local education and economic development today.

From Jocelyn Bruyere, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, on governance:

1) Realizing local government.
2) More economic development, less poverty.
3) We need to consider how much economic development is benefiting the local level. How much are individual First Nations businesses really contributing to local communities.[46]

From Verna Kirkness, Fisher River Cree Nation, on education:

1) That a comprehensive study be done by our people to determine a more effective educational system than the one in existence that has not produced positive results.
2) That parents be consulted about the school curriculum.
3) That more Native teachers be hired.
4) That Native teacher assistants be hired to assist teachers.
5) That high schools be built on reserves
6) That upgrading, vocational training, adult education be available.[47]

From Doris Young, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, on housing:

1) The reports talk about standards. There were no heating "systems"; no running water; overcrowding was always an issue.
2) In cities, many of our people ended up in slum housing.
3) Funding [was] an issue; it is an issue to this day.
4) We talked to a contractor about materials, design. Never met expectations.
5) There was no fire insurance until recently (last 15 years). Communities don't routinely have firefighting equipment.[48]

Regarding education and socio-economic issues in Nelson House, these recommendations are familiar. I would like to return to the call for a holistic approach to all of

[46] Courchene Jr. et al., eds., 13.
[47] Courchene Jr. et al., eds., 24.
[48] Courchene Jr. et al., eds., 31. Doris Young was a member of the *Wahbung* research team. She only recently retired here at University College of the North as Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Affairs and was invested into the Order of Manitoba in 2014.

the calls to action listed above. Indeed, one of the greatest tasks for Aboriginal citizens and fellow travelers in the future will be that of reconciliation in the economy, in education, and in cultural endeavours. Regarding cultural maturity, a concept returned to soon, our communities in the north need to rebuild their cultural capital so that they can increase their ability to engage with Canadian society generally. I want to point to some words from *Wahbung* that express these ideas much better than I have. Of the three following paragraphs, please pay special note to the second:

> A century of government administration and government and church control increasingly restricted the social and physical mobility of Indian people. The effects of living in an atmosphere of state dependency, where virtually all decisions relating to your life and your future are made by others, has brought about a situation where the psychological barriers to change are such that it will require conscious effort on the part of Indian people to effect change in a manner consistent with their own objectives. From a life of productivity and harmony with nature the Indian has been forced to marginal economic activity, with all its uncertainties and tragedies.
>
> In developing new methods of response and community involvement it is imperative that we, both Indian and Government, **recognize that economic, social and educational development are synonymous and thus must be dealt with as a "total" approach rather than in parts** (*emphasis mine*). The practice of program development in segments, in isolation as between its parts, inhibits if not precludes, effective utilization of all resources in the concentrated effort required to support economic, social and educational advancement.
>
> In order that we can effect change in our own right, it will be necessary to develop a whole new process of community orientation and development. The single dependency factor of Indian people upon the state cannot continue, nor do we want to develop a community structure that narrows the opportunities of the individual through transferal of dependencies under another single agency approach.

Wahbung here does a wonderful job encapsulating the need to approach education and community development from a holistic approach. I will argue later that the ATEC educational

model goes some way to addressing this important need.[49] *Wahbung* provides a number of recommendations and I want to highlight some pertinent ones here.

The chiefs call for:

6) Education: The right to free and total educational assistance should be formally recognized in legislation.

11) Economic Development: This is ignored in the existing *Indian Act*. Provision should be made to encourage training and development in industries on and off reserve land.

13) Housing: The existing Indian Act does not refer to housing- merely to Certificate Possession. These sections must be amended as the attitude reflected dehumanizing and degrading and by policy, depriving. The commitment and responsibility of the government to provide original adequate housing for each Indian must be entrenched. The method of instituting this policy must rest with each community. Housing provided must meet with Canadian standards, e.g., CHMA approved.[50]

Of course, nothing in *Wahbung* directly cites the impact of hydro-electric development and the ensuing floods upon community development or even mentions it as a significant and ongoing issue. We know that the Churchill River Diversion was ongoing with the writing and publication of both the federal White Paper, Cardinal's writings, and *Wahbung.*

[49] In the future, and in partnership between the department of History and Social Sciences, and my colleagues in the Aboriginal and Northern Studies department here at UCN, I would like to develop a course that combines some of these essential historical documents, be they cartographical, or socio-economic, or cultural, into a single course so it can inform students' perspectives on how or why local history has developed as it has; such important documents as the *Indian Act*, *Wahbung*, the Northern Flood Agreement, and excerpts of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report would be included and we would try to situate these documents locally, to local developments and history. Obviously, it would be an ambitious course. What I am attempting here with these big documents and ATEC is, itself perhaps, a ridiculous exercise but I think it is important to try.

[50] *Wahbung,* 16.

2.2 Northern Manitoba as a Physical Space: The Traditional Lands of the Nisichawayasi

Northern Manitoba is a land that is replete with natural resources, a beautiful landscape, cold winters[51] and temperate summers. It is the ancient home to Cree, Dene, and Anishinaabe peoples and, more recently, Metis and settler peoples from the East. The northern half of Manitoba stretches from Grand Rapids, situated at the point in the Saskatchewan River system where Lake Winnipeg meets the waters of Lake Winnipegosis, northward towards the Nunavut border 750 kilometers away.

In the heart of this land lies a lake where three rivers meet. As a local history explains, the Burntwood, Footprint, and Rat Rivers converged at this place for thousands of years.[52] There is archival evidence of the Nehetho living in this area at least as early as the late eighteenth-century, as fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) began their travels inland, from the port of disembarkation at York Factory, southwest into the interior. Frank Tough, in his 2008 seminal work '*As Their Natural Resources Fail': Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930*, delineates the three separate regions that make up a significant part of Manitoba's north: The Far North, West of the Nelson River, and South and East of the Rocky Cree. Tough's conceptualizing of the physical and resource

[51] My readings in Russian History suggest Northern Manitoba's climate is colder than St. Petersburg's and closer to average winter temperatures in Northern Siberia.

[52] For a beautiful example of community research and narrative created for local elementary and secondary school students, refer to Nisichawayasi Nehetho Culture and Education Authority, *Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation History: Respecting our Past… Creating a Bright Future* (Nelson House: Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, 2016), 4: https://www.ncncree.com/wp-content/uploads/2018-04-25-NCN-History-Book.pdf

geography of these regions contributes to our understanding these lands. For Tough, the north can be divided into three regions and understanding these regions helps us to understand the history of NCN and the development of hydro-electricity in these three northern-most places.

1) The Far North:

> [I]n the far north, the tundra and transitional forest were occupied by the Chipewyan-Dene and the Inuit. Inuit from the coast camped at Fort Churchill and the inland Caribou-Inuit made occasional visits to this post. The barren ground caribou herds also supported the *Sayisedene* (Tadoule Lake) and *Hotel-nade dene* (Lac du Brochet). This area was a particularly good source for marten, the main high-valued furs. Arctic char was the important fish. This region is drained by the Churchill and Seal rivers. Fort Churchill and Lac du Brochet (also known as Reindeer Lake and Deers Lake) were the main European posts.

2) West of the Nelson River,

> [O]n the Churchill River system, is a region occupied by several bands of Rocky Cree or Westwoods Cree (*Ne-hiyawak)*. This area had the usual resources associated with the boreal forest – fish, game, and fur-bearing animals. Beaver and mink population densities were high here. The HBC maintained posts at pelican Narrows and Nelson River.

3) South and east of the Rocky Cree,

> [W]ere the Swampy Cree. Swampy Cree bands were found along the Saskatchewan River from Cumberland House through to Lake Winnipeg and from northeastern Manitoba to York Factory. The Swampy Bay Cree bands that traded into Norway House, Cross Lake, Oxford House, Split Lake, and York Factory and the mixed Oji-Cree bands at Island Lake and Gods Lake made use of game (woodland caribou and moose), freshwater fist (sturgeon, whitefish, lake trout, northern pike, and pickerel), and fur bearers (beaver, mink, and muskrat). On the Hudson Bay coast, waterfowl (geese, in particular) were an important resource for both Indians and traders. The Hayes River/ Nelson River/ Saskatchewan River was a major corridor during the fur trade. The Swampy Cree bands of Grand Rapids, Cedar Lake, Moose Lake, The Pas, and Cumberland House were able to exploit the resource-rich wetlands of the lower Saskatchewan River, where muskrat and waterfowl were normally abundant. Sturgeon could also be found in good number on this waterway.[53]

[53] Frank Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail': Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008)3,4.

The three river catchment regions described above are important to understanding how harnessing hydro-electric power in the north might work. For hydro generation, like human travel and Nehetho economy in the 18th century, is dependent on the flow of water.

2.2.1 Aaron Arrowsmith and mapping of North America

The earliest mapping I have found of likely habitation at Nisichawayasi, or where three rivers meet, is on a map drawn by Aaron Arrowsmith, circa 1796 (see Figure 2). In this map, housed in the Library of Congress, there is some detail of the Churchill, Burntwood, and Nelson River catchment areas. One can see the progression a traveler would have made down the Nelson River, disembarking first at York Factory and moving, by canoe, up river to Split Lake. From Split Lake the Nelson River flows south, towards Pimicikamak territory surrounding Cross Lake. From Cross Lake, one can travel by boat or canoe into Lake Winnipeg and south towards what would grow to become the Red River Colony, and on to the rivers that flow further south into the Mississippi catchment area.

From Split Lake, which is Tataswayak territory, one can also go west. If one follows the Arrowsmith map to the southwest, one can visually travel the Burntwood River, which is the river that flows through the city of Thompson today. Past the future town site of Thompson, over which will be built the Miles Hart Bridge, one can follow the river to a moderately sized lake, surrounded by smaller rivers, many of which terminate in small bodies of water providing home to beaver and muskrat. In fact, this area would likely have proven to be so prolific in its provision of beaver pelts and furs that it was known locally as Wuskwatim, the Lake of Beaver Dams. Arrowsmith's map refers to this lake as 'Beaver Dam Lake.'

The next lake to the west, past Beaver Dam Lake, is 3 Points Lake. This is the earliest mapping I have found for the place where present-day Nelson House is situated. Today, Nelson House Reserve 170B spreads to the north over Footprint Lake with its south half looking south over Three Point Lake. Nisichawayasi, or "Where Three Rivers Meet" would refer here in the Arrowsmith map as 3 Points Lake, or the lake where three rivers meet. The rivers in this context being the Burntwood, Footprint, and Rat Rivers. The community of Nelson House itself is spread over a series of causeways into an isthmus sticking out into Footprint Lake. Elders say that prior to the 1960s, the community was spread around the shores and upon the islands that make up both Footprint and 3 Points Lake.

Figure 2. Detail, Aaron Arrowsmith's 1796 "Map Exhibiting All the New discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America." Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, G3300 1814 .A7.

This history of mapping is important to understanding place and time in relation to the community of the Nisichawayasihk at Nelson House. Before Adhesion to Treaty 5 in 1908, the Nehetho of the Three Point Lake region lived spread across out between South Indian Lake and the waters flowing downstream from Three Point Lake and Beaver Dam Lake.

2.2.2 The Map drawn by Cha chay pay way ti (1806)

As Aaron Arrowsmith's map dates a site named 3 Points Lake and Beaver Dam Lake in the late 18th century, there is in the early 19th century a unique map, dated May 1806, of a depiction of those rivers and lakes west of York Factory on Hudson's Bay (see Figure 3). This map gives a sense of what, at the time, the Cree view of their relation to the land may have looked like. What there is in Cha chay pay way ti's map is a series of those lakes and rivers that are important to navigating the region. The top of the map is listed as the Nelson River and at the lake marked 'Ta Tas Que' or 'Split Lake', the river system is divided into three parts.[54] The map is best read oriented with Split Lake roughly to the north-east of the compass rose, and Cranberry Portage at the south-west. The three river systems are very important to the economy of the Churchill-Nelson River basin and comprise several important routes for fur trades to access the mighty rivers west of Manitoba, the mightiest being the Saskatchewan.

The river flowing left of the map, from the north-west, is the Burntwood River. Here, the Burntwood is one of three major tributaries that makes up the Churchill-Nelson River basin.

[54] 'Ta tas que' here refers to the present-day band Tataskweyak Cree Nation. Tataskweyak itself has a historical relationship with Manitoba Hydro and the Churchill River Diversion project, its effects dating back to the late 1960s. In present-day, Tataskwayak is one of four First Nations partnered in the Keeyask Project with Manitoba Hydro, the other First Nation partners being War Lake First Nation, York Factory First Nation, and Fox Lake First Nation

Modern visitors to northern Manitoba who visit the city of Thompson will find the Burntwood River passing through the city, on the north-west side. Thompson is situated up river from the communities at Split Lake. In the present-day, driving north-west out of Thompson, across the Miles Hart Bridge, one can drive provincial road 391.[55] About 20 kilometers out of Thompson, on the left-hand side of the road leading south, is the road to Wuskwatim Dam. The Wuskwatim Road, leads south-west towards the modern-day dam and the catchment area for Wuskwatim. On the Arrowsmith map, the old lake was named Beaver Dam Lake. On the map of Cha chay pay way ti, this lake is marked as 'oos cut tim L'. Ooscutim here on the map, or Wuskwatim today, is Nehetho for Beaver Dam Lake. Further down Road 391, marking roughly the half-way point between Thompson and Nelson House, is a river flowing on a south-north axis. This river today has the sign torn off the pole, but about a decade ago, the sign was still there, and it read 'Sapochi River.' If you refer to Chachaypaywayti's beads-on-a-string map, that same river is identified in 1806 as 'Sa putche waw tik gone.'

Collin Gillespie's 2017 history of Pimicikamak, or Cross Lake, tells the story of how Peter Fidler, a Hudson's Bay Company explorer, surveyor and mapmaker, traveled down the Nelson River in 1809 navigating with this map and "sketch-mapped the shorelines in detail along his route through Pimicikamak territory."[56] Gillespie uses this mapping, and oral history sources local to the Cross Lake region, wrote that, "amid inconsistency in terminology and confusion in geography, contemporaneous pre-treaty records tend to confirm oral history: there was little

[55] This provincial road is the access to the communities north-west of Thompson, including Nelson House, Leaf Rapids, and Lynne Lake. Leaf Rapids and Lynne Lake are small communities that used to be home to the Ruttan Mine, and the Farley Nickel Mine, respectively.
[56] Collin Gillespie, *Portrait of a People: A Study in Survival* (Winnipeg: Big Fizz Inc., 2017), 47.

contact between European explorers or traders and Pimicikamak before the end of the eighteenth century and indeed until the making of Treaty 5," 1875.[57] This assessment holds for the Nisichawayasi Nehetho as well.

Having driven about forty kilometers to Nelson House from Thompson, the beauty of the land is apparent. It is true, as Eva Linklater notes in her dissertation, that the land of the Rocky Cree lies here, "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."[58] These lands, and those rivers and lakes depicted in the 1806 map, are the places of habitation for the Rocky Cree and served as traditional travel corridors for Cree peoples and the European fur trade. James Waldram writes, in his assessment of hydroelectric development and native communities in Western Canada, that it at about this point, in the early 1800s, that a community was formed in the Southern Indian Lake area in post-contact times. There were some people taking up residence at both Nelson House and South Indian Lake and this fact likely prompted the Hudson's Bay Company to build a post at both sites at about this time.[59] Oral testimony in Nelson House maintains that prior to permanent settlement at either of the two sites, Nelson House and South Indian, Nehetho families would travel from one site to the other over several seasons, or use one site to winter, and the other to summer, over. This practice, to seasonally live and travel between either of the two sites over a long and

[57] Gillespie, *Portrait of a People: A Study in Survival,* 50.
[58] Eva Linklater. "The Footprints of Wasahkacahk: The Churchill River Diversion Project and Destruction of the Nelson House Cree Historical Landscape." Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1994, 4.
[59] James Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 117. Waldram cites the specific establishment of the post at South Indian for 1803.

continuous period, explains why both of the sites, namely Nelson House and South Indian, would go on to form two separate communities within the structure of one single Band.[60]

The river Sapochi lies at roughly the half-way point if you travel to Nelson House by road. Roughly to our south sits what used to be Wuswatim Lake, but is now the catchment area for the Wuskwatim Dam (which is still, technically, a lake)(Figure 3).

[60] Incorporating both sites as two physically removed communities encompassed within a single band was a result of the establishment of the Indian Act, federally under Canada's jurisdiction, in 1876; it is likely it would not have been implemented at the local level until after Adhesion to Treaty 5 in 1908.

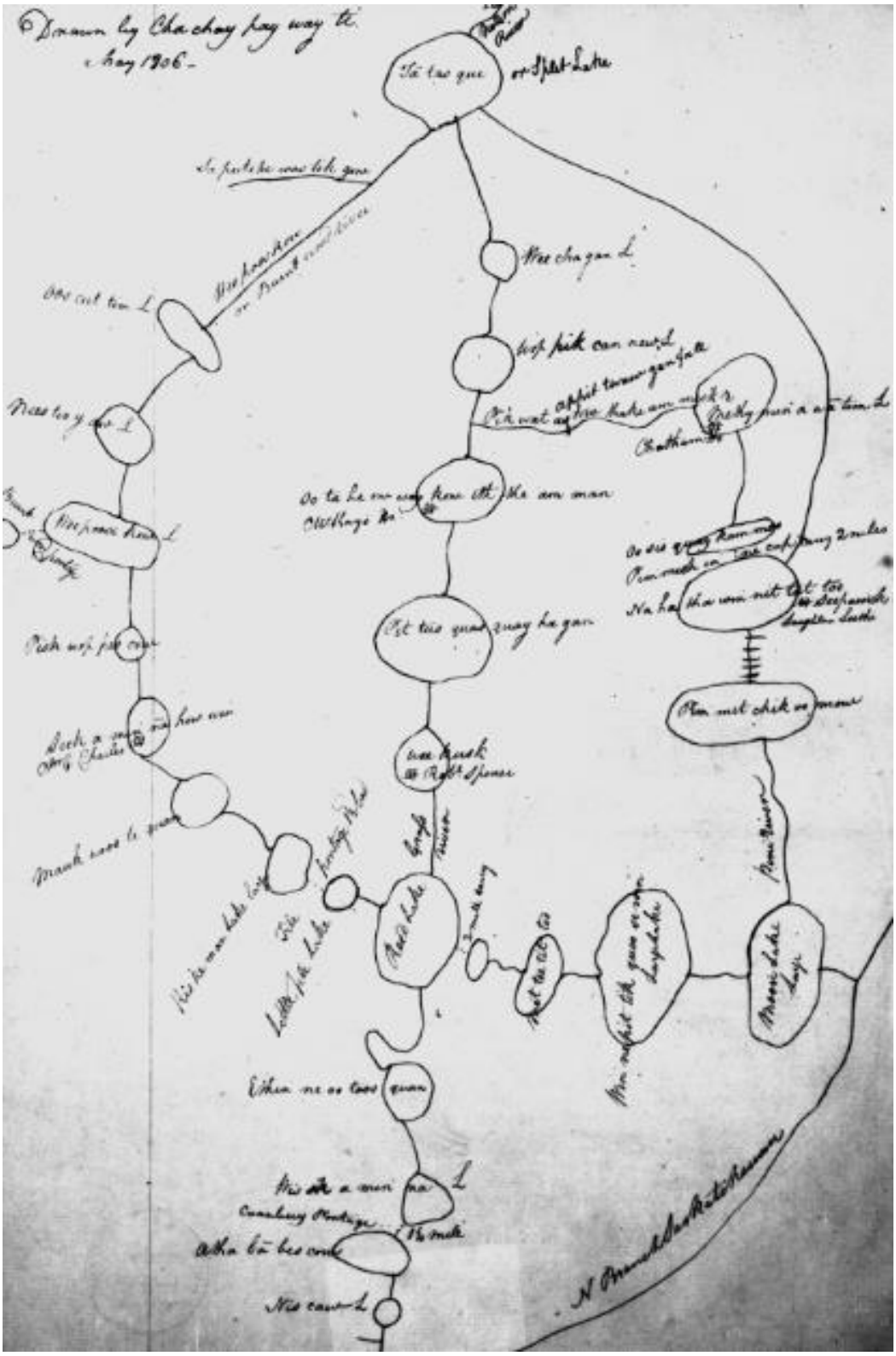

Figure 3. Cha Chay Pay Way Ti's Map of the Waterways of a Part of Northern Manitoba, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cha_Chay_Pay_Way_Ti%E2%80%99s_Map_of_the_Waterways_of_a_Part_of_Northern_Manitoba_(1806).jpg This map is an example of what geographers refer to as

a 'bead map.' This particular bead map details the important lakes in the north of the province of Manitoba, particularly those situated on the Nelson and Burntwood Rivers.

2.2.3 Contemporary Landscape and Community History

The community of Nelson House itself is situated at around the shores of two lakes, that of Three Point Lake in the south, and Footprint Lake in the north. As NCN's community history recounts, the Nisichawayasi Nehetho, as a people,

> Have been connected to the land and waters where the Burntwood, Footprint and Rat Rivers converge for over ten thousand years. After Adhesion to Treaty 5 was signed in 1908, Indian Reserve 170 was created and became the formal homeland of Nisichwayasihk Cree Nation. For millennia we have relied on the waterways for transportation, and what is now called Nelson House, was a strategic location within our traditional territory. This likely influenced the Hudson's Bay Company's choice of the site for a trading post around 1800.[61]

Regarding the settlement of Nelson House as an Indian Reserve, this would have been influenced indirectly by the passage in Canada of the *Indian Act* in 1876, and directly by the signing of Adhesion in 1908. The *Indian Act*, of course, sets aside designated lands, meaning "a tract of land or any interest therein the legal title to which remains vested in Her Majesty and in which the band for whose use and benefit it was set apart as a reserve has, otherwise than absolutely, released or surrendered its rights or interests, whether before or after the coming into force of this definition."[62]

Following contact, the Aboriginal people and the employees of the HBC began with the mapping of Nehetho territory in the late eighteenth century. Economic, social or political contact with what would become settler society was minimal. As described in Frank Tough's

[61] NCN, 4.
[62] *Indian Act*. Statutes of Canada 1985, c.2, s.1.

work, interaction between the two societies, that of the Aboriginal and that of the settler, would have been local:

> The meeting of Native peoples and the world market occurred at the local 'trade' post: where their furs, hides, and meat were traded; where their labour was needed for seasonal or temporary work; where the band formed as the family/ hunting groups congregated; where emergency shelter and gratuities were made available during times of scarcity; where European goods were purchased; and where credit was entrusted in order to outfit another season of trapping. Here also, Native furs entered a commodity flow that reached from their traplines to the markets of industrial Europe. Each post was a point on the Hudson's Bay Company system.[63]

Under such a relationship described above, the effects of settler society were largely economic, introducing wage work and debit credit relations in local Aboriginal society. Relations between the two societies would change with the signing of Adhesion and the introduction of federal government Indian policy, embodied in the form of the Indian Act. The changing relations, and the policies that drove them, animate the legacy of colonialism that exists today. As former chief NCN Jim Moore describes them, they are "shrouds of colonialism" that we consistently are fighting to strip away.

The process of enforcing the *Indian Act* on Aboriginal populations across northern Manitoba, and the ensuing socio-cultural policies emanating from the philosophies animating the spirit of the Indian Act, is well documented in the Canadian academic literature. Regarding the collective experiences of the Nehetho living on the lands connected by the three rivers, there are three particularly significant narratives that animate discussions, historical and contemporary, in local conversations. The first narrative, and the one related to the legacy of colonialism, is that of self-governance. It is easy to complicate conversations around self-

[63] Tough, 14.

governance with larger concepts of sovereignty and talk of nation-to-nation relations. Really, in reading the local literature and speaking with local Aboriginal leaders in northern Manitoba, self-governance begins with *self-reliance* and, to use a metaphor, 'control of one's own house.' In the sections that follow, I will discuss a number of important regional documents, including two mentioned previously, that of *Wahbung, 1977*, *The Report of the Panel of Public Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development, 1976*, and the *Northern Flood Agreement, 1977*. Animating each of these important documents is the idea of Aboriginal spirit of self-reliance and resiliency in the face of outside socio-economic or political forces. When you discuss how you identify means of enhancing self-reliance and resiliency, oftentimes conversations in Nelson House turn into commentaries on education and self-enhancement, or the enhancement of the collective community.

2.3 Impacts of Hydro-electric Development on Communities

The second important narrative that I will consider is that of hydro impact on community development. The Churchill River Diversion and ensuing flooding of South Indian and Nelson House territories in the 1960s and since, has wreaked significant damage on the traditional homelands of many Cree peoples. James Waldram has contributed significantly to the historical narrative of how and why the flooding took place, and its economic, social and cultural impacts on northern Aboriginal peoples. Locally, Eva Linklater's MA thesis "*The Footprints of Wasahkacahk: The Churchill River Diversion Project and Destruction of the Nelson House Cree Historical Landscape"* examines the impacts of flooding on Cree heritage values, how they are anchored to the land as named places, and the consequences of their loss due to inundation. Linklater makes the argument that the philosophical basis of a typical

archaeological impact assessment cannot address such problems as inundation. “Rather, these projects must become a holistic endeavor, integrating both tangible archaeological remains and Cree traditional history.”[64]

Here is the concept of a ‘holistic’ approach applied to the practice of integrating archeology into Cree tradition, history and teachings and this concept. Holistic approaches, in local terms often expressed as “the four directions,” have an important application in not only Cree archeological practice but also in cultural teachings as well. Hopefully through the body of this paper there will be, especially when we get to chapter four on ATEC and education, the need for a holistic, or sometimes expressed as ‘Cree’ or ‘Nehetho,’ approach to teaching. Practitioners in social work, education, or Elders, often express the need to approach the child holistically, or a problem or challenge, holistically. This concept of holistic practice in teaching includes, as taught at ATEC, not just approaching an issue or subject in educational practice from a curriculum, outcomes, or solely academic point of view. In education in Nelson House, practitioners teach with outcomes that are academic, practical, but also cultural or spiritual. Teachers and students have expressed again and again the need to approach education from a holistic point of view and this will be discussed in Chapter Four.

These ideas help contribute to understanding how one might alleviate the damage done to communities impacted by flooding and hydro-electric development. It is also important here to recognize that work and research in Manitoba by the group Wa Ni Ska Tan is contributing much to local, regional and, looking forward, international conversations regarding grass-roots

[64] Linklater, 1.

narratives and the impact of hydro-development in many different geographical and socio-economic contexts.[65]

2.4 Housing and Economic Development

The third important narrative that concerns residents in Nelson House is that of economic development and housing, or rather, the absence of these two things.[66] In making sense of economic development, I want to introduce a concept I find useful in working through and problematizing Aboriginal issues through a settler lens (something of which I am constantly having to do): that of *cultural maturity*. Relations between settler society and Nehetho changed substantially with the signing of Adhesion and the implementation of the Indian Act on local communities. As important documents such as the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996,* and the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015,* have shown, there are colonial legacies that require healing from past federal and provincial policies affecting education, child protection, economic development, cultural practices, land use, and language preservation. The imposition of settler, or Western-informed, models of economic and social development has not worked well for most Aboriginal people.

Roy Medvedev, in his treatise on post-Soviet Russian economic and social development following the collapse of the USSR, notes the difficulties and terrible mistakes made by Western

[65] 'Wa Ni Ska Tan' is Cree for 'Wake up' or 'Rise up,' and is a grass roots alliance that connects activists with the work of researchers and academics. It is "shaped by the priorities of hydro-impacted Indigenous communities." Website: http://hydroimpacted.ca/; a new scholarly addition to this discourse is Aimee Craft and Jill Blakeley, ed. , *In Our Backyard: Keeyask and the Legacy of Hydroelectric Development* (Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg Press, 2022).

[66] The housing element of the ATEC story, where apprentices with the trades programming develop skills on the worksite, is the Pewapun Construction Ltd., run for-profit through ATEC. Pewapun is active in Nelson House in the building of residences and ATEC's apprentices can collect hours of work for their documentation through Pewapun as the employer. For more information, visit https://www.ncncree.com/pewapun-construction-ltd/

policy makers and Russian politicians to marry a Western model of market liberalism and liberal democracy on a society not yet built to those structures. I argue here similar mistakes have been made in forcing Aboriginal communities into these same structures. The American political scientist, Igor Yefimov, cited in Medvedev's text, explains the problem well (though in an entirely different context):

> To be sure, the market form of economic regulation has shown that it is the most efficient. But history has also shown just as clearly that the free market is a luxury that not every nation can allow itself, and certainly not at all times in its history. Solid and tested social structures are needed that will prevent the market from turning into a source of chaos and ruin [sic].
>
> You can see that socialism has not ruined Sweden, while capitalism has not saved Brazil. This is because there is something in the world more important than economics. The name of this most important element in social existence is cultural maturity. When we speak of culture we are not talking about the number of books read or poems memorized. *By culture we mean the way in which a human community is constructed* [emphasis mine]. Culture in this sense is slow to mature. If a country tries to move at too great a speed, one that is beyond its capabilities, it explodes from within.[67]

The Russian example of societies in conflict socio-economically is not unique. In the Canadian context, it is important to discuss the enduring and resilient mixed economies of predominantly Indigenous communities and the historical changes in the way federal and other government policies take this economy into account. Andrew Hodgkins' article "Re-appraising Canada's Northern 'Internal Colonies'" uses the concept of "internal colonialism" applied to Canada's northern territories to describe the process of regional underdevelopment, and discusses

[67] Igor Yefimov, originally published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (October 17,1997) cited in Roy Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey through the Yeltsin Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 71.

Marxian and postmodern lenses in helping to understand the socio-economic underperformance in such regards.[68]

The practice and intent of the Indian Act went far beyond the simple imposition of market economics and political structure upon Aboriginal communities, including that of NCN. To a degree, this insistence of the holistic on cultural practices across the spectrum of issues, including education, child welfare, housing, social welfare, and economic development, is in some senses a call to repair the damage inflicted to a people's cultural maturity.[69] In the Canadian context, these conflicts between settler and Aboriginal societies is best described by Harold Cardinal already in 1977 as follows:

> Over the past century, the Indian people, and many white people as well, have become aware of the aura of conflict surrounding the relations between white man and red man in Canada. The struggle now has become so intense and so emotional for so many of our people, especially our young people; and has led to equally intense but opposite emotional response from elements of white society, that I think the time has come for us to sit back and try to determine in our minds just what the hell this struggle really is all about.[70]

It is little coincidence that a significant part of Cardinal's analysis is given over to economic development, education, and governance. Indeed, what are important elements in building

[68] Andrew *Hodgkins*, "Re-appraising Canada's Northern 'Internal Colonies'," *The Northern Review* (Spring 2009): 179-205. We find in the narrative of internal colonialism that of hinterland and metropolis reminiscent of Harold Innis' earlier work. For an analysis of the state and a Northern Social Economy, consider Francis Abele "The State and the Northern Social Economy: Research Prospects," *The Northern Review* Spring 2009: 37-56.

[69] The topic of failing Aboriginal social and economic structures in the face of colonial development and policy is a narrative in many books I keep near to my desk: in economics, Frank Tough's '*As Their Resources Fail': Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930*, in social welfare, Hugh Shewell's *'Enough to Keep Them Alive': Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965*, in law, Peter Kulchyski's *Unjust Relations: Aboriginal Rights in Canadian Courts.*

[70] Harold Cardinal, *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1977), 7.

cultural maturity and resilience. Understanding the role of an organization like ATEC in contributing to this process is important. Through these three narratives, namely hydro-development, education, and economic development, I hope to illustrate, are partly addressed through such efforts as those embodied in the work at ATEC.[71]

Before moving on, I emphasize here that I do not use the concept of *maturity*, cultural or otherwise, in a pejorative sense, in that Aboriginal cultures and modes of production are not mature, or *immature*. The Russian scholar Roy Medvedev certainly would not have described Russian culture or society as one being immature to that of the American one, in the 1990s. Rather, I take the term to mean that the society, socio-economically, was not able to adapt readily to Western, foreign, or exterior, economic and social conditions significantly and historically different than those modes of economic and cultural production practiced by Russian, or Eastern European societies (we see similarities in difficulties between adapting capitalism and democracy to Russia and Eastern Europe in the 1990s and those experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 21st century).

Having touched on the importance of *Wahbung, 1971*, and before examining *The Report of the Panel of Public Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development, 1976*, and the *Northern Flood Agreement, 1977*, it is worth reviewing the context and conversation around self-governance

[71] I do not suggest here that Roy Medvedev is the first, or best, use of cultural maturity in the Canadian context; I came to Medvedev in my readings on post-soviet reconstruction in Eastern Europe. At the time of writing this dissertation I was reading Mikhail Gorbechev's excellent *The New Russia* (New York: Polity Press, 2017); of course I had read Medvedev's *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1971) much earlier. For a critical and more contemporary use of the concept of cultural maturity, consider Charles Johnston, "Humanity's Necessary 'Growing Up'-the Concept of Cultural Maturity (Long Form)," *Cultural Maturity: a blog for the future* (blog). *The Institute for Creative Devlepment,* Accessed October 15, 2023, https://culturalmaturityblog.net/2016/02/humanitys-necessary-growing-up-the-concept-of-cultural-maturity/#:~:text=I%20see%20our%20times%20demanding,it%20requires%20and%20makes%20possible.

and local control that took place in the early 1970s. Returning to the problems inherent in the history of Canadian Indian policy discussed earlier and the ongoing impact of the Indian Act on Canadian-Aboriginal relations, the federal government, under the administration of Pierre-Elliot Trudeau's Liberals, attempted to solve "the Indian problem." A possible solution was posited in the 1969 white paper on Indian policy, or the "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy." Regarding education and economic issues, the government's white paper had the following to say:

> To be an Indian is to lack power, the power to act as owner of your lands, the power to spend your own money and, too often, the power to change your own condition.
>
> Not always, but too often, to be an Indian is to be without - without a job, a good house, or running water; without knowledge, training or technical skill and, above all, without those feelings of dignity and self-confidence that a man must have if he is to walk with his head held high.

The first clause relates to the ability of the individual in Aboriginal society in terms that are not communal in the same instance that the *Indian Act* itself treats the ownership of land as a part of the reserve and therefore, of the band. Though the government's white paper seems to be motivated by the desire to enhance the welfare and general wealth of the Treaty Aboriginal community, it does so in a way that it is highly individualized, or, many have argued, Western or Liberal.

Harold Cardinal rebutted the federal government's approach to dealing with Indian issues in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cardinal writes in his 1999 foreward to *The Unjust Society*,

> Thirty years ago, Indian Nations in Canada stood at an important crossroads, facing the prospect of termination. The Liberal government of the day proposed doing away with

> Indian reserves, status and identity. It was, for Indian Nations, literally a question of survival…
>
> *The Unjust Society* was written to capture the issues as we then saw them. It represented an attempt to bring to the Canadian public, perhaps for the first time, a voice that was ours, a voice that reflected First Nation thoughts and reactions to the situation facing us. It described the political environment of the late 1960s and the state of Indian/ White relations. It presented the challenges facing First Nation political leaders and their communities and provided a glimpse of the contemporary Indian political movement in its embryonic stages.[72]

On reading the 'Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy' the problem, as so often is the case in government policy papers, is not so much the intent as it is the method. The government paper purported to "require that the Indian people's role of dependence be replaced by a role of equal status, opportunity and responsibility, a role they can share with all other Canadians."[73]

The problem, Cardinal said in 1969, was not so much the liberal philosophy underlining the recommended policies of the government paper, but rather the "arbitrary dictations from Ottawa to Indians that have been repeated down through our history."[74] As Peter Kulchyski argues, the motives of the White Paper may even thought to be benign, but

> The White Paper [sic] had proposed removing most forms of special status for Aboriginal peoples in the hopes of ending discrimination against them. While the policy may have been well-intentioned, it amounted to a proposal for wholesale assimilation in the eyes of most Aboriginal leaders and was attacked until it was withdrawn in 1971.[75]

[72] Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre Press, 2011), vii.
[73] Canada, *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* (Ottawa 1969), 2.
[74] Cardinal, *The Unjust Society,* 118.
[75] Peter Kulchyski, *Unjust Relations: Aboriginal Rights in Canadian Courts* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5.

Using again the concept of cultural maturity, the policies behind the implementation of the White Paper, despite the motives of the federal Liberal administration of the day, would have gone some ways towards destroying the cultural capital that still may have existed in Aboriginal communities across Canada.

The *Report of the Panel of Public Inquiry into Northern Hydro Development*, 1976, was a product of much consultation by the Interchurch Task Force on Northern Flooding. The taskforce began its work in the early fall of 1973 when, at the behest of community members of South Indian Lake, an informal meeting of southern Manitoba clergy was convened. Beginning in 1974, a taskforce was struck by clergy of Manitoba representing the various churches and denominations, including the Anglican Church, the United Church, the Mennonite Central Committee, and the Roman Catholic Church. Participating also were members of the Northern Flood Committee and the members of various stakeholder groups throughout the province of Manitoba.[76] This report is important because it sets the context, and identifies many of the issues, that would have animated the work of the Northern Flood Committee and the issues and desired outcomes identified in the almost contemporary Northern Flood Agreement.

There are shortcomings and inadequacies to be found throughout the deliberations and testimonies presented in the Report regarding hydroelectric development in the north including: the lack of consultation, the failure to due compensation, the inability to consider social and cultural costs to affected communities, the lack of supports for communities undergoing fundamental social and economic change due to loss of livelihoods. Regarding

[76] The Interchurch Taskforce on Northern Flooding, *Report of the Panel of Public Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development* (Winnipeg, 1976), ii.

potential socio-economic impacts, the terms of reference for the Taskforce were clear, and are provided below. The taskforce was to investigate

1) What are the social and environmental costs of this project to the community as a whole? To whom will go the costs and to whom will go the benefits of this project?...

4) Has the severe social dislocation anticipated in the north been given its deserved priority by Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba government? Particularly has the Canadian stance of cultural pluralism been given sufficient consideration by Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba government in view of the unique but also realistically progressive forms of cultural continuity of the Indian and Metis peoples?[77]

From the outset, the non-participation of Manitoba Hydro in the proceedings limited the findings of the Report in that Hydro's perspective would not be heard. The Report identified significant costs to Aboriginal communities and disproportionate gains to Manitoba generally. These costs, in speaking to many community members to this day (in 1976), the Report states, are yet to be repaid, or repaired, or healed over.[78]

The Taskforce used the terms 'cultural pluralism' and 'cultural continuity' and I want to align these with earlier observations on cultural maturity and Aboriginal holistic approaches to education and socio-economic development generally. The Report findings suggested that costs to cultural maturity, and Aboriginal society's cultural capital would be substantial:

> What we were told indicated that, to the Indian, he and his fellows are one with their environment, with the land, trees, flowers, lakes, rivers, animals, birds and fish. It is as if all nature was part of him and he of it. To be forced to move from the place where he has lived, and to separate himself from so much that he regards as part of himself is a

[77] *Report of the Panel of Public Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development*, vi.
[78] A reading of the Report will give a due accounting to the costs paid by northern Aboriginal communities to developments benefitting disproportionately the southern parts of the province. I highlight again the work of Wa Na Ski Tan for those interested in research regarding the human costs of hydro-electric development and the parallel narratives today of 'green' energy sold to stakeholders in the south or internationally.

> very serious matter. It is like giving up part of himself. Similarly, any substantial interference with his environment is tragic. It upsets his whole way of live and raises sharp fears for the future, fears which have been aggravated throughout much of the current dispute by inability to obtain information about matters that are vital to them… The white man generally is unable or at least fails to understand the feeling of the Indian for the land all that grows and lives on it.[79]

In my observation, these sentiments remain common among community members of Nelson House: the growing lack of connection to the land, the separation of their homes and lifestyles from that of the surrounding water, and the failure of the youth to connect with the landscape around them.[80]

The findings of the Report further said that:

> …social and environmental costs cannot be segregated from economic costs, because unless the economy of a district is still able to support the people who live in it the district becomes non-viable, and no matter whether the social and environments costs are light, heavy or tragic, the people or some of them may be forced to move.

These concerns would be of paramount interest in the soon-to-be negotiated Northern Flood Agreement. With respect to utilitarian arguments that impacts to a few thousand people can be justified by benefits to the prosperity of hundreds of thousands, the Report made the following observations:

> These costs, or losses, will not fall upon the people of Manitoba as a whole. They will fall upon the people of the north, by which we mean essentially the Indian and Metis people. The economic costs, of course, may be transferred in part to all Manitobans, through welfare payments and expenditures incurred in moving people to better

[79] *Report of the Panel of Public Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development*, 23.

[80] In teaching Grade 8 in Nelson House, and in working with education partners in building up a lands-based education program there, it was no surprise to find that over half of my class had never before been camping, or fishing on the lake. I want to thank Donald Hart for his ongoing work in advocating land-based education for the students of NNCEA, and I want to remember David MacDonald for his ground-breaking at work at Nelson House before his passing.

> locations and *in devising and setting up, in collaboration with the Native people, new industries and other means of making the north more productive* [emphasis mine][81]

Regarding benefits, the Report found:

> The benefits of the project will endure to all Manitoba. At first most of the benefits will accrue to the populous south of the province, because of the much greater variety of uses there for electricity, but in the north electricity is important for light, communication, other domestic purposes and is confidently expected to be used increasingly in industry as new activities develop and new mines and forests industries come into production. This will not happen overnight.[82]

Benefits and costs is one of the leading narratives in describing the efficacy of hydro-electric development to people outside the northern Manitoba region. Today the conversations regarding 'green energy' and 'sustainability' have replaced the words 'cost-efficiency' and 'cheap availability' that more accurately dominated narratives surrounding hydro-electricity a generation ago. Still, in the documents then and now, the topics of export and surplus energy, profit, and grid-capabilities are still embedded throughout the historical and contemporary discourses. This will be more fully explored in the next chapter as NCN itself explores, through the late 1990s and early 2000s, to become part of the hydro-electricity generating industry.

What does the Interchurch Taskforce Report recommend in education and does this in any way impact the provision of services ATEC provides at present? Though much of the 90-page report deals with social, long-range problems, it also highlights the dire need for

[81] This will have more import in chapters three and four, with the building of the Wuskwatim dam and the role that ATEC and similar organizations would have in 'building up' Nelson House.)

[82] *Report of the Panel of Public Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development*, 51. Regarding economic expansion and mining, remember that Inco began extracting nickel ore from the Thompson site only as recently as 1961; Thompson had been growing ever since. This, again, did nothing to benefit the local Aboriginal population directly or the Nisichawaysi upon whose traditional land the mine was built. With a city population today of over 12, 000 persons, Thompson has since grown into a significant service provider for the north-east of the province.

education and employment, though not till later in the report. The findings in 1976 could easily apply to the past fifteen years:

> With the growing development of the north greater efforts will be required to enable Indians and Metis who so desire to qualify for many varieties of skilled jobs, requiring technical and professional training. We learned from several sources that, as historically has been the case, the employment of Indians in work on the project has been confined almost entirely to various kinds of common labour. Further, construction jobs for Indians are not only limited in character but also temporary in duration. As these jobs come to an end over the years until the completion of the project near the end of the century, native people who have enjoyed higher wages for several years and have been separated from their traditional vocations for that period, may find it very difficult to readjust to their former way of life. At the same time there may be no wage paying jobs available to them. Anticipation of this situation by Government and plans to meet it are essential to the continuance of healthy community life in the north.[83]

The design of community development in the north of Manitoba affected by hydro development should have, from the beginning, provided for training and the socio-economic structural changes taking place in the family and community as it transitioned from a hunting culture to that employed more regularly in modern-day waged labour. The purpose of ATEC as later described on page 31 of the Wuskwatim Project Agreement in Principle 2001 was, in part, to provide an alleviation, albeit very late, for the shortcomings listed above. The long-term negative impacts and the short-term economic benefits of these mega-projects being built in and around the north throughout the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, through to the present building of the Keeyask Hydro Project at Split Lake, are a feature of these large projects generally.

The proceedings of the Interchurch Task Force, underway through 1976, set the context for talks between the Northern Flood Committee, the federal and provincial governments, and Manitoba Hydro in Winnipeg. The members of the Committee, as listed on the front page of

[83] *Report of the Panel of Public Enquiry into Northern Hydro Development*, 64.

the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA), were the Indian bands of Nelson House, Norway House, Cross Lake, Split Lake, and York Factory.

For many academics, the NFA was seen as a resolution to the ongoing trauma of hydro-electric development. Romuald Wera and Thibault Martin argue that, for the Aboriginal peoples of the region, "hydro development was the final step in removing forever the opportunity to fully support and sustain their traditional way of life."[84] They compare the Northern Flood Agreement (1977) in Manitoba and the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) in Quebec (1975) and classify them as modern-day treaties. Interestingly, while both agreements were upheld in their day as exemplars of governments working well with First Nations peoples, both agreements had troubled implementations over the ensuing two decades (some would argue they were not implemented in their original state, at all).[85]

We will turn here to the Northern Flood Agreement 1977 and what it sets forth in regard to education and community development for NCN. As a brief aside, I was first pointed to this document while working at ATEC. My friends and colleagues Jim Moore and Leonard Linklater often referred and mentioned it, highlighting their disappointment that 'if only it had

[84] Romuald Wera and Thibault Martin, "The Way to Modern Treaties: A Review of Hydro Projects and Agreements in Manitoba and Quebec," in Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 60.

[85] In the fall of 2019 University College of the North hosted a 'Linkages in Northern Economic Conference' and one of the special speakers was none other than Chief Matthew Coon Come; part of his talk was about the troubled birthing of the JBNQA and the work leading up to the more contemporary and conclusive Paix des Brave Agreement of 2002. Dr. Coon Come's talk was entitled: "Talk on economic development strategy, Plan Nord, how the Quebec government and Quebec's Grand Council of Crees came to signing this historic agreement and the importance of such partnership." His description of the northern Manitoba agreements compared to those of northern Quebec was not generous to Manitoba. Notable in his talk was his recommendation that the north of the province develop its own regional governance structure to advocate and negotiate with Winnipeg on the northern region's behalf. Prof. Ken Coates spoke to a similar theme at the same conference; of course, his work on northern peripheries, and the Coates and Morrison text *The Forgotten North: A History of Canada's Provincial Norths* makes clear the point sent home by the Interchurch Taskforce Report cited here, that the south of Manitoba benefits disproportionately at the cost to the north.

been implemented.' I began to see that, even over forty years later, the document animates much hope for members of NCN (now wistful).

Wherein lay that hope? By the early 1990s, it was clear that the Northern Flood Agreement of 1977 was not going to be implemented in any meaningful way. The Implementation Agreement of 1997 is much different, in language and intent, than the original 1977 document (the twenty years between them notwithstanding) the philosophy animating the language of the two documents, that of 1977 and 1997, are different, the earlier one using language rooted in Keynesianism, government involvement, and community collaboration; the second rooted in a contract arrangement model featuring a payout and minimal Band/ government intercession. The Northern Flood Implementation Agreement of 1997, then, is a second and completely new attempt to extinguish the outstanding issues outlined in the agreement of 1977.

The original 1977 NFA document is broken into 25 articles with eight lettered "Schedules," A through H, appended to the end. Remembering the lack of consultation ongoing with the building of the Churchill River Diversion and its related infrastructure, Aboriginal peoples in the north are anxious today to know how their communities fit into the cultural, social, and economic growth. This worry is seen in the 1976 Interchurch Taskforce Report and it animates two important sections of the 1977 NFA, notably Article 16, under Planning Policy, and the famous – at least locally at NCN, and in NFA literature – Schedule "E" attached to the Agreement. The bulk of Schedule "E" deals with the development and implementation of the Community Development Plan; the important sections contributing are sections 2, 3, and 4 concerning the purpose of the plan and participation. I cite these two sections below:

Article 16: Planning Policy

16.1 Canada and Manitoba will co-operate to provide the resources required to enable each of the five communities represented by the Committee to formulate a comprehensive Community Development Plan [underscore theirs] to co-ordinate such Plan with government plans as provided for in Schedule "E" attached here to and forming part of this Agreement.

16.2 Such Plan shall be prepared and co-ordinated with a view to enabling the communities to provide continued opportunity to carry on their traditional lifestyles to the maximum extent practical, to deal with social and economic problems that may be identified, to take advantage of opportunities that may be identified, and to recommend the practical means that may be available for implementation of the Plans formulated.

16.3 Canada agrees, within the limits of the community planning budget of the Manitoba Regional Office of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, to make professional assistance and services available to the five Bands for the objective of completing the Community Development Plans for the Reserves by March 31, 1981.

16.4 Canada and Manitoba undertake to consider and implement any recommendation they jointly or severally deem to be practical by any means, including the use of the existing Northlands Agreement and/ or future like agreements intended to contribute to the viability of a community.[86]

Schedule "E"

Section 2: Substantive Purpose of Development Plan

The Community Development Plan shall serve as a policy co-ordinating instrument, setting forth the best-case community development scenario and joint action program for the eradication of mass poverty and mass unemployment and the improvement of the physical, social and economic conditions and transportation.

Section 3: Participation and Adoption of Plan

The Community Development Plan will be developed in concert with the ideas and aspirations of the residents of the communities of Nelson House, Norway House, York Landing, Split Lake and Cross Lake.

Section 4: Scope and Content of Development Plan

A Community Development Plan shall embrace the economic, social and physical circumstances of the residents of the five communities, and any other narrative, text or illustration required to clarify goals, objectives, policies, targets, dates, etc., and to inject

[86] Canada, *Northern Flood Agreement* (Winnipeg 1977), 43-44.

> long-range considerations into determinations of short-term actions and requirements.[87]

These two parts of the NFA, and the spirit in which they were written, could have accomplished much had they been implemented in Nelson House or if ATEC was operated in a community and regional structure so governed. The development, adoption, and implementation of a Plan never did occur. Remember that both federal and provincial levels of government signed this Agreement. The provisions set forth in Article 16 and Schedule "E" were all-encompassing in their aspirations to correct historical wrongs. In the context of *Wahbung* and in the findings of the Interchurch Taskforce, one finds that the solutions presented in the NFA, insofar as co-ordinating community development and presenting short and long-term solutions based on economic, social, and physical circumstances to be a solution, to be about as holistic or total as federal or provincial governments ever got. There are, regardless, substantial steps outlined in the NFA that could have gone some ways towards that end-goal of "the eradication of mass poverty and mass unemployment and the improvement of the physical, social and economic conditions and transportation." For example, the NFA includes articles that could have had long lasting benefits to the communities affected: article 6, Quality of Water; article 10, Minimization of Damage; article 11, Accident, Disability and Life Insurance; article 12, Community Infrastructure; article 15, Wildlife Resources Policy; article 16, Planning Policy; article 17, Environmental Impact Policy; article 20, Community Liaison Committee; and article 21, Employment Task Force. These last two, calls for a community liaison committee and an

[87] *Northern Flood Agreement*, Schedule "E", 1-2.

employment task force at the local, provincial and federal levels of government would have been very interesting to watch play out.

In such an all-encompassing agreement, the role of an organization such as ATEC would seem obvious, as the need to train and educate adults to help implement a broad community development plan would have been paramount.

What were the outcomes of this community plan, that was slated for completion in 1981? Unfortunately, my enquiries locally in NCN and in their documents, I could find no evidence that the members of the Planning Committee ever met or that a final document, or Plan, was ever delivered. It is perhaps one of the historical misfortunes in the history of northern Manitoba that this Plan was never written or even, seemingly, attempted. It would be the middle 1990s again before the actors returned to the table for a second attempt at negotiation and there can be little doubt that the loss of almost twenty-odd years in progress took an economic, social and physical toll on community development in Nelson House.

3 The Northern Flood Agreement and Origins of ATEC

The Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) Implementation Agreement of 1996 was meant to compensate for the impacts of the Churchill River Diversion (CRD), such as changes to water levels across NCN's traditional territory that degraded rivers, lakes, and eroded shorelines throughout the territory. Flooding and disruptions in water-flow significantly affected hunting, fishing, trapping, the gathering of foods and medicines, and the maintenance of sacred sites throughout NCN's territory.[88]

The 1996 NFA Implementation Agreement was an attempt on the part of the four signing parties – Canada, Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro, and NCN – to more clearly define the compensation related to the Northern Flood Agreement of 1977. By the early 1990s it was clear that the spirit of the original NFA document was not being followed and, in the wake of the 1982 *Constitution Act* and the fallout of the Oka Crisis and Meech Lake Accord, it could be argued a new basis was needed on which provincial-First Nations relations could go forward.[89] In this context, the NFA Implementation Agreement was ratified by NCN members in a secret-ballot vote in 1996. This chapter will discuss the nature of the compensation, including financial recompense in the millions of dollars, and how it has been used to make "significant investment in the community and economic development."[90] NCN's website records that the settlement "led to the establishment of the Nisichawayasihk Trust, Gilbert MacDonald Arena

[88],"Our History: Northern Flood Agreement," Nisichwayasihk Cree Nation, accessed March 1,2023. https://www.ncncree.com/about-ncn/our-history/northern-flood-agreement/

[89] The spirit of this necessity to revisit Crown-First Nations relations is embodied in the calling for a royal commission, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), established in 1991 and completed in 1996.

[90] "Our History: Northern Flood Agreement," Nisichwayasihk Cree Nation, accessed March 1,2023. https://www.ncncree.com/about-ncn/our-history/northern-flood-agreement/

and the purchase of the Mystery Lake Motor Hotel along with adjacent property in Thompson." With the approval of the federal government, NCN succeeded in converting the Thompson properties into an urban reserve in 2016. These additional investments have created new economic and social prospects for the communities of Thompson and Nelson House.

The 1996 NFA Implementation Agreement opened the doors to further collaboration between NCN and Manitoba Hydro. In particular, the settlement of grievances arising from the impacts of the CRD gave Manitoba Hydro tacit license to resume hydro development in the northern parts of the province in ways that were different from those of the early 1970s.

Academic and Indigenous writers have noted the paradigm shift that happened following the early 1970s and the federal government's realignment on Indian affairs following the fall-out of Trudeau's policy paper in 1969.[91] The Constitution Act of 1982 altered many assumptions underlining relations between Canada's treaty peoples. No longer could federal or provincial actors operate on a national stage, making decisions regarding Aboriginal peoples and their lands, without the prior and informed consent of First Nations.[92] The contested

[91] This atmosphere of change in the general tenor of Canadian-Indian relations can already be felt in 1977 where Harold Cardinal can observe, in his assessment *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians*, that, "Careful study of the varying definitions of what Canada and being Canadian mean makes it obvious that concepts proposed by the Prime Minister [Prime Minister P.E. Trudeau] are not that much different from ideas suggested by tribal elders. With that mutual recognition perhaps we can at least begin to create the environment that will allow a start at tackling the real problems without getting bogged down in a cold-war mentality between whites and Indians. By wiping out the misunderstandings that have existed for so long we can create an opportunity for members of both societies to attack the very real problems that do exist and work toward mutually-identified goals (Cardinal, *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians*, 15). I believe that this philosophy of 'working towards mutually-identified goals' is the motivating spirit underlying the NFA of 1977. This spirit of collaboration changes in the 1990s and 2000s into a language of business partnership. The language identified by Cardinal is certainly is a step forward from the spirit of potential confrontation or misunderstanding that characterized the language found in the White and Red Papers of a few years previous. We find this language of collaboration, finally enshrined constitutionally in section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982.

[92] The principle of free, prior and informed consent would find its way into the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

nature of Aboriginal self-government and that of Crown sovereignty, between native leaders, provincial and federal governments, and Canadian society generally, is captured well in Bruce Clark's 1990 *Native Liberty, Crown Sovereignty: The Existing Aboriginal Right of Self-Government in Canada*. Here Clark presents this multi-sided discourse between government policy and politics, Canadian and Aboriginal society, and that of the courts and Canadian law. This discourse, of course, is rooted in the history of Aboriginal and Crown relations dating back to Contact and on through the Royal Proclamation of 1763 through to the present. In regards to this context, Clark writes that,

> …the aboriginal right of self-government is already an 'existing aboriginal right' recognized and affirmed under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. The politically acceptable course may be to ignore the right as presently constituted in order to be free to reinvent it, but in a more comfortable context. In the weaving of this political web the law has been entangled, and misunderstood.[93]

Governments and business, in the spirit of the analysis above, continually seek to 'reinvent' relations but, outside of the Constitution Act, this reinvention takes place between the realm of the political and Canada's courts.[94]

This realignment of policy in Canada, for federal and provincial governments, and also corporations, has forced a modus vivendi away from antagonistic and unilateral action and toward agreements that encourage collaboration and shared outcomes. It will be argued that this realignment of provincial and business conduct allowed the province of Manitoba and its

[93] Bruce Clark, *Native Liberty, Crown Sovereignty: The Existing Aboriginal Right of Self-Government in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 4.

[94] The status of the document *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* amongst various Canadian governments, federal and provincial, illustrates the complexity of this relationship, between law and politics, at a national and international level; Canada's acceptance of *UNDRIP* as a binding legal document has changed significantly over the past 20 years, from the writing of it to its adaptation in Ottawa in 2010.

crown corporation, Manitoba Hydro, to move forward from the 1996 NFA Implementation Agreement toward the conditions allowing for the building of the Wuskwatim Dam.

3.1 Cooperation between NCN and Manitoba Hydro

What were the conditions in the late 1990s that led to NCN working with the province and Manitoba Hydro in hydro-electric developments? It is unequivocal that Nelson House, and other aboriginal communities in Manitoba's north such as Easterville, Grand Rapids, Cross Lake, Norway House, South Indian Lake, and those surrounding Split Lake, did not fare well through their original CRD experience. So, what – if anything – changed?

In his 1993 book *As Long as the Rivers Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada*, James Waldram describes the methods and motives that drove hydro-electric expansion in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan as early as the 1960s. He begins with the community of Cumberland House and the construction of the Squaw Rapids Dam and extends his analysis through the experiences of Easterville and the Grand Rapids Dam to those communities of South Indian Lake. Waldram writes that "the processes of hydro project planning and negotiations with the Native people in the hinterland regions were almost identical. Furthermore, the processes by which these people had come to be victimized by hydro dam construction were so akin the processes by which they had lost their lands through treaty making and scrip allocation that I knew I had found the link."[95]

[95] James Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), xiii.

This link, Waldram concludes at the end of his book, is the search for what he calls the 'Common Good.' Despite the open acknowledgment by the province and Manitoba Hydro that some damages to Native interests were inevitable in building these projects, the response to criticisms of the project was an appeal to the 'public interest' over that of private, or in these cases, Native, interests.[96] The idea that the public interest trumped Aboriginal rights began to be unraveled with the passing of the Constitution Act of 1982. This process of protecting and extending Aboriginal rights in the domain of Canadian law is, and has been, a long, drawn-out process, one that is continually being contested in the courts and in the domain of public consensus to this day.[97]

The beginning of a reconciliatory approach by government and, in this instance, a crown corporation working in collaboration with First Nations communities has been gradual and uneven. There are two significant and notably different Canadian contexts where intensive and extensive hydro-electric development has taken place over the past forty-five years: the development of the James Bay water basin into the James Bay Hydroelectric Project, covered under the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, and the 2002 Paix des Braves Agreement; and the cultivation of Manitoba's northern waterways into hydroelectric development (refer to Figure 1 for the major rivers relating to Thompson and Nelson House. The Churchill and Nelson Rivers, depicted in the map, are important to hydro generation and they flow into the Hudson Bay), those projects comprising parts of the Churchill River Diversion

[96] Waldram, 172.

[97] Helpful readings on the topic of Aboriginal rights and Canadian law, constitutional or otherwise, can be found in Peter Kulchyski, ed. *Unjust Relations: Aboriginal Rights in Canadian Courts* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994) or the works of John Borrows, including *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); or *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

(Limestone Generating Station, Wuskwatim, Keeyask) and culminating in the Northern Flood Agreement, 1977,the NFA Implementation Agreement, 1997, and the Wuskwatim Project Agreement, 2006. These two contexts, that of Quebec and that of Manitoba, are important to discuss here as they have had a significant role in influencing economic and social development in their respective communities. As well, the Aboriginal community is increasingly drawing parallels between hydro-electric development taking place regionally in Manitoba, nationally across Canada, and globally, in other international settings.[98]

In the literature on hydro-electric development in Canada, there are significant similarities and differences between the historical contexts of development in Quebec as compared with that taking place in Manitoba after the 1960s. As mentioned briefly in chapter two regarding the NFA and the JBNQA, the two agreements signed in the 1970s with the governments of Manitoba and Quebec, respectively, have been described as modern-day treaties.[99] The philosophy surrounding the word 'treaty' in this respect should not be lost; these agreements do not supersede the original signing of Adhesion, but rather augment the original language and intent informing the signings. Lydia Dobrovolny, in the collection of essays *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec*, writes that, more recently and by a later government, the NFA has indeed been described as a modern treaty:

> The NFA was recognized as a modern treaty by Eric Robinson, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, in a statement before the House on December 15, 2000: 'For the first

[98] See the work here of Wa Na Ski Tan; the work of this organization has extended from that of Manitoba, to the national, to the international.

[99] Romuald Wera and Thibault Martin, "The Way to Modern Treaties: A Review of Hydro Projects and Agreements in Manitoba and Quebec," in Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008).

> time in the history of this house, the Government of Manitoba recognizes that the Northern Flood Agreement is a modern-day treaty and expresses its commitment to honour and properly implement the terms of the Northern Flood Agreement.'[100]

Two parts of the NFA that are important to our context, as has been argued in Chapter Two, are those dealing with community development (i.e., Schedule "E") to help with "the eradication of mass poverty and mass unemployment and the improvement of the physical, social and economic conditions and transportation." The role that locally controlled organizations such as ATEC and other similar efforts in NCN fulfill are key to implementing Schedule "E". As for those documents that opened the way to the construction of ATEC, one of the most important is the NFA Implementation Agreement 1996 (NFIA). What provisions does the NFIA put forward to 'implement' the spirit and intent of the NFA of 1977?

The NFA Implementation Agreement can be viewed as a bridge between responsibilities and liabilities set out in the first agreement, the 1977 NFA, many of which were outstanding, and sought to create the conditions for future collaboration between the First Nation, NCN, and the crown asset, Manitoba Hydro, for hydroelectric development. In a sense, the Implementation Agreement was an attempt to 'reset' relations between the hydro company and the First Nation's interests. For the company, the Implementation Agreement offered the means by which the provincial and federal governments could relinquish their responsibilities set out in the NFA, including the commitments in Schedule 'E' to eradicate poverty, and in article 20, to create a community liaison committee to, amongst other things, facilitate the

[100] Lydia Dobrovolny, "Monitoring for Success: Designing and Implementing a Monitoring Regime for Northern Manitoba," in Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 174.

creation of 1) local workshops, 2) local liaison officers, 3) radio, television, film, and any other appropriate medium, and 4) publications in native languages.[101] The new agreement, on the other hand, had goals that are different, much less broad and inclusive, but much more definite and quantifiable. The band's website lists the benefits of the newer Implementation plan, explaining to its membership that:

> The 1996 NFA Implementation Agreement more clearly defined the compensation and other issues related to the Northern Flood Agreement.
>
> This agreement included millions of dollars of compensation, which allowed NCN to make a significant investment in community and economic development. With the approval of the federal government, NCN hopes to include these properties in a planned Urban Reserve.[102]

Again, from the band:

> In addition to compensation, the 1996 Agreement also gives NCN rights over any future development in our Resource Management Area. For example, if Manitoba Hydro wants to build new projects that may affect NCN, it has to finalize compensation arrangements with us before it can build.
>
> Article 8 also sets out the planning principles and processes to be followed in considering future development of water resources for hydroelectric development. As a result, Article 8 gives us tremendous leverage and control over the Wuskwatim project that we never had with the Churchill River Diversion (CRD).[103]

There is little argument that the second agreement of 1996 is different from that of the first.

That the first agreement was vague and ambitious, one observer would disagree. P.M. Larcombe, in a submission of a 1993 report commissioned for the Royal Commission on

[101] Northern Flood Agreement, Article 20, 52.
[102] Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation band website, "Northern Flood Agreement and Implementation": https://www.ncncree.com/about-ncn/our-history/northern-flood-agreement/
[103] Ibid.

Aboriginal Peoples, recorded the poor history of implementation of the NFA up to that date and wrote:

> Key problems involved in implementing the NFA include: vaguely worded clauses resulting in wide ranging interpretations of obligations by the Parties; lack of an implementation framework; lack of defined implementation funding arrangements, lack of baseline data and documentation of impacts; ineffective institutions; and adversarial and unilateral positions which have created an atmosphere of frustration and distrust.[104]

The report had vaguely worded clauses, most significantly for Manitoba's North, perhaps, that of Schedule "E", including the commitment to eradicate poverty. The NFA also would have been ambitious to implement and fund. In a 1991 report to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, Chief Justices Hamilton and Sinclair had this to say:

> We believe the Northern Flood Agreement is a "land claims agreement" within section 35(3) of the Constitution Act, 1982, and that the rights within the NFA are treaty rights within section 35(1). As a treaty, the Northern Flood Agreement *must be interpreted liberally* from the Indian perspective so that its true spirit and intent are honoured [emphasis mine].[105]

For the NFA to be implemented in the 1990s, in the true spirit and intent of the original document, and mindful of the Indian perspective, including that of the Northern Flood Committee, such a thing would have proven a large and expensive endeavour. In the times of the early 1990s, a period reflective of the post-Oka-Crisis period and the commissioning of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), and with prospective hydro projects for

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[104] P.M. Larcombe, "Northern Flood Agreement Case Study in a Treaty Area," Phase II Report prepared for *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 1993,iv. It is important to note here that in regards to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Northern Flood Committee (NFC) also prepared a submission to the commission, 130 pages long. Needless to say, it included many shortcomings on the implementation of the existing treaty: The Northern Flood Committee, "The Northern Flood Agreement: History of Negotiation and Implementation, and Recommendations for Improvement," prepared for the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 1993.

[105] Larcombe, 1.

Manitoba looming on the horizon, it was clear that something needed to be done. This leads us to the creation of a new agreement: an Implementation Agreement.

It is important to note that the Implementation Agreement was not necessarily then, an improvement to the NFA. Ramona Neckoway, in her dissertation examining hydro-electric energy production in northern Manitoba, describes the years separating 1977 and 1996 as follows, cited here in full:

> In the years following the endorsement of the Northern Flood Agreement, and slow-paced resolutions of NFA claims, governments and industry actively sought to address and realize the commitments made in the NFA. The process ultimately culminated in agreements that have become known as "Comprehensive" or "Master Implementation Agreements." It should be noted that the Northern Flood Committee, which unified the communities and allowed them the strength to negotiate the NFA, no longer existed by the 1990s and hence the Implementation Agreements were negotiated on a community by community basis. Provisions of these agreements are varied and perhaps most exemplified in the comments made by a former bureaucrat who was involved in the negotiation of the NFA:
>
> > Four master implementation agreements [were made]. But in fact they are not really implementation agreements when you read them; they really rescind and terminate benefits that were provided under the 1977 Northern Flood Agreement. A real implementation agreement would build on the Northern Flood Agreement and would set out means for implementation rather than terminating benefits that were in the original agreement.
>
> The excerpt above is taken directly from testimony given by the former Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs who, in 1977, supervised the negotiation of the Northern Flood Agreement. [Warren] Allmand's statement is indicative of the polarizing perspectives regarding Hydro and of the Implementation Agreements specifically, which were made with four of the five Northern Flood Committee Bands.[106]

[106] Ramona Neckoway, "'Where the Otters Play,' 'Horseshoe Bay,' 'Footprint' and Beyond: Spatial and Temporal Considerations of Hydroelectric Energy Production in Northern Manitoba," PhD thesis, University of Manitoba, 2018, 98.

Indeed, in the realm of community development and education – in spite of calls for it in *Wahbung*, the Interchurch Taskforce's report, and the NFA – little was done of benefit for Nelson House through the 1980s and early 1990s. In *Know History,* a 2016 publication on hydroelectric development in northern Manitoba submitted to the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission, initiatives that Manitoba Hydro took to remediate the impacts of development in the north are described. One of these has significance for the provision of education and training in the north, that being the Limestone Employment and Training Centre, which will be developed further below.[107] Interestingly, in the section of the *Know History* document detailing the provisions of the NFA and the efforts in the succeeding years to implement it, nothing is said regarding the failure to implement any of the provisions for community development and no mention at all is made of Schedule "E" of the NFA; this is juxtaposed with realities experienced by the author, in Nelson House, where conversations about the NFA typically *start* with the provisions set forth in Schedule "E".

One of the ways the province of Manitoba has taken to address employment and training is the establishment or provision of appropriate training institutions. On the responsibility and philosophy of Manitoba Hydro to training and employment through this period, the best non-academic description found is from within the *Know History* document.

[107] Know History. *Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba: A History of the Development of the Churchill, Burntwood and Nelson Rivers, 1960-2015,* accessed March 1, 2023,*https://www.knowhistory.ca* This publication is the most insightful document I have yet read providing details from Manitoba Hydro; indeed, it reads like it was possibly commissioned by Manitoba Hydro for submission to the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission to counter submissions from other non-governmental actors involved in the Commission's investigations. Needless to say, as a non-critical narrative of hydro-development in the north of Manitoba, it reads well and provides much information.
http://www.cecmanitoba.ca/resource/hearings/42/Hydroelectric%20Development%20in%20Northern%20Manitoba.pdf

This philosophy, depicted in the quotation below, has had an impact on Manitoba Hydro's shifting relations with Aboriginal communities:

> Unfortunately, for many years, Manitoba Hydro and the province took the stance that any social problems in the communities along the Churchill, Burntwood and Nelson River systems *were merely part of wider problems that existed prior to hydroelectric development*. However, in recent years, Manitoba Hydro *has made strides to involve First Nations and Indigenous people in project planning, and to pursue agreements that provide communities with jobs and revenue*. The corporation has also funded initiatives designed to alleviate or prevent ecological damage along the Churchill, Burntwood and Nelson River systems, as part of implementation agreements formed with individual communities and groups [emphasis mine].[108]

This quotation illustrates a shifting attitude towards the social and economic aspects of Manitoba Hydro's and the province's relations to northern communities. The building of training and vocational facilities in the North is an attempt to fulfil the desire of stakeholders such as Manitoba Hydro, the province, or band leadership towards 'providing communities with jobs and revenue.'

3.2 Limestone Employment and Training Centre

"…the first major opportunity for Canada to create long term employment and economic development opportunities for northern Indian bands"[109]

One of the greatest challenges for mega projects in remote locations in Canada is meeting the employment demand for skilled and unskilled labour. Large contractors and union employers find it easier and cheaper, often, to bring workers from the south. *Wahbung* and the Interchurch Taskforce identified local training and access to employment as key strategies for

[108] *Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba*, 48.
[109] *Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba*, 48.

community development that meets labour needs. Communities, though, would require funding and investment opportunities to meet the needs of modern labour markets. Also, the concomitant requirement for local control and local consultation over this community development and employment training was key. In these regards, the Limestone Project Employment and Training Centre can be understood as an attempt to address some of these issues, while falling short in others.

The Limestone Generating Station opened in 1990 at Gillam, MB, and is a hydroelectric project on the Nelson River. The project is part of the Churchill River Diversion and an extension of an earlier hydro-electric development (earlier dams include Kettle Generating Station, 1973; and Long Spruce Generating Station, 1979. Construction began in 1976 but was suspended until 1985 due to lower-than-expected demand for electricity. In order to create more employment opportunities for northern workers, the province and Canada signed in September, 1985 the "Canada and Manitoba Limestone Project Employment and Training Agreement." This was, in part, a continuation of the work begun with the Churchill River Diversion and an extension of hydro-electric development work connecting earlier efforts and those that would come later.

The Limestone Agreement comes across very positively on the surface. A joint Canada and Manitoba press release from September 19, 1985 reads as a healthy step towards the aspirations for training and employment as envisioned in both *Wahbung* and the NFA. In fact, ATEC's operation today would be significantly enhanced if it were operated under this sort of shared agreement: the only thing missing from the joint release is proof of collaboration with Aboriginal organizations, a shortcoming that would impact its execution. Some of the principal points of this important document are provided below:

Under the agreement, the Governments of Canada and Manitoba have created a framework for consultation and co-operation to provide for employment services, employment support services and occupational training related to the construction of the Limestone Generating Station.

> -It provides for close consultation with employers, unions and community groups. In particular, it contains special measures for consultation with, and involvement of, northern Native groups represented on the Limestone Aboriginal Partnership Directorate Board.[110]
>
> -The government of Canada, through Employment and Immigration Canada and Indian Affairs and Northern Affairs Canada, will contribute about 60 per cent of the training costs, up to $18 million. The Government of Manitoba, through its Jobs Fund, will contribute about 40 per cent of the training costs, up to $12 million. Institutional and community-based training will be provided through the Limestone Training and Employment Agency established by the province.
>
> -The agreement is another step towards closer co-operation with the provinces to meet the challenge of developing and investing in our most important resource, the people of Canada, while contributing to the overall economic growth of Canada. It represents the close working together of the two levels of government with employers and workers, and the Native people of Northern Manitoba.
>
> -Programs and support services include community information sessions, social services such as individual and family counselling, and financial assistance for work-related expenses.
>
> -Mr. Crombie [Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs at the time] emphasized that services would be provided in co-ordination with existing community-based services. “To every possible extent, services are directly delivered by Indian Bands or organizations, in keeping with our commitment to Indian self-government.”

Finally, and importantly for as late as 1985, was the federal government’s commitment to the still-in-effect NFA:

[110] This Board’s membership consisted of such various stakeholders as the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO, an Aboriginal organization representing roughly 30 First Nations in Manitoba), the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), the Northern Association of Community Councils, the Brotherhood of Indian Nations, and Metis and non-status women’s groups; this list is found in *Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba*, 53. The Board was also given representation on the Limestone Training and Employment Agency board.

> This agreement will concurrently support implementation of Canada's obligations under other agreements such as the Northern Flood Agreement. The NFA provides these bands with a wide range of compensatory benefits, including land exchange, economic development, ecological, environmental and socio-economic monitoring and various remedial and mitigatory works.
> "Our continuing obligations to the five Northern Flood Agreement bands can be actively pursued through this agreement," Mr. Crombie said. "It is the first major opportunity for Canada to create long term employment and economic development opportunities for northern Indian bands."

In conclusion:

> "The agreement we are signing today will enable many northerners to acquire the skills and jobs they need to get their fair share of years of hydroelectric development, and it will build a trained labour force that is needed by northern communities."[111]

The press release shows the Limestone Training and Employment Centre to be, as seen in Chapter Four, an earlier iteration of Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre (ATEC). ATEC is much more Cree-centric or Aboriginal than the original Limestone, as is evident in the name of each centre. The names point to the central difference of each institution, namely the control, location, and, ultimately, those who benefitted from each project.

The *Know History* document claims that while the Limestone Centre had its challenges, it was in general "successful in providing a series of short-term and long-term training opportunities for Indigenous Northerners who would have otherwise had difficulty accessing such opportunities."[112] One of the challenges listed is that contractors did not hire as many apprentices as they were allowed to under the terms of the agreement. A criticism by others

[111] Canada and Manitoba, *Canada and Manitoba Sign Limestone Employment Pact*, September 19, 1985: https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/archives/1985/09/1985-09-19-canada_and_manitoba_sign_limestone_employment_pact.pdf
[112] *Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba*, 53.

though, as the *Know History* document states, was that the program suffered from poor communication on the part of the government, which led northern people to erroneously believe that their training would provide them immediate employment at the Limestone site.[113]

The problem of communication stems from the lack of community partners. This situation is common in organizations that are not grass-roots driven but rather led by outside entities. The problems surrounding poor communications are compounded in the north by the geographical and social separation of decision-making bodies, often located in Winnipeg, and the peripheral organizations in communities that are, in the case of Manitoba's north, located hundreds of kilometers away.

The issues that confronted the Limestone Employment and Training Centre went beyond that of simple miscommunication. Shauna MacKinnon's text *Decolonizing Employment: Aboriginal Inclusion in Canada's Labour Market* survey provides an overview of the objectives and outcomes of the centre:

> It was designed to meet both short-term and long-term educational goals, it had the potential to provide apprentices with sufficient work hours to progress to journeyperson accreditation; it provided simulated training programs designed to give trainees a more realistic sense of the real work environment, and it had a broader vision towards implementing institutional education and training programs aimed at developing a highly skilled, professional northern labour force.[114]

In returning to ATEC in Chapter Four some of these objectives are revisited as they pertain to the programming and job-experience work that is ongoing in Nelson House that was developing when MacKinnon wrote these words in 2015.

[113] *Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba*, 53.
[114] Shauna MacKinnon, *Decolonizing Employment: Aboriginal Inclusion in Canada's Labour Market* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 105.

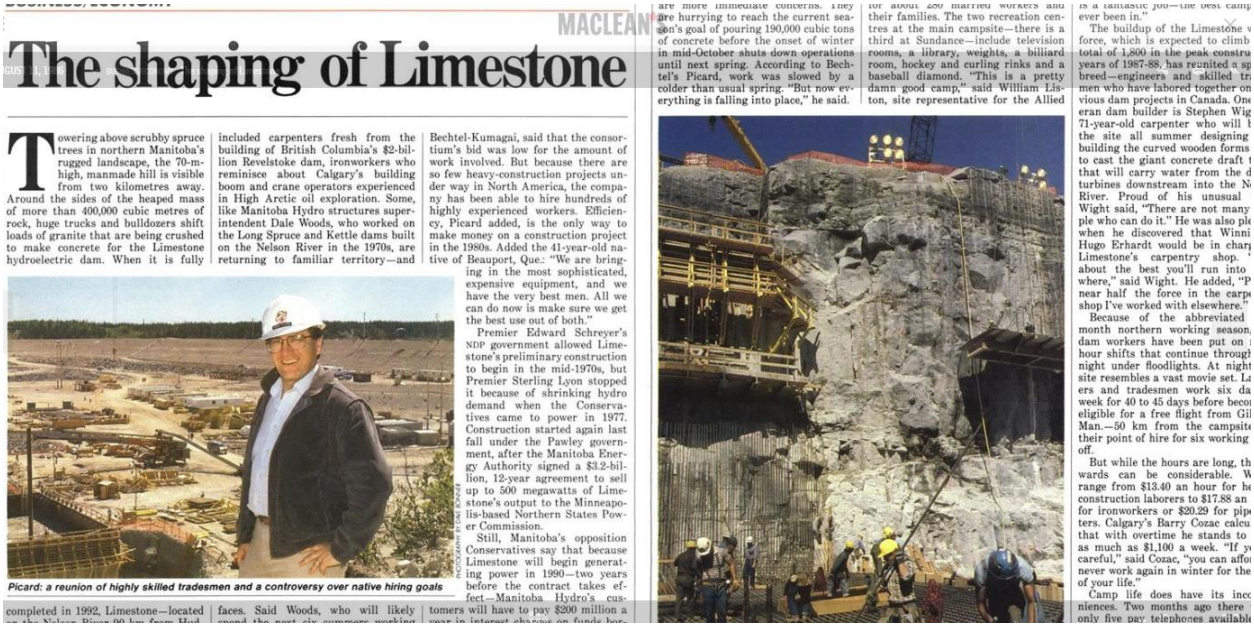
The flaws inherent in the model of the Limestone Employment and Training Centre are, I will argue, the strengths of ATEC's model of training delivery. While the Limestone Centre did develop several community-based training initiatives in the 1980s, there was criticism for its centralized delivery model that left few opportunities for Aboriginal communities to be fully engaged in the program's design and delivery.

The Limestone Centre emerged within the context of several existing education initiatives. As early as 1985, the Limestone Centre was located in Thompson at the Polaris Centre on Princeton Road. The campus is made up of classrooms, a kitchen and cafeteria, office space for staff, and singles/ doubles rooms for students. The Polaris campus in Thompson provided training in some of the apprenticed trades, including carpentry, electrician, plumbing and pipefitting. In the late 1980s, Keewatin Community College (KCC) was also providing programming in Thompson's provincial building, next to City Hall; Keewatin Community College was founded as a northern Manitoba training and vocational centre in The Pas in 1966. It was in the late 1980s that KCC was given space for the first time for its business and computer-based programming at the Limestone Centre campus at the Polaris buildings. This geographical proximity of the Limestone school to the KCC remote campus (remote from The Pas) helped to spur the merger of the Limestone training operations into that of KCC. By 1992, with the seven-year agreement announced in the press release at its completion, the Limestone Centre merged into the overall structure of KCC and thence into the province's college and university system.

The merging of the Limestone Centre into the KCC organization had ramifications for community-based learning in northern Manitoba as the shortcomings of the Limestone Centre

in the 1980s identified by MacKinnon continued on in the nature of Keewatin Community College's and University College of the North's (UCN's) delivery of its programming to the communities to the date of this writing. At the time of writing, UCN has been grappling with ways to design a model of program delivery that is flexible, accountable, and responsive to the needs of its surrounding communities, some of which are or were former parties to the Northern Flood Agreement.[115] In many ways, the UCN model of program delivery to the communities is inherited from the Limestone Centre: UCN has 12 regional centres delivering programming in Manitoba's north, one of which is nominally ATEC. This relationship between UCN and ATEC will be revisited in Chapter Four. To close this part of the story, Keewatin Community College transitioned into University College of the North by act of provincial legislation in 2004.

[115] In December 2018 university-college leadership announced to staff and faculty the beginning of restructuring for UCN; one of the first structures of the school targeted for restructuring was Community-Based Services (CBS), that arm of the school delivering programming and training to the region's 12 respective communities; in each community, one of which is Nelson House, UCN hosted "regional centres;" ATEC is home to one of these centres and this helps to form the complicated relationship between UCN and Nelson House.



The shaping of Limestone

Towering above scrubby spruce trees in northern Manitoba's rugged landscape, the 70-m-high, manmade hill is visible from two kilometres away. Around the sides of the heaped mass of more than 400,000 cubic metres of rock, huge trucks and bulldozers shift loads of granite that are being crushed to make concrete for the Limestone hydroelectric dam. When it is fully completed in 1992, Limestone—located

included carpenters fresh from the building of British Columbia's $2-billion Revelstoke dam, ironworkers who reminisce about Calgary's building boom and crane operators experienced in High Arctic oil exploration. Some, like Manitoba Hydro structures superintendent Dale Woods, who worked on the Long Spruce and Kettle dams built on the Nelson River in the 1970s, are returning to familiar territory—and faces. Said Woods, who will likely

Bechtel-Kumagai, said that the consortium's bid was low for the amount of work involved. But because there are so few heavy-construction projects under way in North America, the company has been able to hire hundreds of highly experienced workers. Efficiency, Picard added, is the only way to make money on a construction project in the 1980s. Added the 41-year-old native of Beauport, Que.: "We are bringing in the most sophisticated, expensive equipment, and we have the very best men. All we can do now is make sure we get the best use out of both."

Premier Edward Schreyer's NDP government allowed Limestone's preliminary construction to begin in the mid-1970s, but Premier Sterling Lyon stopped it because of shrinking hydro demand when the Conservatives came to power in 1977. Construction started again last fall under the Pawley government, after the Manitoba Energy Authority signed a $3.2-billion, 12-year agreement to sell up to 500 megawatts of Limestone's output to the Minneapolis-based Northern States Power Commission.

Still, Manitoba's opposition Conservatives say that because Limestone will begin generating power in 1990—two years before the contract takes effect—Manitoba Hydro's customers will have to pay $200 million a

Picard: a reunion of highly skilled tradesmen and a controversy over native hiring goals

Figure 4: An article in Maclean's magazine describing the work at the Limestone Project. The problem of meeting "native hiring goals" is mentioned; Yvon Dumon, co-chair of the Limestone Aboriginal Partnership Directorship Board, in the article charges Manitoba Hydro with "attempting to slip out of its commitment to native workers;" *Maclean's Magazine*, "The Shaping of Limestone," (August 11, 1986), 34-35; http://archive.macleans.ca/article/1986/8/11/the-shaping-of-limestone#!&pid=34

Returning to the Limestone Centre, the lack of engagement with Aboriginal communities was a problem (and tends still to be a problem for program delivery in the north) but not the only issue. A second issue that is central to Limestone and also to ATEC's operations was that it was tied to the life of the project (i.e., the building of the Wuskwatim generating station, as opposed to the operational life of the dam): in the case of the Limestone Centre, the Limestone Generation Station, in the case of ATEC, the Wuskwatim Generation Station completed in 2012. In both instances, training and preparation for employment began on or after the commencement of construction (after "shovels in the ground"). The need for educational redress in these communities beyond the short-term training provided by projects with only a five- or seven-year run. The educational supports and training needs identified by

such important documents as *Wahbung* are generational in nature. With ATEC, much of the centre's best work was done *following* completion of the dam, in spite of the cuts in funding. The timeframe for the construction of a megaproject project is not nearly long enough to address the historical and geographic inequalities, or, to use my earlier term, cultural maturity imbalances stemming from the multigenerational impacts of hydro-electric flooding, residential schooling, federal Indian policy, and the Indian Act itself.

MacKinnon notes that, despite its shortcomings, the vision behind the Limestone Centre, depicted here in the supportive words used by Minister Crombie in the *Maclean's* news release above (Figure 4), has created an awareness of the validity of the community-driven training model that it was intended to be. I will argue in Chapter Four that ATEC is a further re-envisioning of this model for re-addressing the long-term needs of the communities and the education of future Aboriginal workers. As MacKinnon sees in the Limestone Project one of the principle aims of program delivery for ATEC:

> Hopefully the capacity being developed in the current model will better prepare individuals in northern Aboriginal communities with the skills needed to take advantage of the professional training opportunities that are in place as a result of Limestone.[116]

[116] MacKinnon, 108. I see the legacy of the Limestone Centre and the delivery of vocational and post-secondary programming to smaller communities such as Nelson House as a space for growth for such varied organizations as UCN (the inheritor of the Limestone institute, in part) and that of ATEC (a re-incarnation and re-envisioning, if you will, of the original Limestone Centre. The relationship of ATEC with UCN is, I think, partly a result of the lack of leadership on part of governments to support either organization in the full accomplishment of its goals and mandates; instead, experience shows that where there are lack of resources, acrimony is often the result. It is indicative of both that, while either are in some way, a legacy project of Manitoba Hydro, in both instances, once the building of the mega projects were complete, the responsibilities of the crown corporation grew less actively shouldered.

3.3 The Northern Flood Agreement Implementation Agreement (NFIA)

Ramona Neckoway argues in her dissertation that the NFA implementation plans and the ensuing partnership agreements served to separate communities of the north and marked a transition period in Manitoba Hydro's dealings with First Nations. As Neckoway states,

> The initial positions and view of the Hydro-affected NFA Cree in northern Manitoba assumed in its dealing with developers and governments, as represented and expressed in the ratification of the NFA, seems to have been lost in the newest round of agreement making and 'partnership' planning. Until the early 1990's, the NFC Bands had continued to push government and industry signatories to the terms of the NFA; however, beginning in the 1990's, strategy changed and NFA implementation would change.[117]

The quote above identifies the transition in strategies noted by Neckaway, a) from the intent in implementing the original NFA, and its commensurate commitment to regional community planning and 'the eradication of mass poverty' to b) efforts by Manitoba Hydro and the province to terminate these two major areas of policy and planning. In their place, the logic of the new agreements aims to create alternate sources of revenue that the community can spend themselves, without the need for long-term collaboration between the various hydro-affected communities, or the federal or provincial levels of government.

Looking, then, at NCN's Implementation Agreement, we see that the language specifying a need for collaborative planning and declaring the intent to remove structural inequalities found in First Nations communities, such as what we find in Schedule "E" of the NFA, is missing.

[117] Neckoway, 99.

Turning specifically to the language of NCN's own implementation plan, there are methods or intent concerning how it remediates some of the policy deficit areas identified by the original NFA, specifically in education and community development.

What does NCN's Implementation Agreement promise to deliver? The naming convention for the 1997 agreement, that it is an 'Implementation Agreement,' can be misleading to parties not familiar with the language of the various contracts (the NFA, the NFA Implementation Agreement, the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement). The 1997 document does not actually 'implement' or act on the actual language of the original 1977 agreement. In fact, the 1997 document substitutes new language, indicative of a new 'spirit of the times' that we find in the 1990s, in place of the broad and vague promises agreed to by the member parties in the middle 1970s.[118]

The 1997 NFA Implementation Agreement did make important changes. The most significant part of the plan is the initial payment, or indemnity, promised to the band as recompense for past damages due to hydro-electric development on NCN lands. In the context of ATEC, the benefits derived from the implementation plan are chiefly those that accrue from the revenues gained from the settlement proceeds as defined in Schedule 1.1 of the 1976 Northern Flood Implementation Agreement. The agreement provided for a hydro bond of forty

[118] Some observers might call this naming convention an Orwellian, 'doublespeak,' sort of practice we find in George Orwell's masterful *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where speech is used purposefully ambiguously in order to meet a particular political end. In our case, the term 'implementation' found in the second agreement leads one to believe that it is the terms of the first plan that are being implemented; here, this is not necessarily the case. The 'spirit of the times' I allude to here is the neoliberal order that dominates global policy making in the 1990s going forward. An excellent read on neoliberalism is Garry Gerstle's *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2022). Of course, the seminal text on capitalism and free markets is University of Chicago's School of Economic's Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002).

million dollars fixed (for the first decade) at a rate of return of almost ten percent per annum (9.762%). In the context of NCN's annual general revenue, this amounted to almost four million dollars of additional revenue each year for the band to use for programming and capital investments. The bond was set to mature in 2013 and, not surprisingly, over the course of the period of investment, from December 1999 to June 2013, became a source of funding relied upon by many organizations in Nelson House, including ATEC.[119] I will examine further the mechanism by which proceeds from the bond, administered by a band trust, are disseminated to organizations such as ATEC in Chapter Four.[120]

The NFA Implementation Agreement is broken into articles dealing with compensation for water levels, ecological damages, and easement lands. Those articles having a key impact on NCN's increasing its socio-economic capacity are as follows:

Article 5: South Indian Lake
Article 6: Resource Management
Article 8: Future Development
Article 9: Indian Moneys
Article 10: Settlement Proceeds and Federal and Provincial Funding and Programming
Article 11: Operation, Maintenance and Replacement *(mainly of the community arena)*

Article five on South Indian Lake would go on to have an effect latter on the approval of the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement, the impact being that a majority of residents at

[119] In 2013, when the bond came up for cashiering, there was some concern at band meetings about the impact of the loss of this return, the 10% return on investment, on band programming and services. Understandably, it is very difficult to find new sources of investment that can promise a 10% return. I remember attending a number of band meetings with my students and listening to the feedback from NCN citizens concerning this loss of revenue. Looking backward, as one of my students remarked, the high rate of return from the hydro bond appeared, in retrospect, a bribe with a termination date of fourteen years.

[120] The process, named in short the 'CAP/CIP', is overseen by the Nisichawayasihk Trust and the Taskinigahp Trust. CAP/CIP stands for Community Approval Process and Community Involvement Process. The Trust Office administers and allocates funds to support a variety of community projects and programs annually.

South Indian did not want a dam at Lake Wuskwatim and, secondly, that the status of the community at South Indian was ambiguous in that residents had long been agitating for their own band and reserve distinct from that of NCN. Article 5.1.1, *Request for Band Status*, recognizes that,

> Members resident at or in the vicinity of South Indian Lake have indicated that they wish to be organized as a Band under the Indian Act (Canada) separate from Nelson House and Chief and Council supports this initiative.[121]

The First Nation community at South Indian Lake, presently O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, attained band status in December 2005. Before this, the reserve-side community was administered by chief and council in Nelson House. Article Five in the NFA Implementation Agreement acknowledges and supports, by NCN leadership, the process of South Indian Lake attaining band status. The relationship of the communities at Nelson House and South Indian Lake to Manitoba Hydro is contested. In the years following the Churchill River Diversion and the failure of successive provincial and federal governments to move meaningfully on the Northern Flood Agreement, many Aboriginal people in northern Manitoba came to see Manitoba Hydro as an enemy. It is in this context that Peter Kulchyski writes, "From Grand Rapids to Pimicikamak to South Indian Lake, the words 'Manitoba Hydro' are dirty words."[122]

Manitoba Hydro had plans to continue developing sites in the north and would need more, not less support in doing so. Hoffman and Bradley have argued that the granting of band

[121] Canada, Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, *Northern Flood Implementation Agreement*, Article 5, 1. The First Nations community at South Indian would receive band status in 2005, the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation.

[122] Peter Kulchyski, "A Step Back: the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and the Wuskwatim Project," in Thibault Martin and Steven Hoffman, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 142.

status to South Indian Lake was a means to facilitate development of hydro, particularly in Wuskwatim. They attribute granting of band status as one example of the crown corporation and government taking an isolationist approach, where the Cree are 'divided and conquered'.[123] Reinforcing this theory, Hoffman and Bradley write,

> The contentious nature of the proposal and the underlying motive was illustrated at the March 23, 2005, meeting of the Interim Supply Committee of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Mr. Gerald Hawranik, a representative from Lac du Bonnet, in his questions to a government minister, noted that the 900 or so people who live in SIL [South Indian Lake] have:
>
> > "been waiting and asking for band recognition status for decades. The minister appears now to be in a panic to give them status as early as April 1 of [2005]. To give them band recognition status by April 1 would exclude them from a vote on Wuskwatim, which is scheduled for June 1, because they would no longer be members of Nelson House First Nation… The minister knows that most of the Status Aboriginals in South Indian Lake would vote against Wuskwatim. He knows that. Is the minister pushing ahead with reserve status early because he is being forced by [Premier Doer] and the Minister responsible for Hydro to exclude them from the Wuskwatim dam vote?"[124]

In my time in Nelson House, I observed several discussions about the connection between the granting of band status and the Wuskwatim vote. Understanding Wuskwatim in the context of South Indian Lake and the vote to accept the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement is important to contextualizing what Neckoway describes as the "polarizing and divisive views at micro (individual) and macro (community) levels" in discussing the impact of hydro development in the north.[125]

[123] Steven Hoffman and Ken Bradley, "In Service to Globalization: Manitoba Hydro, Aboriginal Communities, and the Integration of Electrical Markets," in *Power Struggles*, 152.
[124] Hoffman and Bradley, 153.
[125] Neckoway, 99.

3.4 Debating the role of hydro in NCN: The *Canadian Dimension* Debate

In 2004, in the earliest days of the Manitoba Research Alliance, Peter Kulchyski presented a paper based on a discussion he had had earlier in the year at the University of Winnipeg, in February. In his paper he analyses the *Summary of Understanding between the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Manitoba Hydro in Respect to the Wuskwatim Project*. This paper between Prof. Kulchyski and the Manitoba Hydro projects expanded over the following year into a debate between Kulchyski and the leadership of NCN about the nature of hydro development and traditional Aboriginal practices as they exist in northern Manitoba. This section describes and examines the arguments presented by Prof. Kulchyski in his article "È-nakàskàkowaàhk (A Step Back): Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and the Wuskwatim Project" and the ensuing, but not unrelated, debate that took place in the pages of *Canadian Dimension* between Kulchyski and the Band Council of NCN.

The first tenet of Prof. Kulchyski's argument is the sustainability of hunting as a mode of living. In "È-nakàskàkowaàhk," Kulchyski argues that hunting cultures continue to suffer from deeply biased misrepresentations. The argument is quoted here at some length because it is an important element in criticism of hydro-electric development generally and makes up a significant part of Wa Na Ski Tan's position as well:

> There is an assumption, which appears to cross the political spectrum, to the effect that hunters live with an antiquated set of values and an outdated way of life. Yet, if sustainability were a central standard for judging the success or failure of different social forms, hunting would clearly be seen as the most sustainable form of society invented by human beings: industrial societies have been with us for a few centuries; agricultural societies for about ten thousand years; hunting societies have persisted for over sixty thousand years. The notion that continued support for hunting peoples involves a paternalistic or romantic idealization flies in the face of history. In Canada, for over a hundred years a whole trajectory of social, political and economic policies has been developed to assimilate hunters. The cumulative effects of these policies have

> been nothing short of tragic for northern Aboriginal communities. It is the modernizers, those who think they can build in the subarctic and arctic 'communities' that will replicate southern suburbs, who are the true paternalists and romantics here: they still have a naïve faith that sporadic wage work on projects that will last one or two decades offers a future for Aboriginal communities.[126]

The criticism found here, namely contrasting traditional and modern ways of living, form part of the discourse about hydro and Wuskwatim. The quality of water, and the deterioration of environmental conditions across northern communities, is important for many community members for understanding how hydro-electricity development has impacted their ways of living and their relations with the land and rivers. There is widespread concern, including that of Wa Na Ski Tan, that contemporary hydro electric developments, constructed at NCN as a business partnership, are not as environmentally benign as is depicted in Manitoba Hydro promotional literature. One example of this criticism is an APTN news item, where members of the NCN community voiced concerns that the present dam partnership between Manitoba Hydro and NCN is unchanged from earlier, historical practices, displacing band members, the nature of what and how they eat, and the ongoing desecration of sacred sites. [127]

The second criticism leveled by Kulchyski lies with the historical succession of the newest treaty, the Memorandum of Understanding, to those of the previous two: Treaty Five Adhesion and the Northern Flood Agreement. To contextualize Professor Kulchyski's argument here in the timeline of the Wuskwatim Dam project, his observations were made in reference

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[126] Peter Kulchyski, "È-nakàskàkowaàhk (A Step Back): Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and the Wuskwatim Project," Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2004, 2: http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba_Pubs/step_back.pdf

[127] Justin Brake. "Dam partnership has not changed nature of hydro development in Nisichawayasihk, say members." *APTN* (Winnipeg), September 25, 2018. https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/dam-partnership-has-not-changed-nature-of-hydro-development-in-nisichaswayasihk-say-members/

to an earlier Memorandum of Understand (or MOU) signed by NCN and Manitoba Hydro; an MOU is a non-binding agreement that states the intent and philosophy guiding a future action or collaboration on a new project or business transaction. In this case, the Memorandum of Understanding described the ground rules going forward to develop a hydroelectric project at Lake Wuskwatim; it preceded the final Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement of 2006.

In terms of the Wuskwatim Memorandum of Understanding, Professor Kulchyski argues that Treaty Five requires the maintenance of two minimum principles: first, that the state has a "bottom line requirement" to ensure that sufficient land continues to be available in the Treaty Five area to support those First Nations citizens in each community who wish to pursue their traditional economic patterns of hunting, trapping and fishing; and second, "that the signatories to Treaty Five should be seen as joint managers of their traditional territories, joint decision-makers in determining what takes place: not asked to sign on to plans developed far away, but given a meaningful role in making the plans."[128]

With the subsequent treaty, the Northern Flood Agreement Implementation Agreement (NFAIA), Kulchyski finds the successive implementation agreements negotiated through the course of the 1990s have fallen short and that, in fact, they are unconstitutional on the grounds that they are a Treaty and thereby bound to be a constitutionally protected document. Speaking to the alleged unconstitutionality of these new agreements, what Kulchyski is referring to here is that the new agreements, or revised treaties, that we find in the 1990s, in such documents as these MOUs and their successive implementation agreements, feature such changes that are not friendly or legal in regards to the spirit and intent of the original treaties.

[128] Kulchyski, 4.

Clearly, with the signing of the NFA Implementation Agreement, with the parties to the agreement including NCN band, Manitoba Hydro, and the province of Manitoba, with all sides agreeing to the terms provided therein, the signed agreement is a legally binding document. Perhaps though, Professor Kulchyski is making the case, that were the treaties tried in the Supreme Court of Canada, the content of the agreements would fall short and found not to be adhering to the minimum standard of a treaty as required by the Canada Constitution Act of 1982. It is important to note here also that the 1977 Northern Flood Agreement was not the only modern treaty dealing with the fallout of hydro-electric development that was revisited in the 1990s: an important example of a 1970s agreement being revisited was the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement of 1975, which was amended in 1990 to include the Inuit of Quebec with the *Agreement Respecting the Implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement Between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada and Makivik Corporation*.[129]

Returning to the NFA Implementation Agreement and its successor agreement, both the federal and provincial governments' failure to implement measures of the original Agreement such as Schedule E and the commitment to "the eradication of mass poverty and mass unemployment" have yet to be remedied or extinguished and "will not stand the court challenges that they will ultimately and inevitably give rise to."[130] It is here that Kulchyski

[129] To read the *Agreement Respecting the Implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement Between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada and Makivik Corporation,* see https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100030826/1542980702456.
[130] Kulchyski, 4.

compares the NFA with the James Bay Cree, in northern Quebec where, he writes, it would have been better off had they never signed a treaty at all:

> Had that been the case, as with the James Bay Cree, they would have been in a position to negotiate a land surrender modern treaty in the seventies rather than the NFA. Had that been the case Manitoba Hydro might today be forced to offer these communities deals that compare at least minimally to the 'Peace of the Brave' agreement recently signed in Quebec. Those who signed treaties with the Crown more than a hundred years ago, experiencing the benevolence and generosity of the Crown, should, one would think, be materially and demonstrably in a better position than those who did not. The reverse is true and will remain true as long as the narrow and mean-spirited interpretation of Treaty Five prevails.[131]

Turning to the *Summary of Understanding between Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Manitoba Hydro with Respect to the Wuskwatim Project* (SOU), Kulchyski finds little significant support for the hunting way of life and, he writes, it "in fact moves in a direction that diminishes the possibility of a future for northern hunters."[132] The Summary of Understanding referred to here was a non-binding agreement in principle, signed in 2001, that, "would provide for an equity partnership in the project if NCN elects to exercise that option. The process of negotiations resulted in a Summary of Understandings, which formed the outline of a Project Development Agreement."[133]

In the third section of Kulchyski's article is the kernel of the disagreement that culminated in *Canadian Dimension* later in 2004 and early 2005, which will be considered below. Prof. Kulchyski and organizations as Wa Na Ski Tan, are deeply critical of hydro-production taking place on Indigenous territory in northern Manitoba. For his *Canadian*

[131] Kulchyski, 5.
[132] Kulchyski, 5.
[133] NCN band website: https://www.ncncree.com/business-and-economy/wuskwatim-project/

Dimension article, Prof. Kulchyski distilled the premises from his Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives article and provocatively titled the article "Manitoba Hydro: How to Build a Legacy of Hate." Kulchyski's article has three parts: the first is a brief examination of the historical experience of the community at South Indian Lake. The community at South Indian Lake was one of the earliest and most affected by the flooding caused by the Churchill River Diversion begun in the late 1960s.[134] Kulchyski reminds us that South Indian, at the time of the article's publication, was still considered a "sub-community" of the Nelson House Band.[135] This experience of South Indian of hydroelectric development, has, Kulchyski writes, "created a legacy of distrust and even hatred toward Manitoba Hydro on the part of many Aboriginal peoples."[136]

The second part of Kulchyski's article concerns the Wuskwatim Project itself. Kulchyski begins by questioning the legitimacy of the sitting council, mentioning the contestation of the election outcome in 2003. Next, Kulchyski compares the *Summary of Understanding for Wuskwatim* with the Quebec northern Cree's *Peace of the Brave*, describing the Summary of Understanding (SOU) as "deeply flawed." The SOU, Kulchyski writes,

> basically involves a loan by Manitoba Hydro to Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) so they can assume up to a one-third-equity position in the project. That is, by assuming joint risk, they will become minority owners. They are not being compensated for developments taking place on their lands, nor are they being made into nation-to-nation partners in economic development.

[134] For a full examination of South Indian Lake and the CRD, see James Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1993).
[135] Peter Kuchyski, "Manitoba Hydro: How to Build a Legacy of Hatred," *Canadian Dimension* (May 1, 2004): https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/manitoba-hydro-how-to-build-a-legacy-of-hatred-peter-kulchyski.
[136] Kulchyski.

And then,

> The Summary of Understandings (SOU) is clearly not a treaty and is not even binding. There are no standards in place to ensure fair process in the vote that must be held to ratify the final agreement that would ultimately flow from the SOU. One academic, Steven Hoffman of the University of St. Thomas in the U.S., has said that "the agreement represents not the end of colonialism but its zenith." [137]

For Kulchyski and Prof. Steven Hoffman, the agreements surrounding the Wuskwatim Project do not break with the past; rather, they are a continuation of the exploitation sought to be corrected in the Northern Flood Agreement and understandings developed through negotiation in the 1970s. In this sense, they find in the Manitoba agreements, such as the SOU for Wuskwatim, a neo-colonialism that permeates and continues the "Legacy of Hate" described here in Kulchyski's article.[138] In parallel to this interpretation is Steven Hoffman's argument that the agreements for the Wuskwatim project, both the SOU and the Project Development Agreement (PDA) are a step backward for First Nations and modern treaty agreements. Hoffman writes on the PDA that:

> With the approval and ultimately the implementation of the PDA, the goal enunciated by the Van Ginkel Associates report and embraced by both Hydro and Manitoba, that northern Aboriginal communities should put behind the idylls of the past and fully commit to the advantages of modernity, has finally been achieved.[139]

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[137] Kulchyski.

[138] Hoffman's and Martin's edited collection, *Power Struggles*: *Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* is but one example of this literature; the studies coming out of the Wa Na Ski Tan Project are another. Another, more contemporary project in need of examination in this light is the Keeyask Project at Split Lake.

[139] Steven Hoffman, "Engineering Poverty: Colonialism and Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba," in Steven Hoffman and Thibault Martin, eds., *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008): 128. The Van Ginkel report, cited here, makes reference to the 1967 document, Van Ginkel and Associates, *Transition in the North: The Churchill River Diversion and the People of South Indian Lake* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Development Authority).

A response to Prof. Kulchyski's article appeared in *Canadian Dimension*'s January 2005 issue. The response paper was written by NCN's chief, Chief Jerry Primrose, and NCN Councillor Elvis Thomas, whose council portfolio included band development and the negotiating of the dam project. Their response, they wrote, was partly motivated by the circulation of Kulchyski's arguments amongst opponents of the Wuskwatim Project. Kulchyski's article, "È-nakàskàkowaàhk (A Step Back)," highlighted the sustainability of hunting cultures and, Kulchyski wrote, "I feel sad knowing that some communities have lost, and more are about to lose, the basis of an economy that has proven the most sustainable form of social life invented by human beings."[140] Kulchyski's *Canadian Dimension* article did not dwell particularly on the concept of hunting cultures but did criticize the depiction of hydroelectric generation as 'green power' and complained that the benefit of such power accrues differently to different population groups:

> There is no doubt southerners will experience benefits from the project, including less expensive power bills, less expensive power supplies for a variety of industries (private capital) and some capital accumulation by the Manitoba government. The costs are all borne by northern Aboriginal peoples, especially the hunters who rely on their ecological context to sustain an ancient way of life."[141]

In their response, the leaders of NCN chose to address these two main issues.

Chief Primrose and Councillor Thomas identified what they believed to be Prof. Kulchyski's main premise in the two articles discussed above, namely that hunting cultures are economically viable, and the cost and benefits of hydroelectric development to the NCN band. In response to Kulchyski, they argued that:

[140] Kulchyski, "È-nakàskàkowaàhk (A Step Back)," 2.
[141] Kulchyski, "Manitoba Hydro: How to Build a Legacy of Hatred."

> Professor Kulchyski's view is that this hydroelectric development project should be stopped, primarily to protect our "ancient way of life" and "traditional hunting economy." In fact, we are no longer a hunter-gatherer society and cannot sustain ourselves with a hunting way of life.
>
> We are a modern First Nation, with a fast-growing population of young people who want to maintain our Cree culture, but who also have dreams of successful lives as teachers, dentists, doctors, lawyers, engineers, artists, musicians, business leaders and trades people.
>
> Kulchyski ignores this evolving story of our First Nation and the value of this new era of collaboration and cooperation with Manitoba Hydro to build a strong economic base for our First Nation.
>
> This is building a brighter future, not a legacy of hatred.[142]

The literature criticizing hydro development and its impacts on Manitoba's First Nations peoples is, as we see above, extant. Aside from the neo-liberal publications of the Fraser Institute, the literature connecting hydro development with the betterment of First Nations is not common.[143] The NCN reply to Prof. Kulchyski, from NCN Council, is one sincere attempt to justify the Manitoba Hydro First Nations relationship as it has developed since the 1990s and it is important, therefore, to consider it in some detail here. The NCN leadership's philosophy

[142] Chief Jerry Primrose and Councillor Elvis Thomas, "CDebates: The Wuskwatim Hydroelectric Deal Responses to Peter Kulchyski's article, "How to Build a Legacy of Hatred," *Canadian Dimension* (January 1, 2005): https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/cdebates-the-wuskwatim-hydroelectric-deal.

[143] I am thinking primarily of the work of Tom Flanagan and the philosophy of Aboriginal development animating his research; we find this most recently in his study, *Gaining Ground, Losing Ground First Nations: Community Well-Being in the 21st Century* published most recently in 2019 for the Fraser Institute: https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/first-nations-community-well-being.pdf. The emphasis here is the necessity for First Nations to develop their own natural resources and to create their own sources for, what he terms, 'own-source revenue.' This principle, to create a revenue independent of federal transfers, would hold some resonance with leadership at NCN. We might find it holds some parallel with similar work at NCN to extract band policy out from under the restrictions of the Indian Act towards greater autonomy in education, local governance, land management, and economic control.

underlying the arguments in this article is the same as that which introduced the creation of ATEC through the Wuskwatim PDA.

Nisichawayasi, according to band leadership, is a modern and fast-growing First Nation. It is true that northern Manitoba has one of the youngest and fastest naturally growing populations in Canada (and Thompson and surrounding communities form a nexus of this growth.)[144] Prof. Kulchyski, they maintain, "ignores this evolving story" and they cite their efforts to work with Manitoba Hydro as examples of collaboration and cooperation. Further, the article argues that the negotiations for Wuskwatim were an improvement on the relationship between NCN and Manitoba Hydro that existed before with the Churchill River Diversion and the Northern Flood Agreement. NCN leadership argues that Kulchyski's analysis "does us no favour by demeaning what modicum of progress we have achieved within our community and what we have done to take charge of our destiny." For NCN, the Council maintains, progress is being pursued through the following principles:

1) We cannot be isolationists.

2) Progress does not rest in hanging on to the past, fighting forever over the NFA.

3) The 1996 Implementation plan was not a "cash buyout;" rather, it allowed funding for the community's trust, providing key services and programs every year of which ATEC benefits still to this day, [sic]).

[144] A study on Manitoba's population, cited on the CBC in 2012, finds the province to be one of the youngest in Canada according to that year's census, with a median age for Winnipeg sitting at 39.2 years; Thompson was the youngest of Manitoba's cities, with a median age of 30. This age factor has a significant impact on regional decisions concerning economic growth and education; "Manitoba boasts young population," *CBC* (May 29, 2012): https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-boasts-young-population-1.1247749.

4) The 1996 agreement, in a sense, improved on the NFA by augmenting their land affected by the CRD, by maintaining, in article 8, to ensure that no development can happen in NCN's Resource Management Area without consultation and involvement.[145]

The article rebuts Kulchyski's observation that the Wuskwatim deal is "deeply flawed," with leadership maintaining that it should not be compared at all with the *Peace of the Braves* and they with Quebec's northern Cree.[146] They make three points setting the SOU apart from the Quebec agreement.

1) The projects are radically different in scope and in magnitude of effects on the environment.

2) The Peace of the Braves is a government-to-government arrangement, which addresses a whole array of treaty issues, such as funding of government services, and multitude of resource harvesting issues, including mining, forestry and hydroelectric.

3) The SOU isn't a comparable agreement as Kulchyski suggests. Rather, even Manitoba's independent Clean Environment Commission found the SOU and the Peace of the Braves agreement could not be meaningfully compared.

In their article, NCN leadership reject Kulchyski's arguments that they (band leadership) are unable to negotiate an agreement for themselves and they label this line of thinking as "demeaning and paternalistic."[147]

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[145] Chief Jerry Primrose and Councillor Elvis Thomas, "CDebates: The Wuskwatim Hydroelectric Deal Responses to Peter Kulchyski's article, "How to Build a Legacy of Hatred."

[146] Most of the point, for the now seminal text in Canadian hydro development conversations, *Power Struggles*, is the comparison of hydro development in Manitoba to that in Quebec, as evinced in the text's sub-title: *Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec*. NCN leadership maintains that, technically, the PDA for Wuskwatim and the Peace of the Braves cannot be compared, due to scope and intent. What they do not address, nor does anything I have seen from the Manitoba government or MB Hydro, is why it could not have been compared. Kulchyski hints, in the first article mentioned here, that it is the nature of Treaty 5 and its adhesion in 1908 that is the root problem; the Quebec northern Cree are not so burdened by Canada's numbered treaties post 1869.

[147] Primrose and Thomas, "CDebates: The Wuskwatim Hydroelectric Deal Responses," 3.

Perhaps, for my own reading of this debate, the most difficult thing to overcome is not the arguments surrounding themes of modernity vs tradition, economy vs culture, sustainability vs environmental damage. It is difficult to reconcile the views we find in the articles discussed above. Prof. Kulchyski was allowed a reply to NCN's reply in *CD*, and we will visit it below. Point two, regarding the *Peace of the Braves* as a government-to-government arrangement, falls flat on my ears and deserves revisiting in a future project. Concerning local governance in First Nations communities, we often hear that the relationship between First Nations and the Crown is that of a 'nation-to-nation' relationship. One wonders if NCN *could* or *should* have negotiated on a government-to-government basis. Failing that possibility, if the Northern Flood Committee had never been dissolved (and this is a historical what-if question), could *that* have formed a basis for the creation of a 'government' to negotiate with provincial or federal governments on a broad assortment of issues and concerns? The implementation agreements, of course, were settled one time only, with each First Nation separately, with Cross Lake band/ Pimicikamak, of the five, refusing to sign (the 1977 NFA was developed and signed by the Manitoba government, the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board, the Government of Canada and the Northern Flood Committee (representing Nelson House Cree Nation, Norway House Cree Nation, Cross Lake First Nation, Split Lake Cree Nation and York Factory First Nation).[148] A union of sorts, in line with that we saw with the Northern Flood Agreement, could have perhaps forced a return to some of the themes captured in that earlier document of 1977, including the commitment to create a regional socio-economic development plan, and the concomitant

[148] Settlement and other Agreements, Province of Manitoba, accessed March 1, 2023. https://www.gov.mb.ca/inr/treaty-land-entitlement/settlement-and-other-agreements.html

commitment in Schedule E, to eradicate poverty (however that might look like, I for one would be interested to see the attempt). At a conference hosted by UCN at The Pas in the fall of 2019, Prof. Ken Coates suggested the possibility that the various provincial norths develop their own, northern and regional, systems of governance to advocate on their behalf due to the power disparity between the various norths and their respective provincial governments in the south. Chief Coon Come, who also spoke at the conference, hinted that the success of the northern Cree, in relations to the government at Quebec City and in regards to the *Peace of the Braves*, was predicated on the fact that they had created earlier a regional alliance in northern Quebec, in some respects created independently and despite the best interests of the central, provincial government. More work needs to be done, perhaps, comparing the NFA with the earlier James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement: there is the beginning of a discussion in *Power Struggles*. I believe that for NCN leadership, the Wuskwatim agreement is their take on creating opportunities for their youth and developing the community. For many critics of the Wuskwatim Agreement, both in NCN and in the province, the costs are too high, the partners too unreliable, the damage to the earth too much.

Prof. Kulchyski did have the opportunity to reply to NCN leadership's letter in the January 2005 edition of *Canadian Dimension.* Kulchyski defines the two main issues dividing his reading from that of the Band leadership as follows: that the agreement will lead to "a deal compared to similar arrangements; and whether this is the right economic direction for the community to travel down."[149] Concerning the similar arrangements, hydro-community

[149] Peter Kulchyski, "Peter Kulchyski Responds," *Canadian Dimension* (January 1, 2005): https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/cdebates-the-wuskwatim-hydroelectric-deal.

agreements in Manitoba have often been compared to those negotiated in Quebec.[150] Regarding the second point, and the role of a 'modern First Nation' mentioned by Chief Primrose and Councillor Thomas, Kulchyski disagrees, stating that "the twentieth century proved… that hunting, long predicted to be outdated, is a resilient, flexible, sustainable way of life that offers rewards of an incalculable sort."[151]

In the last analysis, time will tell whether the decisions of NCN band leadership proves sustainable and capacity-enhancing over the long run. Prof. Kulchyski's argument is well documented and supported by Indigenous organizations that have been contesting the actions of government and corporations in hydro-electric development across Canada, as exemplified through the work of such grass-roots organizations as Wa-Na-Ski-Tan. It is true that, as Kulchyski writes, there is "plenty of research that large development projects, with their boom-and-bust cycles, are damaging for northern Aboriginal communities and bring with them the social pathologies all too evident across northern Canada."[152] At the same time, almost twenty years on from when this set of articles was written, it can not be denied that the revenue from the dam, in addition to those monies invested from the Northern Flood Implementation Agreement (in the form of NCN's Trust office and the revenues accruing from the Trust Funds), and the side benefits of the continued operation of ATEC and a sustained partnership with

[150] See in particular Thibault Martin, "Hydro Development in Quebec and Manitoba: Old Relationships or New Social Contract?," in *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec*, 9-38.
[151] Kulchyski, "Peter Kulchyski Responds."
[152] Kulchyski, "Peter Kulchyski Responds."

Manitoba Hydro, in toto, has had a net benefit to Nelson House as a community and NCN as a First Nation in Manitoba. This is a topic for more and continued research, indeed.[153]

[153] Similar work needs to be done on the effects of the Keeyask hydro project at Split Lake to determine the types of benefits and detriments of this mega project on the communities and landscape (slated for completion in 2023, according to their website): https://www.hydro.mb.ca/projects/keeyask/. The model for this project is different from that of Wuskwatim. How the additionally planned Conawapa will unfold, sited further up the Nelson River, closer to Hudson Bay, and what sort of agreements will be made with First Nations communities, must form the subject of future work.

4 The Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence

What is the role of adult education in Nelson House and, if an organization had a working mandate, what might it be? ATEC's mantra, 'Investing in our People' is the distillation of a complex set of socio-economic and cultural needs specific to Canadian youth, to First Nations peoples generally, and northerners in Manitoba specifically. In 2013 the ATEC team, comprised of management and instructors, met in Winnipeg for a three-day strategic planning session to determine where ATEC wanted to go, and how. By then, the last of four turbines at the Wuskwatim Dam had begun operating and the funding from the band, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Manitoba Hydro, under the 2006 Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement, had already been exhausted. From the viewpoint of Manitoba Hydro and the fulfilment of the terms of agreement set out in the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement, the original mandate for ATEC had been fulfilled, the dam built, and local training initiatives completed.[154]

In 2012 the mandate for ATEC as seen by the people of Nelson House was not completed, but rather continuing to evolve. From NCN's perspective, and from the larger historical context, the mandate for ATEC was not simply to fulfil the training and work imperatives for the building the Wuskwatim Dam, though the funding model for ATEC's first years of operation were tied to that objective. Rather, there was a broader and ongoing

[154] The Nordman Report lists the end cost for the construction of the ATEC building and facilities at $8.6 million; the report describes ATEC as a "superb facility," which it is: this, despite a few shortcomings, as it was not properly equipped with air conditioning. In an *NCN Band Update newsletter*, dated March 2003, the funds committed to training at ATEC, and other Wuskwatim related training, was set for up to $16.5 million, to be distributed annually "based on NCN's training needs as contained in annual training plans," reported from a federal announcement from the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Robert Nault: *NCN Update: Training and Employment Update* (March 2003).

mandate of capacity building and community development. This chapter considers the development of ATEC as an idea to that of manifestation, from the initial findings of *Wahbung* through to the completion of the dam in 2012. The second part of the chapter examines the operations of ATEC post 2012, under new management and changed staffing, a 'post-Wuskwatim' phase of ATEC. For the operations of ATEC in the first phase, I examine key reports including one written by Curtis Nordman and Associates, released to NCN in 2010, and a Deloitte report released on completion of the dam, in 2013. These reports, along with public statements from NCN leadership, are used to illustrate the successes and the obstacles that ATEC encountered in its first phase, with corresponding recommendations for change to adapt future operations. In the previous three chapters, I have examined themes such as the effects of neoliberalism on aboriginal learning and education, the need for Aboriginal control over education, and how a post-secondary Aboriginal education system fits into the federal/ provincial jurisdictions of aboriginal affairs and control of education.

4.1 Aboriginal Adult Education

The literature dealing with Aboriginal Adult Education is small but growing. I have found especially useful the ideas in Shauna MacKinnon's dissertation and further elaborated upon in her analysis of the north-end of Winnipeg in *Decolonizing Employment: Aboriginal Inclusion in Canada's Labour Market*. MacKinnon describes the current Canadian neo-liberal context that operates "within the strictest rules of capitalism," as a place where "labour market policies have particular characteristics that have had significant implications for workers and more

specifically those most vulnerable to social exclusion."[155] In MacKinnon's work, I find a method of understanding my work in education and employment in Nelson House and northern Manitoba. I have found through experience in working in the north, that, as MacKinnon writes,

> First, in Canada and Manitoba more specifically, Aboriginal people are over-represented among those who fail to complete secondary training through the first-chance trajectory. Second, they are over-represented among those most marginalized. And third, while I was able to find research discussing the challenges of Aboriginal adult learners, as well as research on the impact of neo-liberalism on education and training policy, I was unable to find research discussing the relationship between neo-liberalism and the Aboriginal adult learner.[156]

This examination of ATEC contributes to understanding the significant role that such an organization can have in helping adult learners in the north adapt to, and overcome, the obstacles and challenges characteristic in obtaining education and employment in the context described above.

An important topic in Aboriginal education is "understanding which level of government education has jurisdiction and responsibility for the funding of Indian higher education." [157] In Nelson House, the administration and operation of the primary and secondary schools fall under a local school authority, the Nisichawayasi Nehetho Culture and Education Authority.[158]

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[155] Shauna MacKinnon, "The Effectiveness of Neo-Liberal Labour Market Policy as a Response to the Poverty and Social Exclusion of Aboriginal Second-Chance Learners," PhD thesis, University of Manitoba, 2011, 1.
[156] MacKinnon, "The Effectiveness of Neo-Liberal Labour Market Policy as a Response to the Poverty and Social Exclusion of Aboriginal Second-Chance Learners," 2.
[157] Stonechild, 2.
[158] ATEC was structured to have its own board of trustees with the board's chair reporting to Council and working in alignment with the band councilor holding the portfolio for education. ATEC does not fall under the jurisdiction of the local school authority, though the diplomas for the mature student diploma program are granted under that school authority, with some funds flowing therefrom. There have been some efforts in the past ten years to align or subordinate the governance and operations of ATEC with those of the local school authority. In the years immediately after 2012, the co-director of the school authority sat on ATEC's board of trustees, to aid in the aligning of programming and overall strategies for the two institutions. Since 2014, the situation has changed, and ATEC went through some time with no operational board of trustees at all, with the executive director of ATEC

At ATEC the initial funding for programming and operation was provided by Manitoba Hydro as a condition of the PDA; operational and programming funds for ATEC did not flow through the local educational authority. In this sense, since its origins ATEC has operated less as a secondary institute (which it is not, as its programming was originally vocational in nature and delivery is focused on adults) and more as a post-secondary one. Since 2012, which Manitoba Hydro refers to as 'project completion,' the funding for ATEC has become more convoluted and relies on multiple sources. The local view is that the federal government, while responsible for funding education at NCN, does not adequately support or fund adult education programs such as those delivered by ATEC. With regard to adult education on reserve, this truism seems especially relevant.[159]

The gaps in funding and support for social services and education on First Nations reserves is well-known to the federal government. A recent document released from the office of the Auditor General of Canada in 2018, acknowledges that Indigenous Services Canada does not have a comprehensive picture of well-being on-reserve, nor even collects the data and information needed to improve educational outcomes.[160] Anita Olsen Harper and Shirley Thompson have written that these gaps in funding and record-keeping reflect the many 'structural oppressions' Indigenous students experience in Canadian education, including

reporting directly to Band Council. These ongoing shifts of the position of ATEC within the overall larger structures of band governance, with the status of ATEC in reference to other band institutions always in flux, are indicative of how the changing relations in band politics and economics can influence ATEC's ability to continue providing programming and services.

[159] An observation of the author is that, since the Stephen Harper years, things seem to be improving 'slowly'. Only recently the local school authority announced funding imminent for the building of a new high school, an accomplishment that has been decades in the making.

[160] Canada, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada: 'Report 5: Socio-Economic Gaps on First Nations Reserves- Indigenous Services Canada' (Ottawa Spring 2018).

poverty, suppression of their identities, racism, and gender-based violence.[161] The authors call for an overhaul of the education system to better address the "*holistic* in the areas spiritual, physical, mental/ intellectual, and emotional growth" [emphasis added][162]

Australian author Lillian Holt similarly calls for adult education to be holistic, and to address issues of mind, body, and spirit.[163] At ATEC, the medicine wheel and the four directions provided the framework to maintain an environment that would foster students' emotional, academic, physical, and spiritual well-being. ATEC tries to provide student supports that strengthen this 'holistic' approach, such as student coaching, access to Indigenous medicines such as sweats and smudgings, living accommodations for those who require them, transportation and busing services, and access to Elders and psycho-therapists provided by the Band or Health Canada. I believe that these holistic approaches to education have contributed to ATEC's success in maximizing retention of students and their transitioning to employment.[164]

4.2 ATEC, an Operation in Phases

For the sake of chronology, the operating years of ATEC are best understood as a series of phases, based on ATEC's mandate and indicative from whence its funding flowed. Simply, in Phase One, the years 2006-2012, ATEC operated mainly to meet the demand for a skilled, Aboriginal workforce recruited from and trained in northern Manitoba; this demand was tied

[161] Anita Olsen Harper and Shirley Thompson, "Structural Oppressions Facing Indigenous Students in Canadian Education," *Fourth World Journal* (Winter 2017): 41.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Lillian Holt, "Aboriginal Justice, Democracy and Adult Education," *Convergence* 25 (1992): 18.
[164] An excellent model for examining education and employment experiences in Canada, and one I use in learning the research skills myself, is Jason Brown and Cheryl Fraehlich, "Assets for Employment in Aboriginal Community-Based Human Services Agencies," *Adult Education Quarterly* 62 (2012): 287-303.

mainly to the building of the NCN-Manitoba Hydro-partnered Wuskwatim dam. Phase Two, post 2012, is the period after the construction of the dam, where ATEC's operations and programming develop independently of the needs of the dam project. The mandate for this second phase is less directly tied to providing a workforce for the Manitoba Hydro project, and more towards creating a skilled and employable workforce to the community specifically and Manitoba's north generally.

The first phase included funding provided through an agreement between NCN, Manitoba Hydro, and the province. In a news release explaining the importance of ATEC's opening in 2006, Chief Jerry Primrose wrote that "ATEC is an important legacy resulting directly from our negotiations for the proposed Wuskwatim project. The centre will provide benefits for our people for years to come regardless of whether the generation project proceeds or not." It is evident from several documentary sources that leadership at NCN envisioned ATEC as a long-term investment project that would benefit the community beyond the building of a hydro project. Chief Primrose further explained that, "We realized that to have meaningful participation in Wuskwatim and other northern development projects taking place over the next 20 years, our members needed an easily accessible way to acquire the necessary employment training, skills, and experience. This facility will help us create a sustainable and independent future."[165] I attempt to show through the analysis in this dissertation that this vision, namely that of a long-term and *funded* training to employment mandate for ATEC, was one of the issues that NCN and Manitoba Hydro failed to come to agreement on. There was a

[165] Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, News Release, *Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence $8.6-million Post-secondary Training Centre Officially Opens in Nelson House*, Nelson House, May 25, 2006: https://www.ncncree.com/wp-content/uploads/ATECLaunchfinal.pdf.

lack of foresight during this period by MB Hydro and NCN council to create a model for ATEC with long-term, renewable, stable, core funding as we might find in the provincially funded, post-secondary sector. The inability to secure stable, long-term funding for ATEC created a context where ATEC began to operate more as a a 'business' with a need to generate its own revenue. A for-profit model for providing services to students, that is, clients, without the economic means to access it is problematic.[166]

ATEC's second phase began once the Wuskwatim project was complete, resulting in ATEC's funding through the Wuskwatim PDA ending in 2011. While the first phase of ATEC operations focussed on training employees to build the Wuskwatim dam, the mandate of ATEC since 2011 has been program-based funding on a needs and ad-hoc basis to meet the training and employment needs of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) citizens. In practice, this funding model has meant that ATEC must respond to fluctuations in the labour and training market to meet the needs of Nelson House and the region surrounding Thompson. In the past, ATEC has partnered with a variety of stakeholders in delivering its programming in Nelson House. For its Mature Student Diploma, for example, ATEC partners with the local school authority, the Nisichawaysi Nehetho Culture and Education Authority.[167] In this program, adult learners can earn their grades 11 and 12 at ATEC. A second example is programming provided through

[166] The Nordman Report posits two schools of thought limiting the prospects of ongoing funding for ATEC: the first is jurisdictional where, the Report states, "it is very unlikely that the Province would see itself responsible for the ongoing operation of a facility in a jurisdiction it would regard as essentially federal"; and two, the ongoing relationship with UCN, where "the Province has attempted to address the question of providing post-secondary services to small centres across the North," The Report describes this second avenue for funding as an "opportunity [that] has not been well exploited" (arguably by either side, NCN/ ATEC or UCN, in the author's opinion) *Nordman Report*, 3.

[167] In 2012, the local authority was named the Nelson House Education Authority. The contemporary name change is indicative of the importance placed by the community on language and culture preservation.

UCN's regional centre at ATEC, where funding was channeled initially through the province's Committee on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE) to regional centres in the north. This programming was focussed on college preparation courses and first-year university courses.[168] When the band needed water and waste-water operators for its plant in Nelson House, ATEC partnered with Red River College to deliver programming, funded through the local band office. Other examples of stakeholders providing funding have been the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, VALE (the Brazilian mining company operating in Thompson), Service Canada, and Indigenous Services Canada. These type of partners often offer targetted funding for programming to meet local immediate needs. Due to changing labour markets, ATEC, in this second phase of operations, created partnerships with many different institutions so as to secure a diversity of funding and achieve its mandate to train NCN members so that they could gain employment.

ATEC is an example of an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary (LMI). In Shauna MacKinnon's *Decolonizing Employment,* she argues that the LMI is an effective model to overcome challenges often experienced by adult learners living in Nelson House or transitioning to life in the larger urban centres, such as Thompson or Winnipeg. MacKinnon writes:

> For individuals who have had very limited or no attachment to the labour market, the transition to work can be extremely challenging, something that may not be understood by those who hire them. Research has shown that the most effective programs for multi-barriered job seekers offer holistic approaches that address all the barriers to work and raise aspirations and confidence; they offer an individualizsed approach, flexible support with a personal advisor; they provide continuing support once the individual has moved into a job; they involve partnerships working between the

[168] COPSE was the province of Manitoba's Committee on Post-Secondary Education; a few years ago that committee was disbanded and, at present, its responsibilities are under the office of the Deputy Minister of Education.

> agencies delivering the different elements with a seamless service and 'no wrong door'; employers are actively engaged in opening up job opportunities, work placements and skills support; and early support is available.[169]

This description of a LMI matches closely to what ATEC aspires to be and it aligns with the holistic approach that ATEC has cultivated; ATEC knows that a holistic approach to adult education, adapted to the needs of NCN's adult learners, enhances student success. Labour Market Intermediaries are important for both Aboriginal communities or other communities who are marginalised from the workforce and employment for class, age, gender or other reasons.

Since ATEC is a non-profit organization operating on reserve land for a growing First Nation in northern Manitoba, it benefits from some autonomy.[170] At the same time, chronic underfunding for education and skills training on all reserves means that ATEC lacks the core operating funds to carry out its programming, which leads to difficulty to do long-term planning. Despite these challenges, ATEC takes pride in monitoring and supporting its students from entry to the attainment of employment.[171]

There is a distinct disjunction between the two phases of ATEC's history, not only because of the change in funding models between the Wuskwatim and post-Wuskwatim project, but also because of the complete change in staffing and leadership of ATEC itself. The

[169] Shauna MacKinnon, *Decolonizing Employment: Aboriginal Inclusion in Canada's Labour Market* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 168.
[170] Kirsten Bernas and Shauna MacKinnon. "Making a Case for a Labour Market Intermediary: The Experience of BUILD." *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba*, March 2015, 6. The model of an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary, or Aboriginal LMI, is best explained in Shauna MacKinnon's recently published book on the topic, *Decolonizing Employment: Aboriginal Inclusion in Canada's Labour Market." (*Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).
[171] What we find here is described in Pamela Stern and Peter Hall's *The Proposal Economy: Neoliberal Citizenship in Ontario's Most Historic Town*. (Vancouver: University Press, 2015).

post-Wuskwatim operations include the following partners: Universities of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Athabasca, University of the North, Manitoba Hydro, VALE, Smooks Construction, Nischawayasihk Education Authority, Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM), Employment Manitoba, Northern Sector Council, Apprenticeship Manitoba, Red River College, and Assiniboine Community College. In cultivating these partnerships, ATEC has been able to choose and retain those relations that allow them to continue programming opportunities that benefit the people.

ATEC has managed to provide an array of programs. ATEC's efforts at overcoming obstacles due to the lack of core funding and inconsistent funding sources are evidence of resilience, adaptation and innovation in the face of pressures created by, what MacKinnon would identify as, neo-liberal ideas of Aboriginal training and education. To quote MacKinnon, neo-liberalism features "the systematic use of state power to impose (financial) market imperatives, in a domestic process that is replicated internationally by 'globalization'."[172] For this dissertation, I will use this as a working definition of neo-liberalism.

ATEC leadership envisions servicing and supporting all NCN clients, from basic and family literacy and numeracy, through to grades eleven and twelve, and on to university, business, or the trades. As well, ATEC strives to provide the tools for members to succeed not only academically and professionally, but also socially. Many Aboriginal youth in the North face not only academic and geographical barriers, but also social barriers such as substance abuse,

[172] MacKinnon, *Decolonizing Employment,* 4.

fear of success and self-sabotage, lack of housing and social services, and poverty.[173] ATEC attempts to address, in a holistic and traditionally Cree fashion, the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual facets of the individual ATEC student or employee.[174]

4.3 Aboriginal Education and *Wahbung*

Wahbung highlights the important role that education has for First Nations. I examine the Wuskwatim PDA to determine how and whether it meets the expectations of Aboriginal leadership in the 1970s, both in *Wahbung* and the NFA as they relate to education and training, understanding that these two areas are necessary for economic development and wellbeing generally. In 1971, the education of Manitoba's Aboriginal peoples as compared to the provincial standard, of Aboriginal youth to reach Grade 12, was, in the words of the Manitoba chiefs in *Wahbung*, "a shocking illustration of monumental failure."[175] These shortcomings listed in the administration and outcomes of educational programs for Aboriginal people that *Wahbung* cites, reverberate throughout the literature on Aboriginal education in Canada. Key shortcomings that the leadership at NCN and ATEC have been trying to correct include the:

1) Absence of a clearly defined educational objective.

[173] At ATEC, we often run into incidents where students take actions in their lives that have direct impacts on their learning; for example: drinking heavily before tests and exams, failing to attend class when assignments are due, skipping exams; I have experienced incidents of spousal sabotage, where a spouse or partner will willfully obstruct a student's attendance or, in the worst example, destroy their texts and work.

[174] I use here the concept of 'traditional Cree' teachings. The concept I learned locally, from colleagues such as Joe Mercredi, of approaching instruction holistically, using the medicine wheel as a model, taking the four directions and implementing them into teaching as a method that addresses the 'whole' needs of the student: mental (academic), physical (material needs), spiritual (religious and cultural needs), heart (social and familial needs). The more typical approach to teaching and learning in contemporary universities and post-secondary institutions in Canada, of course, focus mostly on the academic or vocational portion.

[175] Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (Winnipeg: Indian Tribes of Manitoba, 1971), 104. Projections taken from statistics from the school year 1968-1969, projected that by 1980, 10.8% of Manitoba Aboriginal youth would be in Grade 12 as compared to the 90% of Manitobans generally.

2) Failure to provide a meaningful educational program.

3) Lack of qualified teaching personnel. Simple academic qualification is not sufficient.

4) Absence of parental involvement in determining the school program.

5) Failure to genuinely consider the relevance of Indian reality to new programs such as the one on integration.

6) Facilities on many reserves can be described as being medieval in atmosphere.

7) Disregard for the essential feature of education which is a total experience. Unrecognized were questions pertaining to Indian language, Indian culture, Indian life and customs, and the participation of the Indian parent in the shaping of education.

The shortcomings listed above are identified in the document *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows.*

In creating an educational model for an Aboriginal post-secondary institute it is important to keep in mind the suggestions and shortcomings identified in *Wahbung* as I believe it to be a very important and seminal document and I think it is useful to revisit when one is looking for a blueprint for the present and future. The shortcomings in providing Aboriginal supports and meaningful programming are further discussed in this chapter through findings from interviews of staff and students at ATEC. The need for clearly defined objectives in delivering programming, as point one above sets forth, is important and the need for clear educational objectives was something ATEC wrestled with in 2013.[176] For point four, absence of parental involvement, we can substitute here the feedback from students and the NCN community and

[176] I was fortunate to be a member of the working group as an instructor, Leonard Linklater was facilitating; also present were: Jim Moore, Executive Director; Jackie Hunter, Finance Comptroller; Mohammad Azzam, Program Coordinator and Instructor; Cheryl Linklater, NCN Director for Human Resources Development Authority; Amy Warnar-Brown, Essential Skills Instructor; Danielle Moose, Human Resources Finance Officer. There is a close relationship between ATEC and the band's human resources assets; NCN HRDA is one of ATEC's most reliable funders in the delivery of student allowances and in the subsidization and payment of student wages for internships, apprenticeships, and summer employment; students qualifying for EI also benefit from the relationship between ATEC and HR through the continued payment of benefits while attending classes.

band leadership. ATEC often responds to the training needs of the community and as identified by band council, whereas larger institutions such as University College of the North, University of Manitoba, or Red River College, may not be as responsive as ATEC, though these institutions are often the delivery partners/ curriculum providers for ATEC. Point seven, the need to address 'the total experience' of learners is one that is widely accepted by ATEC but also the one most difficult to find provincial or federal funds to support. In examining the impact of what Pamela Stern and Peter Hall describe in the title of their text as a proposal economy, it is difficult to build holistic, social and technical, 'total experience' programming into funding models.[177] In this regards, ATEC's Social Readiness programming is one example of incorporating the many academic and social needs of the student body into the organization's programming and curriculum; ATEC also partners with Nelson House's Medicine Lodge to offer, what the Lodge describes as, non-medical, drug and alcohol treatment, prevention and aftercare services that encompasses both Indigenous and Western worldviews.[178]

4.4 Other Training Centres: Rivers Air Base Training Centre/ Oo-Za-We-Kwun Centre: A Southern Labour Market Intermediary

ATEC is not a new concept, namely a locally controlled, locally situated, post-secondary adult education and training centre. The Limestone Training Centre was never intended to be 'total,' as called for in *Wahbung*, nor was the training centre located in a local First Nations community

[177] Pamela Stern and Peter Hall, *The Proposal Economy: Neoliberal Citizenship in Ontario's Most Historic Town* (Vancouver: University Press, 2015).
[178] Nelson House Medicine Lodge homepage: https://www.medicinelodge.ca/.

(the term 'total' here refers to a pedagogical approach that can also be described in present-day parlance as 'holistic' or focused on the entire person);[179] rather, it was situated in the city of Thompson which is centrally located in northern Manitoba. One example of an Aboriginal adult training centre in the south of the province on Canadian Forces' Rivers Air Base is described in some detail in *Wahbung*. The converted Air Force base in south-western Manitoba became a training centre – the Oo-Za-We-Kwun Centre. The school was in operation from 1971 to 1980 and resembles what MacKinnon has described as an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary. While a detailed examination of Oo-Za-We-Kwun's successes and failures is beyond the scope of this thesis, [180] its model for local, Aboriginal education is worth discussing because of its relevance to ATEC. *Wahbung,* in the section 'Rivers Air Base,' describes Oo-Za-We-Kwun this way*:*

> Historically, the various facets of education for Indian people have been presented in a fragmented manner of unrelatedness. The reserve was the site of many of the elementary school programs, whereas the secondary school and the post-secondary school programs were conducted off reserves. Adult programs of training and relocation were approached from the standpoint of academic and vocational upgrading and skills development. These factors are what might be referred to as physical factors of employment that are applicable to the employee but have little reference to the family unit.

[179] One late colleague, Joe Mercredi, used to describe the 'whole,' or total aboriginal approach to learning, one that focused not only on academic or performative outcomes but also on the spiritual and emotional. He would use the medicine wheel to depict the learner as a being that needs to learn while addressing needs that are four-fold: mind, spirit, body, and emotion. If a learner is experiencing trauma, or addiction, or an inability to find and secure housing, they will not be able to meet academic or cerebral outcomes in a classroom setting. There is an emerging Canadian literature on a more holistic approach to teaching aboriginal learners (and much could be gleaned for the instruction of non-aboriginal learners as well); consider Olga Shugurova, "Transformative, Intercultural Learning from the Indigenous Teaching Circle: Creative autoethnographic reflections on dialogic, holistic education with place," *Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning*, (15:19, 2021); and the Canadian Council of Learning's *The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach To Measuring Success* (Ottawa: Canadian Council of Learning, 2009).

[180] An assessment on the life skills programming conducted at Oo-za-we-kwun can be found in Raymond Muzychuk, "An Evaluation of the Oo-za-we-kwun Centre's Life Skills Course," MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1975.

> As stated in our position, we strongly believe that for education to be effective, it must be nurtured in relevancy, commitment, motivation and identifiable purpose. The process must be a part of the community activities and community progress. With this in mind, it is necessary for the Indian people to have access to facilities wherein this concept may be realized. The acquisition of Rivers Air Base as a training centre for Indian people will provide such a facility.
>
> The principle objective of the Centre is to establish a basis of life skills development which encompasses everything from grade school through to employment giving consideration to the family as a total unit. Social orientation, which has been given little attention in the past, will now be emphasized. The predominant factor of failure in most training and relocation programs has been that the social problems of family relocation and the concurrent social dislocation have been ignored and attempts have been made to attack the symptom rather than the cause of failure.
>
> The entire program of the Centre will be geared to acquainting the family in training with the reality of both the independence of man and the inter-dependence of society and to help the individual to utilize his potential in both the social and economic sense.
>
> The relevancy, commitment, motivation and identifiable purpose with which training programs will be conducted at the centre is to provide a "community classroom". Programs previously offered at Community Colleges and Universities for training Indian people as teachers, teacher assistants, counselor assistants, recreation coordinators, dental assistants, etc., will have greater meaning if conducted within the "community classroom". The doors of the Centre will open to invite such programs to operate within this new "reality". Programs not yet established and those not firmly established at any University or Community College will find their roots at the Centre. This is urgent in the light of training for magistrates, school trustees, police constables, etc.
>
> Through recognition of education as a preparation for total living and recognition of the family as a unit, we believe that programs once offered in isolation as a "things unto themselves" will in this context have greater meaning and therefore, provide a greater opportunity for our people.[181]

From this text, I have selected six statements that help to explain shortcomings in providing Aboriginal education. These points are highlighted below and then considered with respect to the programming and overall student experience at ATEC.

[181] Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, *Wahbung*, 129-31.

1) "Adult programs of training and relocation are applicable to the employee but have little reference to the family unit."

2) "For education to be effective, it must be nurtured in relevancy, commitment, motivation, and identifiable purpose."

3) "The process must be a part of the community activities and community progress."

4) "The principal objective [should be] to establish a basis of life skills development which encompasses everything from grade school through to employment giving consideration to the family as a total unit."

5) "Social orientation… will now be emphasized."

6) "The entire program… [is] to help the individual to utilize his [sic] potential in both the social and economic sense."

In general, the emphasis on not only the economic (or we might say technical, or academic, or vocational) side but also on the social is intended in both a constructive and alleviative sense. As we find on the shortcomings of Aboriginal education from *Wahbung*, the educational experience should include programming "pertaining to Indian language, Indian culture, Indian life and customs, and the participation of the Indian parent (or, read here, the family) in the shaping of education."[182] An adult educational centre might, in this sense, include a more holistic approach to education, one that could incorporate local customs and ways of knowing, language and use of medicines, and other culturally and locally relevant learning.

There needs also to be programming and support to address the social barriers facing many adult learners as they enter the educational system, sometimes after long breaks from previous encounters. In the interviews conducted for this study, students at ATEC described many obstacles inhibiting their re-entry into education including: early parenthood, broken

[182] Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, *Wahbung*, 104.

marriages, addictions, exposure to domestic or community violence, lack of previous success in school, inadequate housing and space to study/work, or past altercations with the justice system. To increase rates of success in student programing and graduation, an Aboriginal adult educational centre should aim to meet the needs of a varied student body. The collaboration between ATEC and the Nelson House Medicine Lodge, discussed later, is an example of this. *Wahbung* describes how addressing the needs of the whole, or 'total' student can get at the roots of social problems. "The predominant factor of failure in most training and relocation programs has been that the social problems of family relocation and the concurrent social dislocation have been ignored and attempts have been made to attack the symptom rather than the cause of failure."[183] Taking together the need for an educational approach that stretches from life skills, through to vocational and academic training, on to employment, is a significant mandate. Extending this programming to include the 'total' student and situating it in the heart of a local Aboriginal community would need an exceptional organization indeed.

4.5 ATEC and the Wuskwatim PDA (2006)

I argue here that ATEC is a variation on the model proposed above in *Wahbung*, although hampered because of funding sources, the original Manitoba Hydro mandate, and the inability of ATEC to fit effectively in between the federal and provincial jurisdictions dividing the federal responsibility for Indians and the province's responsibility for the provision and funding of post-secondary education. Examining documents establishing the building and operations for ATEC in the early years, what is the role envisioned by the stakeholders, in this case MB

[183] Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, *Wahbung*, 130.

Hydro and Nisichwayasihk Cree Nation, for the new Aboriginal adult learning centre in Nelson House?

It is important to clarify here that the Project Development Agreement discussed here is different from the text mentioned in the *Canadian Dimension* debates above, though, as Prof. Kulchyski mentions, the latter does not deviate significantly from the former. As we saw with the Limestone Education and Training Centre project in the middle 1980s, the provision of training and employment opportunities for "Northern Aboriginals" has been a part of MB Hydro's policy for some time.[184]

The Wuskwatim PDA discusses training and employment opportunities in Article 8 of the agreement where it envisions Wuskwatim and Keeyask as a continuous set of projects described as "Hydro Northern Projects." The first part of Hydro's plan for employment was called "The Training Initiative," where Hydro and Aboriginal partners were identified and funds allocated.[185] The remainder of Section 8 deals with the allocation of funds for training. Other partners committing funds under this section include the province of Manitoba, the federal ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC), and Western Economic Diversification Canada (WED). The location and means of delivery of training initiatives is discussed in sections 8.8, 8.9, and 8.12, with section 8.8 stating that:

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[184] The Wuskwatim PDA acknowledges Manitoba Hydro's previous and ongoing commitment to the "importance of providing pre-project training opportunities for Northern Aboriginals related to jobs in the construction and operation of the Wuskwatim Project and the Keeyask Project," *Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement* (2006), 55: https://www.hydro.mb.ca/docs/community/indigenous_relations/wuskwatim_pda/Wuskwatim_PDA_ToC.pdf

[185] "The Training Initiative" of Section 8.2 is part of a larger training endeavor, here identified as the Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative, which helps facilitate "the training of Northern Aboriginals to take advantage of employment on both the Wuskwatim Project and the Keeyask Project," (Sec. 8.2 of the Wuskwatim PDA).

> NCN's Training Funds are to be used by NCN for the pre-project training of Members and NAC Residents for jobs on the Wuskwatim Project and the Keeyask Project. The training of Members and NAC Residents will be community-based and will be delivered by NCN through ATEC as described in section 8 .9.[186]

The objective was to provide pre-training for jobs relating both to Wuskwatim *and* Keeyask. However, since 2012, ATEC has had little opportunity to coordinate training initiatives with the Keeyask Project aside from continuing to provide job-referral services (JRS).[187] It is important to note in Section 8.8 there is a commitment to the training being "community-based" and that training would be delivered "by NCN through ATEC." This is an example of two tenets in *Wahbung*, that education be provided locally and by First Nations.

Section 8.9 discusses ATEC specifically and describes the delivering of training at ATEC through NCN:

> The training of Members and NAC Residents will be delivered by NCN through ATEC. ATEC will implement NCN's multi-year training plan and will prepare annual implementation plans setting out the specific budgetary requirements, anticipated outcomes for the upcoming year and other matters outlined in the NCN Contribution Sub-Agreements or in the Training Contribution Agreements, as the case may be. NCN will remain responsible, jointly and severally with ATEC, for all matters pertaining to the pre-project training of Members and NAC Residents.

ATEC is responsible for pre-project training. One of the long-standing challenges of pre-project training for a large project such as Wuskwatim is the time it takes to create an employable

[186] The term "NAC" here refers to residents of the Nelson House Northern Affairs Community who are not NCN band Members (Article 1, Wuskwatim PDA).

[187] For more on the province's Job Referral Services (JRS), see https://www.gov.mb.ca/jrs/. Essentially, it matches contractors for Hydro projects (Wuskwatim, Keeyask) with job seekers, prioritizing those living within pre-determined recruitment areas and target recruit groups. JRS has its strengths and shortcomings and this is not the space to go into them; the efficacy of Manitoba JRS is, perhaps, an avenue for future research opportunities. In Nelson House, ATEC houses JRS.

workforce. As we found in *Wahbung*'s model of an adult education centre, there is a need "to establish a basis of life skills development which encompasses everything from grade school through to employment giving consideration to the family as a total unit. Social orientation, which has been given little attention in the past, will now be emphasized."[188] ATEC programming since 2012 demonstrates the need in Nelson House for this type of life-skills programming. In the first phase of ATEC, there was inadequate time for teaching and nurturing these types of skills. Moreover, as the Nordman and Deloitte reports about ATEC found, there was little capacity to meaningfully work with clients who lacked the essential life and technical skills necessary to engage meaningfully in the trades and jobs building a large hydro-electrical project. Also, the relationship of Hydro with ATEC, based on my reading of the PDA, seems to be restricted to the pre-training and training stages for Wuskwatim and Keeyask. When we reflect on some of Prof. Kulchyski's criticisms about how Manitoba Hydro conducts business, this short-term and limited approach appears problematic but probably natural.

However, on reading NCN band literature about the Wuskwatim SOU and PDA, there is a discourse that seems closer to that previously envisioned in *Wahbung*. In Chief Jerry Primrose's message to members in 2003, he had this to say in an update on ATEC:

> The new Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence is one of our community's most important new initiatives. It has the potential to train our members for jobs on proposed Hydro projects and to take advantage of other northern economic opportunities. It will help develop and support entrepreneurial talents and skills of our NCN Members.
>
> The potential of this centre for our members, particularly our youth, is enormous, and the benefits for our community will be felt almost immediately and long into the future. It is an accomplishment we can all be proud of.

[188] *Wahbung*, 130.

> Your council and the Future Development Team have worked hard to negotiate and develop this project over the past several months. The result is a training centre that we believe respects our community's vision and meets the needs of our members for the future.
>
> We are committed to making ATEC accessible and effective to ensure as many members as possible have access to the opportunities the centre will offer.
>
> With this important component in place, all our energies will be directed towards creating and assuring meaningful long-term employment and careers that are the basis of a strong future for our community.
>
> Now it is up to all of us to provide the community support and encouragement that will help our youth, families and friends take full advantage of the centre's programs for their, and our, future success.[189]

The same newsletter has an important addition from Councillor William Elvis Thomas, whose portfolio at the time was that of Future Developments:

> The vision and scope of the centre, along with the training and support programs offered, have, with your input, been planned and developed through the efforts and dedication of the entire council, the Future Development Team and our key advisors. We believe the result of this hard work will be one of our community's most significant and important.
>
> Many NCN members have already been trained through programs arranged by NCN Human Resources – and the momentum is building. When completed, the new centre will be a local and regional training centre offering a wide range of designated and undesignated trades and job skills.[190]

There are several important points to draw from this 2003 newsletter. Firstly, it was to have the potential to not only train members for jobs on proposed Hydro projects but also, "to take advantage of other northern economic opportunities." Secondly, the scope in time for the

[189] Chief Jerry Primrose, "Training and Employment Update," March 2003: https://www.ncncree.com/wp-content/uploads/NcnUpdate.pdf
[190] William Elvis Thomas, "Training and Employment Update," March 2003: https://www.ncncree.com/wp-content/uploads/NcnUpdate.pdf

centre would be "enormous, and the benefits for our community [would] be felt long into the future." The result for NCN, concludes Chief Primrose, a facility "directed towards creating and assuring meaningful long-term employment and careers that are the basis of a strong future for our community." For Councillor Thomas, ATEC would become "one of our community's most significant and important accomplishments – a legacy for our youth that will be felt many years into the future."[191]

We see in Councillor Thomas' words a hopeful legacy, not one of hate described in Prof. Kulchyski's article. Chief and councillors hoped that ATEC would become a positive force for building the economic and social capacity of the community. In contrast, for Manitoba Hydro and the PDA, the usefulness of the centre might be limited to the building of the Wuskwatim Project, with potential avenues of usefulness in Keeyask and other hydro construction endeavours. Though the PDA did not provide for the long-term funding for ATEC's maintenance, operations or programming, it did provide the capital funds to build the centre and, as we will see, for ATEC to contribute to the overall well-being of many NCN community members.

4.6 ATEC and the Early Years: 2004-2012

For those not familiar with ATEC as a physical structure and overall vision, a 2003 newsletter described it as follows:

> The Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre is envisioned as the community's main training and employment agency, and will offer courses in many different areas depending on the community's needs. In the short term, ATEC will serve as a local education, training and employment centre, mainly related to employment on the

[191] Ibid.

> Wuskwatim project. The centre will also operate as the NCN human resource referral agency for jobs related to Wuskwatim.
>
> The centre will also be a training and business incubation centre to promote and develop business relationships and opportunities to take advantage of a number of hydro and resource development projects planned in the region over the next 20 years.
>
> The ATEC campus will include the 15,300 square-foot training and employment centre, a 6,400 square foot dormitory to house 24 students from outside Nelson House, three duplexes to house instructors and a 1,500 square-foot day-care centre.
>
> The facility will have three classrooms, a science lab, a computer lab, as well as industrial shops to provide hands-on training for trades programs. Capacity for the centre is expected to be about 100 students at a time.[192]

As well, it houses a kitchen and small dining area, office space for staff at ATEC, NCN Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA), and Job Referral Services. Since it was built, it has expanded to include an outside deck, a permanent sweat lodge, and a large 14, 000 square foot industrial building for the manufacture of housing modules. In addition, one of ATEC's teacherage buildings is presently housing NCN's Lands and Resources Department to better facilitate planning and the building taking place in the community.[193]

It is worth listing some of the things that ATEC has achieved in the context of large hydro megaprojects, as well as the value attributed to ATEC by the community of Nelson House, its community members, and NCN band leadership ATEC has helped to graduate students in their three core programs: in its Mature Student Diploma Program (MSDP), which grants a provincial diploma in Grade 12; in its Aboriginal Business Diploma Program, which is a one-year diploma program run in conjunction with Winnipeg's Yellowquill College, the diploma

[192] Nisishawayasihk Cree Nation, "Current and Future Training Plans," *Information for Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation* (March 2003): https://www.ncncree.com/wp-content/uploads/NcnUpdate.pdf

[193] The building of ATEC and the provision of programming was initially estimated at $16.5 million, about half of which went to building the centre: https://www.ncncree.com/wp-content/uploads/NcnUpdate.pdf

granted by the University of Winnipeg with the option of upgrading to the two-year certificate; and ATEC's Apprenticeship/ Trades Program, where students with Grade 12 or 10 equivalency work their way through provincial apprenticeship levels one, two, and three, in cooperation with NCN Housing Authority and Peewapin (the local employers) and Apprenticeship Manitoba.[194]

It is worthwhile asking what the province of Manitoba felt about the creation of a post-secondary training centre in Nelson House. Since Nelson House is a reserve and the provision of services there fall to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), there is potential for a First Nations post-secondary educational facility to get lost in the funding models of either the federal or provincial levels of government. There is a lack of clarity regarding the role for Aboriginal organizations such as ATEC in the post-secondary and adult-education landscape.

An example of the ambiguous nature of ATEC's relationship with the province can be found in the Manitoba legislature's discussion from April, 2005. In this discussion, Mrs. Rowat, MLA for Minnedosa, enquires of the Minister for Advanced Education and Training, Ms. McGifford of Osborne on Nelson House and ATEC:

> Mrs. Rowat: I understand the community of Nelson House has recently–I think it was three years ago, so not very recent–there was an announcement made regarding an $8.1-million training centre in the community. I would like to know what the minister can provide in status on that building, and, also, if there is an executive director or co-ordinator that has been hired, and if it is up and running, because it has been three years; $8.1 million has been committed. I just want to know the status of it.
>
> Ms. McGifford: Madam Chair, this is really a question that concerns the federal government. The ATEC Centre, as the member has rightly identified, is being built, and Nelson House is currently being built. The federal government provided $3.7 million for

[194] I was privileged to speak at the 2020 graduation for ATEC at NCN's Gilbert McDonald Arena. ATEC graduated 20 students for the MSDP, 18 students for Level 1 Carpentry and Woodworking, and 12 students for the Aboriginal Business Certificate.

> its construction, and the rest of the money, we assume, is band money. In other words, the Province has not made a financial contribution to the construction of the ATEC Centre.
>
> Mrs. Rowat: The money, approximately $4 million coming from the band, where would that money have been–the band is in receipt of–but where would that money have come from? Would it have been through Hydro or the Province?
>
> Ms. McGifford: I cannot really address the issue of band funding. I think it would be intrusive for us to ask. We would probably be told to mind our own business. The $3.7 million came through INAC and WD, the federal money.[195]

We find here on the part of the Minister the kernel of the problem in ATEC's relationship with the province. The member for Minnedosa was correct that money released for the building of ATEC was provided for in the PDA, some coming from Manitoba Hydro, some from INAC, and some from WED. Regarding the province and the actual provision for training, the Minister of Education does have more to say:

> Mrs. Rowat: My understanding is there are several individuals that are currently enrolled through the training centre. Can the minister indicate to me if she is involved at all or the department is involved at all in enrolment and recruitment in that area?
>
> Ms. McGifford: We are talking about the ATEC Centre at Nelson House, but it is not completed. It is not up and running. However, they are delivering community-based training, and we are involved there.
>
> Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister elaborate on the community-based training, what type of training that would be?
>
> Ms. McGifford: The participants under the community-based training are involved in a range of training. It includes components like life skills and upgrading. Individuals are involved in designated and undesignated trades, and there is on-the-job work experience training.[196]

[195] Manitoba, *Parliamentary Debates and Proceedings*, Legislative Assembly, 18 April 2005. https://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/38th_3rd/hansardpdf/31.pdf
[196] MB, *Parliamentary Debates and Proceedings*, Legislative Assembly, 18 April 2005.

On questions from Mrs. Rowat concerning the top training agencies responsible for delivering programming, the Minister lists the University College of the North, Red River College, the Manitoba heavy construction industry and the Carpentry Training Institute as partners. There is an apparent commitment from the province to have its partners assist in delivering "community-based training." This commitment to community-based learning, by the governing party of the day, namely Gary Doer's NDP, has implications for the scope of programming anticipated for ATEC. Summing up her reporting on advanced education, the Minister had this to add:

> Ms. McGifford: I can tell the member that whenever it is possible to train people in the community, when what is needed for training is present in the community, we do that work within the community because, of course, it is in the interests of community development, it is in the interests of the project, it is in the interests of family life to do the work in the community.
>
> I can, secondly, tell the member that the trainees only leave the community when it is necessary. In other words, when the supports, the machinery; whether it be specific machinery as we usually mean machinery, or the machinery of education, if those are not available in the community then, of course, the education has to take place outside the community.
>
> I also want to point out to the member, and I am sure she knows this because she did say that she has some familiarity with northern education; with these individuals, multiple interventions are necessary so that an individual may take some upgrading, may take some life skills training, and completion of those parts of an education are really vital and necessary before that individual may be in a position to choose to become a heavy-duty equipment operator, or a plumber, or another trade, some preliminary work is necessary.[197]

The last word to the conversation in the provincial legislature on ATEC, despite the earlier ambiguities of the province's commitment or relations to the *funding* ATEC, does display some

[197] MB, *Parliamentary Debates and Proceedings*, Legislative Assembly, 18 April 2005.

of the principles on what Aboriginal adult education in the North should look like, from the governing party's point of view:

1) "Whenever it is possible to train people in the community."

2) "The trainees only leave the community when it is necessary."

3) "Multiple interventions are necessary so that an individual may take some upgrading, may take some life skills training, and completion of those parts of an education are really vital and necessary before that individual may be in a position to choose to become."

These three tenets are consistent with the vision set forth in *Wahbung*. Point three, acknowledging the necessity for "multiple interventions" and up-front or remedial training to better position clients to take advantage of more technically applicable training is here. Point three is a major tenet for Aboriginal training in the north and, when in the context of labour market intermediaries, the work that ATEC needs to do to prepare clients for participation in the workforce is considerable and the problem of funding these "multiple interventions" and skill gaps in hard and soft life-skills is ongoing.

ATEC, in the sense that it prepares its students for employment, but operates in a context that is sensitive to local conditions, has some features of an LMI but it does not completely align with the LMI model as portrayed in the literature. According to this, "An LMI links low-skilled workers with semiskilled and skilled employment in targeted sectors to create job opportunities for people with barriers to employment. It brokers relationships with employers, education and training institutions, government, funding agencies, unions and

community based organizations to help clients find and keep good jobs." [198] Rather, ATEC has a focus on the front end, in that its focus is on training, local employment and local social and economic development, particularly on a First Nation, the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation.

Before finishing with the relationship with Manitoba and ATEC I do want to touch on the Centre's relationship with University College of the North (UCN). The transition of Keewatin Community College (KCC) to the university college took place during the same NDP mandate as the signing of the PDA (Gary Doer's NDP was in office 1999-2009). NCN's document *Information for Nisichwayasihk Cree Nation Members* (2003) refers to an agreement "recently signed between NCN and the Keewatin Community College. In return for annual funding to NCN, KCC will provide educational programs through ATEC to NCN Members in the community."[199] It was envisioned for UCN to operate throughout northern Manitoba as a network of separate locations in the various northern communities, one of them to be housed at ATEC. Money earmarked for each community was to flow through the province's Committee on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE) to the regional centres, where UCN staff, in the form of instructors and program coordinators, worked with the communities to determine the type of UCN programming delivered. The ATEC/ UCN Regional Centre had set up, as a result this agreement, a Regional Centre Board consisting of senior leadership at ATEC and from UCN.

Perhaps the failure of the province and ATEC in creating a meaningful relationship is due in some part to this relationship between the centre and UCN. This may be due to the fact that

[198] See MacKinnon and Bernas here, "Making a Case for a Labour Market Intermediary: The Experience of BUILD." *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba*, (March 2015).
[199] NCN, *Information for Nisichwayasihk Cree Nation Members*, 2003.

though ATEC governance was conceptualized as a regional centre to UCN in regards to publicly funded programming in vocational and post-secondary schooling, it is not directly controlled by the university-college. Rather, governance for the centre is controlled by the regional centre board consisting of one part UCN administration, and one part ATEC/ NCN. The building and operations and maintenance is the responsibility of ATEC; ATEC is also free to accommodate programming and partnerships with other institutions as well and has done so, including the local school authority, the Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg, Red River Polytechnic College, Assiniboine Community College, and Yellowquill College. This more ambiguous relationship between UCN and Manitoba's other post-secondary institutions results in the need for collaboration (which can be a good thing) but ends in the absence of a long-term core funding model to ATEC itself. The on-again, off-again relationship between UCN and ATEC, and the flow of funds from the provincial government to the province's north, through UCN, does not enhance planning and programming to Nelson House.[200]

4.7 ATEC and the Early Years: The Nordman (2010) and Deloitte (2013) Reports

Having examined Manitoba Hydro's vision for ATEC as compared with that of NCN leadership, let's now consider ATEC's efficacy over the first half of its life. A report conducted by Curtis Nordman and Associates evaluating ATEC was completed in 2010 providing a fair picture of performance up to that point. Curtis Nordman wrote the extensive report with twenty-seven recommendations to improve programming and operations at ATEC. Another evaluation was

[200] As with everything in Manitoba's north, there is a past politics behind present relations between UCN and ATEC: it includes such stakeholders as the provincial government, Manitoba Hydro, UCN/ Keewatin Community College, and NCN band.

completed in October 2013 by Deloitte. Both reports attempted to give an overview of ATEC's performance including indicators of how NCN and the province envision the provision of Aboriginal education in Nelson House. In this section we consider the recommendations and evaluations included in the two reports and how they fit in to the visions for ATEC by Council, Hydro, and *Wahbung*.

The 2010 Nordman Report recommendations continue to resonate with staff familiar with the day-to-day operations of ATEC as they addressed chronic problems that staff and leadership faced since taking over ATEC in 2012. The 27 recommendations are:

1. That ATEC's mandate be expanded to include a wider range of post-secondary activity than just technical and vocational education.

2. That ATEC revise its financial systems so that every unit and every program can be analyzed independently against a formal start of year budget.

3. That ATEC resume proper file management of its financial and administrative records.

4. That ATEC adopt modern data analysis tools and incorporate them into its planning process.

5. That ATEC be reorganized into three functional areas: Ancillary Services, Administrative Services, and Academic, Career and Vocational Services.

6. That ATEC Board meet monthly from September through June of each year in order to provide ATEC with direction, to assess its performance and to ensure its accountability.

7. That the responsibility for the restaurant be transferred from ATEC and that ATEC in turn sub-contract food services from the restaurant.

8. That ATEC daycare be operated on a break-even basis with appropriate fees established to that end.

9. That ATEC's residence be operated on the basis of a modest profit.

10. That ATEC diarize each JRS[201] registration and contact registrants at least two weeks prior to the date their registration is to lapse and obtain the necessary information to keep their registration current.

11. That ATEC implement an appropriate on-call system so that contractors can reach ATEC personnel directly during work hours and not through a voice mail system.

12. That ATEC expand its data collection activity to include tracking student's labour market attachment for a year after program completion.

13. That ATEC Executive Director conduct a thorough skills assessment of staff and, in light of this assessment, establish professional development plans designed to equip staff with the skills necessary to operate ATEC efficiently or where necessary hire staff with the necessary kills to carry out the functions identified in this evaluation.

14. That ATEC review its leave and attendance policies to bring the former into line with those of the Education Authority and to make the latter more formal and better enforced.

15. That a new Post-Secondary Education Authority be established in which all post-secondary budgets and mandates are consolidated and which has responsibility for ATEC which becomes its community-based training arm.

16. That the Chief and Council as a matter of the highest priority move to reconstitute the ATEC Board and to give the Board strict instructions to discharge its oversight responsibilities in a timely and effective manner. This reconstituted Board will stay in place until such time as NCN has fully considered the recommendations regarding the establishment of a new Post-Secondary Education Authority.

17. That the reconstituted ATEC Board move immediately to address and resolve the issues outlined above.

[201] JRS here refers to the province's Job Referral Service, nowadays administered with the Ministry for Economic Development, Investment and Trade; https://www.gov.mb.ca/jrs/

18. That the reconstituted ATEC Board will, as a priority, negotiate with the Executive Director a fair and without prejudice settlement that would include payment in lieu of notice and a neutral letter of reference. This settlement will be a reflection of the Executive Director's many years of service and the concerns outlined above. The Board should then commence a search for a new Executive Director with qualifications consistent with those required to implement the recommendations of this report.

19. Given the fact that, with the exception of upgrading, demand will dictate that individual academic programs can only be offered periodically, ATEC should avoid hiring permanent teaching staff and instead invest in the resources necessary to operate the ATEC as a training host.

20. That ATEC invest in its intake and assessment capacity as a first step in its efforts to enhance student success.

21. That ATEC carefully monitor its enrollment and increase its permanent Transition year Programming capacity as required.

22. That ATEC expand its counseling services in order to facilitate student entry, to maintain students in their studies, and to connect them to the labour market.

23. That ATEC adopt a three year horizon for scheduling its course offerings.

24. That ATEC engage in an annual strategic planning process, involving major stakeholders, that translates community and regional labour market demand into a multi-year training plan.

25. That ATEC develop a funding strategy tied to its three year rolling calendar that will ensure economic viability.

26. That ATEC take immediate steps to improve its relationship with its partners and to extend the range of its partnerships.

27. That ATEC devote appropriate resources to marketing in order to make the NCN community aware of what training is available over the next three years and to recruit students from outside the community to make ATEC economically sustainable.

28. That this report be distributed to all staff and stakeholders and that it become the discussion paper for ATEC's first annual strategic planning session.

The following section deals with the most important themes visited in the recommendations and how ATEC has adapted or changed its programming or operations in response. Some changes have helped ATEC move toward the '*Wahbung*' model, sometimes it has changed to align its operations to conform to what Shauna MacKinnon describes as an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary model, but sometimes it has had to adapt in response to local political decisions or funding changes that affected ATEC in some way.

This poses the interesting question, what is the difference between an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary model (ALMI) and that envisioned in *Wahbung*? In my reading, the philosophies and undergirding pedagogies supporting either approach are very similar, perhaps only the historical setting is different. The model for aboriginal education advocated for in *Wahbung* was a product of the 1970s and the beginnings of advocacy for Aboriginal rights in Manitoba and Canada. The ALMI approach, of course, is versed in language more accessible to a fiscally conservative and economically liberal environment, that of neoliberalism that we find ourselves in today. *Wahbung* is anchored in race, rights, and past injustices/ disenfranchisements, perhaps? ALMI is situated in a discourse emphasizing accessibility, employability, and better labour market performance for Aboriginal populations. Whatever the differences in presentation, the spirit of both *Wahbung* and ALMI is similar: that of empowering Aboriginal students and increasing success rates in post-secondary and vocational education in a meaningful and holistic way. It should be noted here that an ALMI is really an extension of

already existing model for vocational training, the LMI, or Labour Market Intermediary, that extends the concept of long-term financial support for comprehensive, enhanced servicing and training to the population at large.

4.8 Programming at ATEC

The Nordman Report's Recommendation #1 calls for expanded programming at ATEC beyond the technical and vocational training provided during the construction of the hydro project. The PDA stipulates that ATEC, in tandem with NCN, be responsible for pre-project training in accordance with the Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative (HNTEI). It was reported in an annual band review of 2009-2010 that, while earlier in ATEC's life, the NHTEI had provided the bulk of the funds for training, by 2010, the majority of the funding (from HNTEI) had been used up. Lynne Fernandez, in her 2019 review of Manitoba Hydro noted that in delivering HNTEI programming, Manitoba Hydro "miscalculated how much time and education was necessary to train the northern workforce for the positions that opened up." This oversight, Fernandez observed, "[m]eant that Northerners were not able to realize as many long-term benefits as they should have, further fueling the cynicism so many feel about hydro development in Manitoba."[202]

Looking at training and enrollment numbers going back to 2003, initial programming at ATEC started with the apprenticed trades carpentry Levels 1 and 2, and electrical Level 1. The

[202] Lynne Fernandez, "Manitoba Hydro: The Long View," *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives* (August 2019), 21: https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2019/09/Manitoba_Hydro_Long_View.pdf. Fernandez notes that the HNTEI was a training initiative of the NDP government of the day and it was ongoing from 2001 to 2010. The Deloitte Report addresses also the HNTEI and ATEC and it will be visited below.

number of classes extended rapidly into the next year to include courses such as security, heavy-equipment operating, truck driving, adult upgrading, and training for trainers. We find here in the offerings skills that are heavily geared towards the building of the Wuskwatim dam and they are, as called for in the PDA, part of overall pre-project training (PPT).[203] As early as 2005, we see two students taking high school credits with the high school at the local school authority and by 2008 this had broadened out to a full cohort of thirty-three students taking the Mature Student Diploma Program (MSDP) with ATEC; initially with curriculum provided by Red River College.

The role that ATEC plays in programming can vary depending on the partner and the courses offered. Since 2012, ATEC has employed a program director to coordinate programming and write proposals to acquire funding; sometimes ATEC goes through some years without a program director and the duties of such are assigned to members of senior management. Part of the special relationship with UCN is a provision where the funding of the position of program coordinator is shared, roughly 50% from the budgets of ATEC, 50% from that of UCN programming and administration costs from COPSE annual funding, allocated to each of UCN's 12 regional centers. Typically, this has worked out where the program coordinator is hired and employed by ATEC, whereas program coordinators at other regional centers work directly for UCN. The issue of program coordinator at ATEC, the source of the funding to pay the position, and to whom the position reports, are part of the larger complexity that is ATEC's finance and governance. (ATEC would like UCN to fully fund the position of

[203] The Deloitte report separates training at ATEC into pre-project training (PPT) and on-the-job training (OJT).

program coordinator, whereas UCN would like the coordinator to be hired and answerable directly to UCN.)

4.9 Finance and Governance

When Jim Moore, NCN chief from 2008-2012, stepped into the position of Executive Director of ATEC in the summer of 2012, the main building was in the process of being mothballed. With Wuskwatim's three turbines beginning operating and generating hydroelectricity, the purpose of ATEC, in the eyes of Manitoba Hydro, was fulfilled. Jim has described to me how the building was effectively empty, the files and paper records for ATEC from 2006-2012 in various stages of disarray, and two of the employees – Jacqueline "Jackie" Hunter, Finance Comptroller, and Muhammad Azam, Program Director – in the process of packing up and moving on to new employment. Jim proposed that the two stay and become the nucleus for a new ATEC, one promoted to educating local NCN citizens, readying them for employment. Jackie and Muhammad gracefully agreed to stay. This story from an August afternoon marked the start of the second phase of ATEC's operations in Nelson House.

5 The Story of ATEC, post-Wuskwatim

5.1 What is different about ATEC phase one, 2006-2012, and ATEC phase two, 2012 to the present?

In the fall of 2012, ATEC transitioned from being dependent on Manitoba Hydro and the Wuskwatim PDA for its funding and, in that fall semester, revised its operations to a for-profit business model. ATEC would have to create revenue streams that could support existing and new programming, pay staff costs, and ensure coverage of operations and maintenance. To do this, ATEC leadership worked to create partnerships at the local and regional level, beginning with agreements with the local school authority to provide adult learning opportunities in the form of a Mature Student Diploma Program, with the cost of tuition drawn from the authority's post-secondary funding. This base programming was soon augmented by other post-secondary funding, with contract for services drawn up with Red River College and University of Manitoba.

Since 2012 ATEC has partnered with the local school authority, the Nisichawayasi Nehetho Culture and Education Authority (NNCEA) in delivering grade eleven and twelve programming at ATEC. The relationship with NNCEA is one of ATEC's longest lasting and productive partnerships, leading to (at time of writing) eight consecutive adult cohorts graduating from ATEC and NNCEA. The programming began with a core delivery of math, English, science, and computers (locally described as MESC programming) but has since expanded to include offerings in Native Studies and work placements as well.

In cooperation with outside partners, ATEC has since 2012 delivered programming with institutions such as Red River College (RRC), University of Winnipeg (U of W), University of

Manitoba (U of M), University College of the North (UCN), and Assiniboine Community College (ACC). Over the years, programming has been offered in Information Technology Network Protocols (RRC), Water and Waste Water (ACC), Licensed Practical Nurse (UCN), first-year undergraduate arts courses (U of M), Heavy Equipment Operator, and, most recently, Aboriginal Business Diploma programming (in conjunction with Yellowquill College in Winnipeg, and U of W)

5.1.1 Operations as a 'not quite for profit,' for profit business

As operations through the first few years of phase two progressed, the funding model began to take more of a not-quite-for-profit, for-profit business model. ATEC is incorporated as a not-for-profit institution, owned by the band of NCN; the Board of Directors is appointed by and answerable to NCN chief and council. As such, ATEC is not technically a for-profit enterprise, but rather a not-for-profit operation of the NCN band. The argument put to ATEC in the Nordman report was that it could no longer be dependent on outside funds for its operations and maintenance. As a result, ATEC had no core funding and could not rely on band funds to augment shortfalls in revenue or excess costs.

The contradiction in funding and organizational model is not only in the nature of its ownership, namely that it is owned by the band. Also, its unofficial mandates, 'Investing in our People,' and 'Training to Employment,' are service oriented and focused on providing services to those who need it most and are least likely to be able to afford it: residents of the Nelson House reserve. Herein lies the funding paradox where demand for educational and vocational training is needed by many yet at the same time, it is not normally affordable. Interviews with

ATEC students showed that most would not have attained their Grade 12 or higher level of education through ATEC or any other institution had there been costs to themselves or their families. The question remains then, if you cannot charge tuitions to your clients, and you are not supplied core funding from organizations such as Manitoba Hydro, the local band office, or the provincial government, where can you draw your revenues from? As of Spring term 2023 ATEC was solicited by the federal government to supply an application for extended funding, for up to four years of funding for extended operations. The success or non-success of this application will determine if ATEC is partly on its way to a more sustainable funding model.

5.2 Partnerships and Proposals: Neoliberalism in education

The costs for post-secondary education in Canada are largely shared between government funding augmented by individual self-funding (savings, scholarships, bursaries, or student debt). While the Northern Flood Agreement, with different levels of government committing to "the eradication of poverty," or *Wahbung*, where the Manitoba chiefs call for an institute in each community that might "establish a basis of life skills development which encompasses everything from grade school through to employment giving consideration to the family as a total unit," we might find a fully funded model that provides for free tuition and covers training costs for members of the Nelson House community. In the first phase of ATEC, this was what funding permitted, albeit directed largely by the needs of Manitoba Hydro towards training and employment at the Wuskwatim Dam. Following the transition to a post-Wuskwatim funding model, ATEC relied increasingly on its partnerships with local and regional partners, such as the local school authority, UCN, WEM, or NCN HRDA. Outside of these ongoing relationships, ATEC

continues to spend significant time and resources seeking out other partners or sources of program funding from government or other educational institutions. The Nelson House community generally has worked to reduce its dependence on federal social transfers and so more and more local programming relies on growing band revenue or other specific funding opportunities directed for a limited time and purpose.

This need to constantly seek out funding to maintain or augment existing programming is indicative of a larger trend in educational circles specifically, and public-service delivery in Canada more generally, identified by researchers as a proposal-driven economy.[204] The work from Pamela Stern and Peter Hall describes how this proposal writing, what they term 'development proposal writing,' has become extremely important in the daily lives of many [Cobalters, but here read Nelson House].[205] "Proposal making, write Stern and Hall, "has been an overlooked facet of neoliberalism." To put this into a larger historical context, "Beginning in the 1980s," they write:

> The Keynesian economic theories that informed the governing policies of the West following the Great Depression, and especially since the Second World War, gradually gave way to a different set of economic theories and style of government known as neoliberalism… Commonly associated with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, neoliberal forms of governance came to Canada slightly after they appeared in the United States and Britain, as did Keynesianism, and were adapted and shaped by national and provincial particularities.

[204] Pamela Stern, and Peter Hall, *The Proposal Economy: Neoliberal Citizenship in Ontario's Most Historic Town,* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2015).
[205] Ibid.

Most important for Nelson House and ATEC, "Keynesianism and neoliberalism differ sharply in their effects on the ways that individuals experience their rights and obligations as citizens and on the ways that individuals and communities engage with the state."[206]

This breakdown, or change, in economic models during the second half of the 1970s and 1980s was concurrent with the negotiation of the Northern Flood Agreement (an example of Keynesianism at work, an ongoing relationship between First Nations and the Crown) and the Implementation Agreement in the 1990s (an example of a one-time payment followed by and in exchange for the extinguishment of an existing claim). This neoliberal culture of addressing social and economic problems at the individual rather than collective or community level is further complicated by the jurisdictional challenges in education of Aboriginal peoples among the federal, provincial, and local levels of government.

The tendency to address social and educational issues at an individualistic level, as we find in northern Manitoba today, is indicative of trends globally. The change from a social to more business-oriented model of global governance since the 1970s, with the trend away from Keynesian ways of thinking about social problems. These changes undermine the collectivist or reciprocal relationships embedded in the Northern Flood Agreement and *Wahbung.* British historian Ian Kershaw describes these global economic and social changes towards a business, or consumer, model of governance:

> Globalization has greatly increased individualism, a trend under way since the 1970s at the latest. Individual choice in commodities to purchase, in patterns of expenditure, and in lifestyles has widened immeasurably. In many ways (looking aside from the scope for manipulation of consumer tastes and purchases by sophisticated advertising) this is

[206] Stern and Hall, 4. In a future project, I would like to look closely at documents such as *Wahbung* and the NFA and examine them in the context of Canada's practice of Keynesianism compared to the spirit of neoliberalism animating the more recent Implementation Plan and subsequent agreements.

> greatly to be welcomed. But a sense of obligations to a community beyond the individual has weakened in the process. There is no prospect at all that this trend will be reversed. Traditional forms of class society, related to industrial labour and production, barely exist any longer. Nor do the *general* [italics his] levels of poor or mediocre living standards that pushed people together rather than apart. Post-industrial individualism still requires much of the state (especially when things go wrong). At the same time it wants to reduce the role of the state and generally favours cutting taxes rather than subsidizing the less well off through higher levels of taxation.[207]

This expression of thinking, from the Keynesian towards a neo-liberal way of thinking, is generally associated with Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, published in 1962. Friedman's text is accepted as having had a significant impact on economics and government policy making since the middle 1970s.[208]

Returning to the context of Manitoba, the Northern Flood Agreement is one example in the 1970s of three levels of government, the federal, the provincial, and the First Nations themselves, seeking to develop an agreement in which poverty alleviation and social reconstruction are identified as important facets of policy. In the Implementation Agreement, these aspects are largely absent. Substituted in their place is a discourse around business partnerships, and a fixed compensation in the form of the $40 million dollar payout. This is unfortunate, for a model of economic and social investment that allowed for a long-term plan at the national, provincial, and First Nation level might have allowed ATEC, and other similar organizations, to thrive. The findings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), written in a contemporaneous time as the Implementation Agreement of 1997, corroborate the local and collective approach advocated for in the NFA and *Wahbung*:

[207] Ian Kershaw, *Roller Coaster: Europe, 1950-2017*, (London: Allen Lane Publishing, 2018), 555-556.
[208] Kershaw, 273.

> Typically, the problem is defined as Aboriginal individuals not having access to opportunities for employment or business development in the larger Canadian society.

Rather,

> This approach ignores the importance of the collectivity in Aboriginal society (the extended family, the community, the nation) and of rights, institutions, and relationships that are collective in nature. It also overlooks the fact that economic development is the product of the interaction of many factors – health, education, self-worth, functioning communities, stable environments, and so on. Ultimately, measures to support economic development must reach and benefit individuals, but some of the most important steps that need to be taken involve the collectivity – for example, regaining Aboriginal control over decisions that affect their economies, regaining greater ownership and control over the traditional land and resource base, building institutions to support economic development, and having non-Aboriginal society honour and respect the spirt and intent of the treaties, including their economic provisions.[209]

Organizations such as ATEC, if allowed to serve as a labour market intermediary, would go some way in meeting the local needs of First Nations like Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. As the section on Collectivity in RCAP concludes,

> Many Aboriginal individuals will want to or will have little choice but to make their way in the larger Canadian economy – this is especially so for those who migrate to urban areas – but it should not be forgotten that Aboriginal nations want to develop their own economies on their own land and resource base, guided by policies, programs and institutions that they control.[210]

Forcing ATEC to be dependent on a proposal-driven model of funding does not adequately meet the needs of the local. Rather, the present proposl chasing funding model is haphazard and piecemeal, as identified and corroborated by the Nordman Report.

[209] Canada, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Final Report*, Vol.2 (Ottawa, 1996), 750.
[210] *RCAP Final Report, 752.*

Volume 2, Chapter 5 of the *RCAP* on Economic Development supports the model of a locally controlled adult education organization responsive to local and regional economic and social needs. In fact, the RCAP further questions the usefulness of policies and institutions controlled from Ottawa or provincial capitals. In fact, *RCAP* reads that:

> One of the implications of this diversity [between rural and urban populations, sic] is that it is no longer helpful, if it ever was, for economic development policy to be issued from Ottawa or a provincial/ territorial capital and applied uniformly to a range of conditions. This is one of the compelling reasons for locating authority and resources to support economic development in the hands of appropriate Aboriginal institutions at the level of the Aboriginal nation and community.[211]

In the spirit described in *RCAP,* the Northern Flood Agreement and *Wahbung* were written with the intention that community problems in economic and social development would be solved locally, in combination with efforts between Canada, the province of Manitoba, and First Nation communities (in the case of the NFA, the five northern communities; in the case of *Wahbung*, First Nations in Manitoba). *Wahbung* and the Northern Flood Agreement are in agreement on this point. Unfortunately for Aboriginal learners, both before local authority in 1982 and afterwards, the responsibility for primary, secondary, and post-secondary education is the jurisdiction of Manitoba and the other provinces. Though the federal government is responsible for funding First Nations schools on reserve, the government of Canada was not party to the agreement between Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Manitoba Hydro, and the

[211] *RCAP Final Report,* 753. In thinking of the disparities between the North and South, the metropolis and the hinterland, the provincial capital regions and their 'provincial norths', I am drawn to the work of Prof. Ken Coates and associates, who have done such excellent work in outlining the shortcomings of the provincial system in regards to their respective northern hinterlands. Refer to Ken Coates and Bill Morrison, *The Forgotten North: A History of Canada's Provincial Norths*, or, more recently, Ken Coates, Carin Holroyd, and Joelena Leader, "Managing the Forgotten North: Governance Structures and Administrative Operations of Canada's Provincial Norths," *The Northern Review* 38 (2014): 6-54. Of course, the place of Aboriginal peoples in this relationship is of paramount importance.

province. Manitoba Hydro provided funding for ATEC for the duration of the Wuskwatim project construction but no provisions were made for the operation or funding of ATEC after construction was finished. Perhaps NCN should have negotiated for some continuation of funding, post construction, or they should have insisted that the Ministry of Education and province make some commitment to a longer-term relationship with ATEC.

Nonetheless, some provisions were made during the planning for ATEC around a relationship with University College of the North, involving an ephemeral understanding between COPSE, Manitoba Hydro, and NCN Council.[212] ATEC operates as one of twelve regional centres of UCN. There is a joint board of members from both UCN and ATEC executive that guides UCN programming at Nelson House (this joint board is unique to Nelson House; I do not know the other centres have such). As well, there is an annual budget from the province and COPSE, designated as Regional Funds, that funds UCN programming at ATEC. In practice, this has allowed one or two NCN UCN cohorts of students to study each year at Nelson House, typically in College Preparation courses, or carpentry and woodworking pre-employment training. In my observations, the relationship between UCN and ATEC is tenuous and differences in vision and interpretation exist. This is indicative of the ambiguous relationship between NCN and the province regarding aboriginal adult education in the north in that both UCN and ATEC envision themselves as leading things. In practice, this has led to less-than-optimal programming and not helped secure greater levels of provincial funding or support to Nelson House.

[212] As a former employee of ATEC and an ongoing employee of UCN, it is fair to say that understanding the foundation of this relationship between NCN and UCN remains challenging.

5.3 WEM, NCN Human Resources Development Assets, and NCN CAP-CIP

Since 2012, ATEC has sought to expand its partnerships to support adult programming and education in Nelson House. With the expanded partnerships, the types and sources of funding can change significantly (depending on the nature and duration of the partnerships) and help ATEC meet its need for program funding. A partnership with the local school authority, for example, secures funds from the federal government, through the band, to the local school authority, funds earmarked to the band's post-secondary committee, for adult or post-secondary training. Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM) has provided ATEC with assessment inventories and essential-skills-workplace training since 2012. The resources that WEM can bring are partly funded by the province of Manitoba to help potential workers to gain basic or essential skills needed for entering the workforce. As well, WEM-funded training that augmented UCN's pre-carpentry placement programming, providing instruction in essential math, reading, and writing skills. NCN Human Resources Development Assets (HRDA) deriving some of its funds from Indigenous Services Canada, has funded 'Plato' programming, assessment programming in the form of 'Accucess,' provided by firm *edmentum*, and various student supports.[213] NCN's Community Approval Process, and Community Involvement Process (CAP-CIP) has provided funds, applied for semi-annually by ATEC, to augment valuable student services for ATEC students, such as transportation in the form of pickup and drop-off at their

[213] Information on Plato and Accucess services can be found on *edmentum's* website, at https://www.edmentum.com/resources/brochures/plato-courseware-overview. More detail will be given on the student supports provided by HRDA in the next section.

homes, a school lunchroom, and workplace clothing for programs like carpentry and Water/ Waste Water Treatment. ATEC has used funds from CAP-CIP or HRDA to help students complete external school assessments, attend job interviews, go to work conferences, and, in some cases, provided overnight accommodations in Nelson House, Thompson, or Winnipeg in order to ensure students' succeed outside of the classroom. In this regard, the example of ATEC's partnership with NCN HRDA has been especially valuable, as HRDA has been generous in providing student supports and aids to enhance student success rates in ATEC's programming and training.[214]

5.4 Planning, Student Recruitment, and Supports

A key challenge identified by ATEC staff after 2012 was the need to increase retention in programs. At all levels of programming, but especially at the grade 11-12 and post-secondary education levels, far too many students were not making it past the mid-term point in programming. Moreover, students who dropped out of programming mid-term were reapplying for admission to the same or different program in the following academic years. This cycle of admission and failure was interpreted as students being 'set up to fail': this cycle needed to stop.

ATEC staff and management met over several academic semesters to create and refine an approach to help ensure that students succeeded, and were not set up to fail. This has come

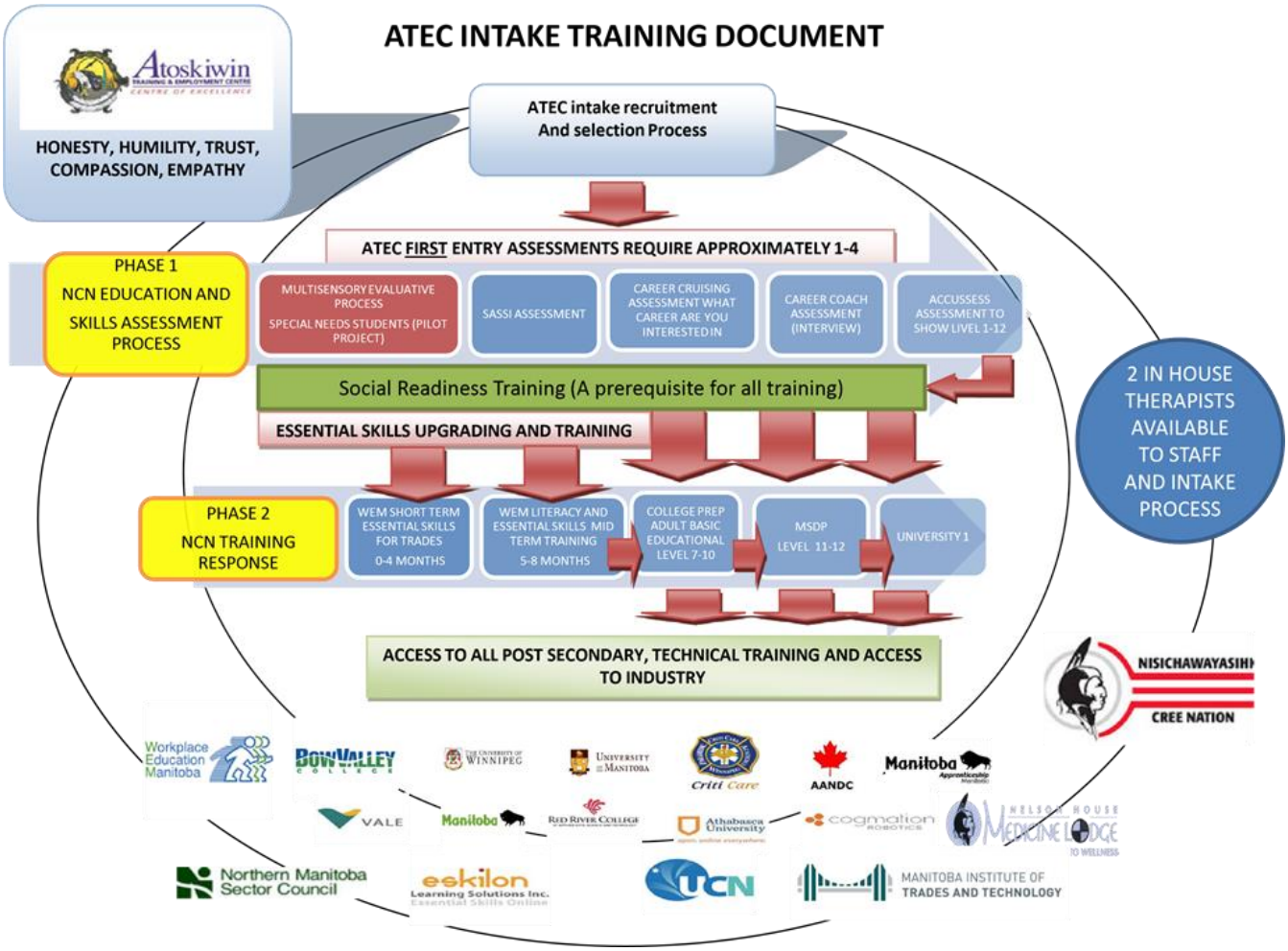
[214] In some cases, HRDA has actually driven students the hour and a half to Thompson to purchase appropriate work clothing for the jobsites that students train at, in carpentry, electrical, or plumbing. Most students interviewed attest that they would never have had the personal funds necessary to make such up-front investments in training.

to be known as ATEC's Intake and Enrolment Process (see Figure 5 below). It is well known that northern and Aboriginal students arrive at formal education with a diverse set of academic, social, economic and even spiritual needs. ATEC's Intake and Enrolment Process thus seeks to take into account students' unique needs and abilities outside of those normally addressed by secondary and post-secondary institutions.

To help students identify their needs and goals, ATEC's intake process worked with the student to develop a learning plan specific to them. Before this, students often enrolled in programs for the sake of taking whatever was on offer, not according to their goals. As well, students were encouraged to identify needs and requirements that might normally be considered auxiliary to their academics, but which very much would influence their likelihood of success. This might include family needs, sources and level of income, types of dependencies and addictions, and past handicaps to performance such as literacy and numeracy levels. Finally, students were asked to identify their goals and aspirations, including the types of employment they desire, and where. In this regard, because many students at ATEC have identified a lack of role models in the north, and the lack of awareness of what types of employment and training opportunities might exist, ATEC sought to address this by providing access to the software program 'Career Cruising' in the Intake process to help them match interests and skills with potential career paths. Beyond Career Cruising, ATEC used diagnostics developed by WEM to determine the level of literacy and numeracy of the prospective student.

In creating ATEC's Intake Process (Figure 5), community partners were engaged to support students as they transitioned to education and training (what is locally referred to as out of 'NEET' (Not Employed, Educated, or Trained). For example, the Nelson House Medicine

Lodge provides a service with a Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI) assessment that helps identify possible addictive behaviors that could impede success in training. ATEC's philosophy of education is to not deny a prospective student access to training, but in circumstances where students have a barrier related to addiction or substance abuse, they can be referred to the Lodge for treatment and readmitted to ATEC programming on successful completion of treatment.[215]



[215] ATEC has significant waiting lists to its programming (most significant in its Mature Student Diploma Program) and students repeatedly performing poorly due to addictions use up program space that might otherwise be made available to new candidates from the community. One local count in 2016 identified over 300 community members dependent on social welfare, most of whom were identified as prospective clients of ATEC's MSDP. Provided the remainder of the community did not age or apply to local welfare, it would take ATEC at least a full decade in the best circumstances to cut a significant notch in this number.

Figure 5 Showing the ATEC Intake training process; this image, designed to be a large wall poster, illustrates ATEC's attempts to make education accessible to everyone.

A second example of ATEC's community partnerships providing support to students is NCN's Human Resources and Assets (HRDA). HRDA have, for the better part of a decade, provided students with subsidized tuition, student allowances ($10/day), and professional tools and clothing. As well, students qualifying for Employment Insurance, on entry to a program, may continue to draw on those resources as well. Students attending classes at ATEC have spots reserved for their small children at the community's daycare, with free access for band members. ATEC provides students living too far away from the building with transportation and a driver to help in getting them to ATEC and the NCN daycare. Transportation is provided on a scheduled system so that students become accustomed to the structure of public transit in an urban environment (many students, on leaving the community, move to a town or city where they will be dependent on city busing). Students who struggle academically because of lack of housing or shelter can request from the executive director to stay at in the local dormitories with reduced (or sometimes free) rates in exchange for work around the building. Behind the ATEC building is an all-season sweat lodge that conducts sweats once a week, open to students, community members, and visitors. ATEC in the past has made the van and driver available to drive students to Winnipeg for provincial assessments in the trades (Water and Wastewater), to Thompson for assessments at UCN, and to Thompson for interviews with prospective employers. ATEC and HRDA have partnered to pay for eight weeks of billeting for students attending UCN's level 1 Carpentry training in Thompson. The costs for these services

can be significant but students and ATEC staff have consistently identified these extra efforts and interventions as being key to their success.

Mental health is another key area of support that students need to succeed. ATEC has often partnered with mental health professionals when they work out of Nelson House. One past model in mental health that has worked involves ATEC reaching out to professionals (typically licensed psychotherapists) contracted by Health Canada to visit and work in Nelson House. These professionals visit NCN for three or four days every third week but are hard pressed to find clinical space at the Nursing Station (resources in space and personnel being constantly stretched to the limit there). ATEC has provided office space in exchange for being accessible to students. This has worked well, and students have commented on the benefits of having someone outside the community to talk to in a safe and accessible space.

5.5 Challenges and Obstacles

ATEC continues to face several structural challenges highlighted in the Nordman Report of 2012 and not properly addressed since. The first the report lists financial challenges around revenue, expenditures, and budgets. Solutions to these financial and budgeting challenges have proven elusive. To cite Nordman,

> ATEC does not operate from a conventional budget. That is to say a budget cast at the beginning of the year against which the above income and expense statements can be arraigned and variances with explanations generated. In the absence of such traditional accounting practices, the ATEC Board is seriously hampered in discharging its oversight responsibilities. [216]

[216] Nordman Report, 9.

The situation noted by Nordman is exacerbated by ATEC's lack of a fully formed governing board during the past few years; in its place, the Executive Director reports directly to Council. There has been some talk at ATEC between the management and the author about creating a new governance model for the centre that better reflects the aspirations of ATEC management to operate ATEC on a collegial model that is less dependent on band politics and Council deliberations while still being responsive to the needs of community leaders and stakeholders.

Record keeping continues to be a problem at ATEC, especially in regards to student records and receipts. The Nordman Report identifies shortfalls in financial record keeping, in the operation of financial systems, and keeping of student records and statistics. This continued to be a problem through the decade ending 2020. As Nordman observes, student data is vital to marketing and costing, and that these types of data are essential to the "life blood of an efficient post-secondary institution". This data could be used to solicit funding from partners, for proposals, or to make an argument for greater investment by government into the organization.

The Nordman Report is an important assessment for understanding the strengths and shortfalls of ATEC, especially as it was done at the conclusion of the Wuskwatim Project, when Hydro funds were disappearing and ATEC/ NCN leadership was seeking to create a new model for training and education. The report was commissioned in part through the auspices of the band council and the government of Manitoba.

5.6 Areas for Growth

ATEC embarked on project after 2017 to create workplace experience opportunities for apprentices. ATEC partnered with the local high school since 2013 to deliver workplace-experience opportunities with local housing contractors and the band's housing authority. As part of this partnership, high school students and instructors had use of the ATEC workshop, sharing that space with ATEC's students enrolled in carpentry, and sometimes electrician and plumbing apprenticeships. In close partnership with Manitoba Apprenticeship Branch, ATEC and Nisichawayasihk Neyo Ohtinwak Collegiate incorporated workplace experience into the programming for students in the High School Apprenticeship Program and the Mature Student Apprenticeship Program (HSAP and MSAP). This allowed students to gain experience in the building industry in Nelson House while still being enrolled in their studies. These work hours in turn are logged as apprenticed hours for students' Blue Books.[217] By engaging in the local housing market, ATEC students were able to create wealth for their families while they pursued their education and training.

In 2016 ATEC started to bid on local housing projects, involving students in the project planning and bidding process, to build housing units in Nelson House for the local NCN housing authority. With the support of local band leadership, ATEC succeeded in building two single-family dwellings over the 2016-2017 school year and has continued to successfully attract building contracts from the local authority. As an extension to the planning and building, ATEC students and staff have pursued alternative avenues of growth in the housing industry,

[217] The Apprenticeship Manitoba Blue Book is used for apprentices to report the number of on-the-job work experience hours that student apprentices have accumulated during a period of work time. Apprenticeship Manitoba uses the book to update an apprentice's progress in their trade.

investing in training to install and maintain solar photovoltaic panels and more energy efficiency measures such as insulating homes.

In addition to the HSAP and MSAP model of programming, ATEC responded to a local business and government need for administrators and office workers. ATEC adapted the pay incentive of the MSAP programming and began placing students enrolled in Mature Student Diploma programming and, more recently the Aboriginal Business Diploma Program, into local internships with the band office, the school authority, the housing authority, and the local development corporation.[218]

By working with the local housing sector and providing internships in local business and government, ATEC played an active role in community development and creating local economic capacity. This type of community economic development aligns with broader discussions in Manitoba as seen in the work of John Loxley, Shauna MacKinnon, Lynne Fernandez, and Lawrence Deane.[219]

[218] The Aboriginal Business Diploma Program is a more recent partnership (starting 2018) with Yellowquill University College and the University of Winnipeg to deliver a post-secondary accreditation to suit new workers to positions locally in band and business administration, of which the local economy is in great need. The credits here are accredited by the University of Winnipeg but the rights to the programming are purchased through Yellowquill. ATEC administers the program and oversees instruction (ATEC hires the instructor). These credits can later be scaffolded into a U. of W. business degree further down the line.

[219] Lynne Fernandez, "Work Life: Time to Give Back to Manitoba's North," Manitoba Research Alliance Publications (September 2016): https://mra-mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/Tolko-OmnitraxFINAL-copy.pdf; and Lawrence Deane, *Under One Roof: Community Economic Development and Housing in the Inner City (Win*nipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2006), and "Nisichawayasihk: A Future Net-Zero First Nation?," Manitoba Research Alliance Publications (April 2020): https://mra-mb.ca/publication/nisichawayasihk-a-future-net-zero-first-nation/

5.7 Student Perspectives and Experiences with ATEC

The experiences and perspectives of learners is critical to understanding the impact of ATEC. Participants were interviewed in the spring term of 2016, the early fall term of 2016, and the late term ending June 2017. In total, about 33 students were interviewed once, five students in the carpentry program interviewed twice, and six staff interviewed once, producing over fifteen hours of interviews. Interviews were conducted with a University of Winnipeg Masters student.[220]

The students interviewed were those in attendance over two weekdays in the fall term of 2017 and again over two days in the spring term of 2018. For those interviewed, the student participants are separated into age categories (20-29, 30-39, or 40 and over), education last completed, whether or not they have dependents, whether or not they possess a driver's license, and the program they were currently enrolled in. The students interviewed on each of the two occasions is indicative of the attendance in any of the proffered programs at each of the two terms and their attendance average. The four programs with students in attendance on the days presented below are the Essential Skills workshop, at this time run with Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM), the Mature Student Diploma, the vocational programming in carpentry and Water/ Waste Water Management, and the business diploma program with Yellowquill.

Looking at the information for the student participants, there is the following:

[220] I want to thank the Manitoba Research Alliance for making available the funds to pay gifts to the participants, to bring the graduate researcher up from Winnipeg to stay in Thompson, and to help pay the costs of transcription. I want to thank all the assistance and hard work of Cassandra Szabo, a graduate of University of Winnipeg's Masters of Development Practice and presently a PhD candidate with Carleton University's political science program.

Students' Gender

Male	22
Female	11

Students' Age Categories

20-29	20
30-39	8
40 and over	2

Education Last Completed

Grade 10 or less	15
Mature Student Diploma	15
Gr.12 diploma	3

Program Enrolled In

Essential Skills	1
Mature Student Diploma	13
Trades (Carpentry, Water and Waste Water)	14
Academic (Business Diploma Program)	5

With Dependents

Yes	13
No	20

Driver's License Attainment

Yes	20
No	13

Looking at the data, a few observations came out. The inequality of gender in enrollment saw the greatest disparity in the trades training and not the academic. The majority of those with

driver's licenses were, not surprisingly because of the need to drive between various work sites, those enrolled in the trades programming.

The interview guide was developed in consultation with ATEC leadership. The goal was to solicit the experiences of students, their engagement with ATEC programming and support structures, and get a more complete understanding of how ATEC has affected their social and personal well-being and their experiences in training and employment. The data from the interviews was coded for important demographic features, such as age, gender, past educational attainment, previous employment history.

In assessing the comments and feedback from students and staff interviews, the data from students have been organized into themes that align with the original questions. I have included selected quotes from the interviews to illustrate the flavour of the responses.

Interview guide:

1) What programs so far have you been involved in?
2) What kinds of jobs have you had in the North?
3) What kind of ATEC supports have you used, such as the allowances, transportation, etc.?
4) Are there supports ATEC should have?
5) When you are done your training where do you expect to work?
6) Before you started at ATEC, how would you describe your wellbeing?
7) Have you had any jobs as a result of the Wuskwatim project, or Hydro generally?
8) Has access to housing had an impact on you?
9) Has access to food been an issue for you?
10) What do you think ATEC is doing well?
11) What could ATEC be doing better?
12) Is there anything else you want to say about ATEC?

The overall findings from the interviews, some of the students having attended ATEC over a period of three years, attest to the important role that ATEC programming and staff have played in the lives of NCN members. Themes from the interviews substantiate that ATEC is doing an excellent job preparing students for employment, that ATEC's ability to provide financial and other supports outside of the classroom is essential to success, and that the holistic aspect of the curriculum, and ATEC's perseverance in supporting students from the moment of acceptance to programming on through to employment and afterwards, is critical to students succeeding. As well, ATEC's strategy to be always open to students, and helping them cope with addictions, crises, and various 'life situations' in creative and meaningful ways, is crucial to students' believing that ATEC is always there for them and that, in the long run, they can overcome systemic barriers and join the labour market in a way that is meaningful to them and their families.

5.7.1 Background of Participants

Students were asked about their program and learning pathways. Their answers highlight that there is a breadth of programming offered at ATEC that enables citizens of NCN to pursue diverse educational opportunities that might not have previously occurred to them. This breadth and diversity of programming opened new doors. Participant answers represented this breadth in ATEC's programming since 2015. There are also several educational pathways that students can follow. Some interviewees began learning workplace skills at ATEC through the Workplace Education Manitoba-sponsored program. Other participants began their return to

education at the Grade Eleven level, enrolling in ATEC's Mature Student Diploma Program.[221] Other participants had previously completed high school and entered ATEC to pursue vocational or academic training. Some participants had been involved in Water and Wastewater Management, or in carpentry, electrical, or plumbing apprenticeships. Through programming in conjunction with University of Manitoba or University College of the North, some participants pursued college preparatory courses or first-and second-year academic courses, ranging through Aboriginal Studies, Canadian History, and Introduction to Cree. Most recently, participants have had opportunity to engage in a new program at ATEC, the Aboriginal Business Management Diploma, in partnership with the University of Winnipeg and Yellowquill College.

5.7.2 Prior Employment and Training in the North

[221] The funding for this program is through a partnership with the local education authority, the Nisichawayasi Nehetho Culture and Education Authority Inc. Funds are identified by the authority and administered by the band's Post-Secondary Education Committee.

Interviewer: What level of income have you gotten, has it been enough for yourself, where does it come from?

Participant: Right now I'm on EI and I have 5 dependents and its not really cutting it so I'm in the process of looking for a job right now, the job I had before I was working at the fitness center and I was making 30,000 and that didn't even cut it, but other than that I've been employed my whole life, I've worked for everything I've owned, I believe in working. I've been on welfare on and off for 4 years because there is no employment around unless I leave the community to go find a job but I'm not interested in that because my kids are young. I think Nelson House just needs more employment and training, they just need more spots. Other than that it's just trying to scrape by on one income because my common law is at home with the kids because of daycare not many opening there either. It's pretty rough but we make it.

Interview with a student, Sept. 2017 (007).

A minority of participants had previous employment or post-secondary training experience. Some participants even had worked at the Wuskwatim dam project or for Manitoba Hydro more generally, but the great majority of clients at ATEC after 2012 have little experience or exposure to Manitoba Hydro as an employer or source of training opportunity. Some participants' experiences at ATEC did predate the completion of the dam and 2012. Even fewer participants also had previous work experience with VALE, the mining company in Thompson. A greater number of older or more experienced students with previous work experience had worked with the local band in various capacities, such as education assistant with the school authority, child worker with the local CFS, or local band enforcement, as examples. The majority of younger participants, however, depended previously on social welfare transfers and child payments in lieu of earned income through wages.

Interviewer: [As an] a MSDP graduate, can you talk a bit about your time here and the program you were in.

Participant: The program was 2014-2015 it was MSDP, which I enjoyed. The instructors were nice and helpful and brought a lot of opportunities. I was presented with the option to go work at Vale [the mine in Thompson] or do the apprenticeship program and I chose Vale because I wanted to make some money, other than that it was a good experience. I worked at Vale for 6 weeks which was helpful, and got to learn what Vale was about

Interviewer: So you got to work at Vale because of ATEC?

Participant: Yeah ATEC sponsored, I was going to school with ATEC so after the program I got the GED and so that's where I stood from there.

Interviewer: What have you been doing since?

Participant: I've been from job to job trying to gain experience, from Vale I worked like, I came to Nelson House working with Meetah [local building supplier], I just asked for a lay off so I could go to school.

Interview with a student, April 2018 (023).

5.7.3 ATEC Supports and Allowances

The majority of participants appreciated the student supports they received from ATEC. For those students who lacked space to study, ATEC has quiet places to read and a computer lab to research and write. The building has dorm rooms and students needing lodging have been able to make arrangements to use these in exchange for a modest fee or for work around the building. A day dare is available free of cost to students enrolled in ATEC programming, hosted within the Family Wellness facilities in the community. The arrangement with Family Wellness in setting aside spots at the daycare for ATEC students has been important in making programming more accessible for parents of young children and, especially, for single parents

ATEC typically has a driver who can pick up and drop off students needing transport, and in the past ATEC has hosted a kitchen where food is sold in the morning or during the lunch period.

Participant: Yeah I guess it's a little bit of everything, you get a little more cash for going to school with the allowance and still get your welfare so you basically get paid to go to school, I don't know why people give up on this its free education. Just recently I was getting 12.50 for my wages until I got my blue book signed.

Interviewer: Is the level of income enough for you to provide for yourself?

Participant: Yeah 19$ just as an apprentice has been good money, and then each level you get more money, so it has been good.

Interview with a student, June 2017 (008).

One of the most common supports available to students are student allowances, paying $10.00 a day. Students who have worked before they enrol may also apply and collect employment insurance while they are at school. As well, students working as apprentices receive apprenticeship pay rates while working and accruing employment hours for their Blue Books. ATEC students interning with local partners, such as the Band Office, the local Meetah, or the local school authority also receive income during the hours they intern. One of ATEC's greatest assets, and the one often mentioned by ATEC valedictorians at the end of each school year is the school retention worker or, as students term it, a 'Flossy mom'.[222] This is a dedicated staff member who coaches students, visits them when they do not attend class, or

[222] A popular recipient of valedictorian shout-outs is Florence Linklater (known to colleagues and students as 'Flossy'); another great asset in coaching students at ATEC is Jaqueline Hunter. The value that such ATEC colleagues bring to enhance retention and student academic success cannot be underestimated. As well, tutors in math such as Stanley Linklater have received much credit and applause from students.

scolds them if they arrive late to an exam. This is an essential service that sets up students for success.

Interviewer: What ATEC supports have you used, which ones do you think work well which ones do not?

Participant: when I was going to school I used the supports like the cafeteria and the allowance was nice but I personally don't think there should be an allowance, I hear people brag that they are being paid to go to school but education should be attained and It shouldn't be something you have to be coaxed to do, but that's just me everyone else thinks differently, that was definitely not my motivator for me I wanted to learn and better myself.

Interviewer: Why do you think the allowance is so important for some students?

Participant: just because of the employment rate a lot of students are on welfare it is a really big struggle to get that education and especially when you don't have that motivation and it helps put food on the table for people, I mostly used it for the cafeteria. The driver was good too when he had a nice attitude but it depended on the day.

Interview with a student, Sept. 2017 (005).

5.7.4 ATEC and the Concept of Wellbeing

> *Interviewer: Before you started at ATEC, how would you describe your wellbeing?*
>
> *Participant: It wasn't too good before but now it has come up quite a bit.*
>
> *Interviewer: How has your sense of wellbeing changed and why?*
>
> *Participant: It has changed in a positive way, why? I'm not sure?*
>
> *Interviewer: Is it because more money, more self-esteem, or things like that?*
>
> *Participant: Yeah, all of that, I make more money and have a better lease on life, I'm happier.*
>
> *Interview with a student, June 2017 (004).*

ATEC staff and management focus on wellbeing as a key element of programming and education at ATEC. Asking about this in the interviews was important to assess how, if, or why ATEC was having a holistic effect on students as opposed to results that were academic or vocational. Participants reported an increased sense of wellbeing, including increased sense of health, self-esteem, and social awareness. Many participants reported a correlation between their success as students and as parents and community members. In tandem with in-class, academic programming, ATEC exposed students to a program called 'Social Readiness,' typically at the beginning of a program, that introduced students a more holistic, emotional and, indeed, spiritual, method of understanding self. As well, students learn time management, budgeting for school, and healthy eating and living, and the importance of local community involvement and volunteering. The element of making a living wage, or contributing to the home economy,

very often provided participants with a sense of self-worth as well.

Interviewer: Before you started at ATEC, how would you describe your wellbeing?

Participant: It was god-awful actually; I was going through some major stuff, and I didn't know how to handle it so I figured I would go to school to keep my mind off of it until I figured something out. But now my wellbeing is good: I'm healthy, I eat well, I exercise.

Interviewer: So, you think being at ATEC has helped?

Participant: Yeah, it keeps me from doing nothing just sitting around collecting welfare, now I feel smart when I first started, I felt dense because I didn't know any of the stuff they were doing, but it made me feel better getting knowledge.

Interview with a student, June 2017 (007).

Participants said they learned skills they could use elsewhere outside of the ATEC community. Importantly, students spoke of ATEC's programming and regimen as important preparation for transferring their skills and experience to other environments, such as employment in Thompson or further schooling in Winnipeg.

Participant: I wasn't a fan [of attending school in Nelson House] because I wanted to leave as soon as possible, so it was frustrating for me because I was told if we didn't go to ATEC we wouldn't get other sponsorship [in the past, the Band has sometimes required that students pursue of a year of programming at ATEC before they are allowed to go on to sponsorship at other institutions]. It was kind of, it seemed almost like you have to do this on our terms in order to be sponsored and I felt like we should just use our high school accomplishments speak for us, but looking back on it now I think what they did was good because had I not done it I wouldn't have been ready for the workload I was going into so going through the university one definitely helped me prepare for what I was getting myself into with university.

Interviewer: So, you think if you hadn't of taken the U1 [University One, a model of programming where students are exposed to university preparatory courses before taking academic credits] here you wouldn't be succeeding now?

Participant: Yeah, there are a lot of supports and resources, but I had no idea university would be the way it is, I thought it would be a cake walk but it is definitely not, and even University One was difficult. The first year I had here was nothing compared to the first year I had in Alberta because I was in a new environment it was a melting pot of new things, but I would say that U1 prepared me for sure, and the support I had from [my instructor] *and his wife was incredible, he's always checking up and seeing how I'm doing and seeing what I'm doing and sometimes he even knows before I tell him what I'm doing, he keeps tabs on his students and it shows he cares and enjoys what he's doing and I love those professors because you learn the most from them.*

Interviewer: So, you would say your wellbeing is better after?

Participant: Yeah, about halfway through I started noticing like oh this is for real

It is important to recognise the work that local aboriginal educational institutions do in the economic and social environments that make up living in Nelson House. It can sometimes be difficult for citizens of NCN to transition from life and work on Reserve. In the interviews participants were asked to making parting remarks on their reflections on ATEC and one participant's poignant comments stand out for capturing many of the overall themes found in

the interviews. This participant's remarks are below and provide an interesting perspective from one who had attended ATEC previously but had gone on to pursue additional opportunities out of the community and out of province. We will finish with these last thoughts:

Interviewer: is there anything you think ATEC could be doing better?

Participant: Not personally no, not for me, I haven't paid too much attention to it, I know they have had a lot of growth and a lot more programs opening up and a lot more students coming in so I think if they keep doing what they are doing then I don't think there are any issues.

One other thing I would like to see is more discussion on mental health, depression and anxiety and the impact that can have on people when they are going to school, I think having more resources readily available, the counselor is only here for 3 days so I think having a more substantial presence would help to end the stigma a bit of mental illness. I also think more diverse training, outside of just the trades, there are a lot of students who want culinary arts or stylist training and makeup school and beauty technicians and to let people know they are fostering everyone's dreams not just trades. Or things like music, I know there are a lot of creative kids that need different things for us left brained kids. I would have loved to see that in high school I would have been more excited to come here because there was an expectation for me to get into the trades. More training on things that happen outside of Nelson House; I've talked to people who don't know about Charlottesville or Syria, so I would like to have people know what's going on outside of NCN. I had to go outside of NCN to see it, the whole world opens up when you leave. Having those discussions would better prepare people who want to leave, because it's scary out there.

Even training on racism and internalized racism is important; when I left NCN I left a lot of who I was behind and that's because I didn't want to become the stereotypical Indian and when I first go to Calgary there were people who said I wouldn't make it because I'm Indigenous. Even here there are a lot of people who kind of try to pull down those that are trying to better themselves, and that also pushed me out, I always stand out against injustice and I see a lot of pulling each other down, I'm thankful it hasn't happened to me but it's happened to a lot of people like my parents where they would let people pull them back in and that inspired me to get out of here, people aren't encouraging or motivating each other.

Since I have turned 18 I haven't gotten one welfare check because that's been a goal of mine, and I would like to see more of that with the youth, and that's what I would come back to do to instil that knowledge in the youth.

Interviewer: Would you say overall education and training has changed your life?

Participant: Oh definitely, its opened up a lot more doors, I've learned a lot about the career I'm going into, I thought I would be a nurse, and then I discovered I'm iffy around blood and then went to sociology so I switched to child studies and you know just beyond education and being in university just being in Calgary and being outside of Manitoba has given me so many opportunities, I sit on the board of two committee's and I do a lot of activist work and I brought the red dress campaign to my university, so I have done a lot with my life since I've left NCN. I don't talk about it to her much because people roll their eyes and think I'm all that but I'm proud of it, and it's because of the education I've received and the supports from ATEC and the education authority.

Interview with a student, Sept. 2017 (005).

5.8 Chapter Conclusions

This chapter focuses on the programming and describes some of the outcomes and experiences animating ATEC as an organization. Providing education, both secondary and post-secondary, academic and vocational, is an important role much sought by community members and band leadership. The need for education and training in Manitoba's North is there, and the youth and potential for labour is there, but there needs to be will on the part of local, provincial and federal levels of government to support funding and programming in a long-term, sustainable and meaningful way.

6 Concluding Thoughts

Situating oneself in the analysis and writing of any discourse is an important exercise. In reflecting on the words written so far here, and in thinking back to conversations with friends and colleagues, students and staff, at ATEC and in Nelson House, the element that sparks for me the most interest and sympathy with Rocky Cree, or Nehetho, history is the space that water consumes in the narrative. This relationship with water and rivers is one that reverberates in my own family's historical narrative. In the past, studying Cree history with my students in northern Manitoba, I have tried to relate their own experiences to their past but also relate the teaching to my own life's context.

In the earlier part of the dissertation, I tried to situate Rocky Cree history into or, in the case of mapping, onto the geography of northern Manitoba. When you speak with Elders and citizens of NCN, you quickly learn as I did that theirs is a history of water and, especially, of rivers.

6.1 The Making of a Working Class

The experiences of people on the ground, in an historical context, is bounded by time and place. This dissertation has attempted to identify the needs and the historical context of a growing body of people in need of help to take part in a global and competitive labour market on their own terms. For many inhabitants of Manitoba's north to a modern labour economy in need of skilled and educated workers and citizens the transition has been a troubled one. At the signing of Adhesion in 1908, the people of the Nisichawayasi were already transitioning to

an economy based on a fur trade that was in the process of dying, if not already dead.[223] The introduction of mining to NCN territory in the 1950s, with INCO building a mine that would become the second largest nickel-producing operation in the world, did little to incorporate Cree into the local mining economy or its supporting industries. The story of the coming of hydro-electric generation to northern Manitoba is a well-chronicled one, with many observers noting the damage done to Aboriginal communities in the north, including those of the Northern Flood Committee.[224] The building of the Wuskwatim Dam Project and the construction of ATEC to meet the need of engaging local Aboriginal workers in the development, is the latest in a long history of engagement of native peoples with water and their natural landscape.

6.2 The Making of a Working Class: Northern Indigenous Workers not like any Others

The tendency in the neo-liberal context of the twenty-first century is to treat all workers as equal and independent economic variables in a larger global economic machine. One is reminded of earlier criticisms of that ultimate progenitor of neoliberal policy, Margaret Thatcher, that she acted "'as a nineteenth-century liberal,' a doctrinaire free-marketeer who wished to reduce the subtleties of human society to the dry facts of a balance sheet."[225] Rather

[223] Read Frank Tough's text on the fur trade in northern Manitoba, *"As Their Natural Resources Fail": Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

[224] The Northern Flood Agreement lists the communities involved as, 'the Indian bands of Nelson House, Norway House, Cross Lake, Split Lake and York Factory.' For a critical commentary on the effects of hydro development on northern Manitoba, see the work of Peter Kulchyski, Stefane McLachlan, Ramona Neckoway, and the many projects of the Manitoba research group, Wa Na Ski Tan.

[225] Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, Vol.2 (New York: Penguin Books, 2016): 5; these criticisms were not solely those of British Labour and radical left. In this case, the criticism of Thatcher's economic

than seeing prospective workers as free-floating historical actors working under equal conditions within a free labour market, history suggests in the case of northern Manitoba that communities and people prosper and suffer depending on the historical social, cultural, and economic conditions in which they find themselves. If you listen to students at ATEC and members of the larger NCN community, the historical legacy of colonialism, of Residential Schools, of the impact of hydro development on the surrounding environment, of general impoverishment due to geographical and social remoteness from Winnipeg, is apparent in conversations and collective experiences.

The title of this section, and suggested in the section previous, introduces a concept or narrative not often used in addressing work in Canada and Aboriginal experience, but one which I have inherited from my earlier readings and has influenced my interpreting of the world. Edward Thompson, in the post-war period, attempted to conceptualize a working-class experience that was situated in time and place, but also influenced by historical factors specific to it. Like the sheepherders and cottagers of northern England in the 1840s, the communities of northern Manitoba reacted to, and were acted upon, by historical forces unique to it over the course of the last one hundred years. What I suggest here is that what emerged, and may be unique to NCN and the greater Aboriginal experience in that it is emerging still, is an experience that is based not solely of race, but on class as well. This interpretation, that the

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policy, in the early 1980s, came from her party's Tory, Conservative members. Those familiar with economic policy in the Thatcher era will find echoes of such policy in the Canadian context, federally and provincially, from the policy of Brian Mulroney and Mike Harris, through to Paul Martin and Stephen Harper, and most recently in the last two terms of Brian Pallister's Manitoba. It seems, on analysis of the Northern Flood Agreement, that economic and social policy in Manitoba was still inspired by the collective security discourse typical of post-war Keynesianism; the failure of the NFA implementation in the late 1970s and 1980s would be due to the rise of its Thatcherite, neoliberal replacement, what Margaret Thatcher and her advisers described in the early 1980s as 'popular capitalism.' For a description of popular capitalism, read Moore.

NCN experience, as influenced by historical experiences that are rooted in understandings in race/class intersection, requires a unique approach to training and work in northern Manitoba, this need is not adequately met through the individualistic neoliberal model that currently dominates public policy and informs programs and their funding.

My understanding of class and 'situatedness,'[226] which is an important historical method of understanding time, place, and experience, is heavily tempered by my reading of Edward Thompson and helps me, as a non-Aboriginal Canadian, understand the arguments and vision set forward in key historical documents, such as *Wahbung*. What Thompson says about class, and how he makes it most understandable for the average layperson, and the definition of which is the basis of his observations in his ground-breaking book, *The Making of the English Working-Class,* is this. I will cite in full:

> If we remember that class is a relationship, and not a thing, we… [must remember] that "It" does not exist, either to have an ideal interest or consciousness, or to lie as a patient on the Adjustor's table. Nor can we turn matters upon their heads, as has been done by one authority who (in a study of class obsessively concerned with methodology, to the exclusion of the examination of a single real class situation in a real historical context) has informed us:
>
> > Classes are based on the differences in legitimate power associated with certain positions, i.e. on the structure of social roles with respect to their authority expectation. An individual becomes a member of a class by playing a social role relevant from the point of view of authority… He belongs to a class because he occupies a position in a social organization; i.e. class membership is derived from the incumbency of a social role.
>
> The question, of course, is how the individual got to be in this "social role", and how the particular social organization (with its property-rights and structure of authority) got to be there. And these are historical questions. If we stop history at a given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals, with a multitude of

[226] The term 'situatedness' used here is in reference to E.P. Thompson's use of such, in his seminal text *The Making of the English Working-Class* (London: Vintage Press, 1966).

> experiences. But if watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition.[227]

The point made here and illustrated in the second chapter of this thesis is the unique situation created by geographic and historical forces to create a population of workers and citizens in northern Manitoba. To use a phrase often cited in the context of the Cree in western Canada, their peoples have lived there 'so long as the rivers flow'. What has emerged in northern Manitoba is a number of First Nations communities that have developed their own cultures and distinct languages; in the past one hundred years of Treaty these peoples have had to adapt to Canada's changing industrial and economic landscape while negotiating a relationship with the Crown and with settler society, and not necessarily negotiating from a position of strength (at least with regard to control of capital, the creation of federal or provincial policy, or the administration and implementation of education in regards to their own people.) What has emerged in the north is partly a result of its history and partly an effect of colonial and Canadian education policy: we live in a region with one of the youngest demographics in all of Canada, yet amongst a population that is the least educated and least prepared to succeed in a modern labour market.

To end this section in reflection, why did I not marry Edward Thompson into this discourse earlier in the dissertation? In situating an understanding of employment and work onto the geography and culture that is dominant in northern Manitoba, I have attempted to pay a respect to the work and spirit of E.P. Thompson. It is important to understand work and

[227] Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 11.

living in a local and regional context, and our clumsy attempts to 'grow a working class' in a late twentieth-century context has been no easier, and certainly no kinder, than that experienced in early nineteenth century industrializing England. Taking a thesis that is manifestly British, European and classical, namely that of the making of a working class, and synthesizing it through a Canadian and Aboriginal lens, and then reconciling it with Manitoban and Nehetho historical experience, would require an accomplished and refined hand indeed. Of course, a working class and a labour force are not commensurate either; the interplay of participation, collaboration, resistance, and co-optation, the social forces of family and band, government and company, with economic forces of traditional employment, social payment dependency, hydro-electric development and a liberal market regime, with the added geographic and cultural inputs of our northern Manitoban communities, all make for a very interesting and complex analysis. Perhaps that is a project for a future time.[228]

It is important to note the complexity here of the intersection of working class and Indigeneity. Eric Kojola's article "Indigeneity, gender and class in decision-making about risks from resources extraction" examines the interplay of these concepts in resource extraction, in this case mineral mines, in Northern Minnesota.[229] Amongst this intersection there are, what he calls, "differential impacts" across gender, Indigeneity, and class. He describes these

[228] There are interesting explorations into working-class experiences in different contexts: that of Hawaii, a book review by Alexander Saxton, "The Making of the Hawaiian Working Class," *Reviews in American History* (September 1984)12(3): 414-418; and in America, a gendered account, written by Ava Baron, "Women and the Making of the American Working Class: A Study of the Proletarianization of Printers," *Review of Radical Political Economics* (Sept. 1982) 14(3): 23-42.

[229] Erik Kojola, "Indigeneity, gender and class in decision-making about risks from resources extraction," *Environmental Sociology* (2018), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Erik-Kojola-2/publication/322531681_Indigeneity_gender_and_class_in_decision-making_about_risks_from_resource_extraction/links/63dae41d64fc86063805b008/Indigeneity-gender-and-class-in-decision-making-about-risks-from-resource-extraction.pdf

concepts as "social locations" eliciting different experiences and ways of understanding, and these notions are useful in understanding power dynamics and social formations in society and economy.[230]

6.3 The Rebirth of Canada's Indians

To shift the focus lastly from one writer in the 1960s England, Edward Thompson, to another more situated in western Canada and Aboriginal history, I want to discuss briefly Harold Cardinal. Harold Cardinal committed thirty-three pages of his seminal text, *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians* (1977) to education. Ultimately, the arguments found through this dissertation show that education and economic development are closely linked and these forces need to be controlled, or at least influenced, by the historical subjects upon whom they are acting. Cardinal connects education and economics in the following way:

> Many of our people have expressed fear of Indian control of Indian education. They ask legitimate questions: Why is Indian control necessary? Would we control just our reserve schools, or would we have control over schools our children go to off the reserve? What really is the function of education? How does that function relate to our needs and our development? What are the options and alternatives? How does education relate to economic development? Obviously, much work remains to be done on both sides to clear up such questions. Problems have surfaced that were not obvious when the policy was announced.
>
> Education is a complex business and the machinery to run it is intricate and utterly foreign to most of our people. Problems are multiplied because we are dealing with a function both federal and provincial. If our people really want to take over education, they must accept that they themselves have a long hard learning period ahead.
>
> Let's make it entirely clear that we are not talking about wasting our money or anyone else's money just to prove that we can control educational facilities or school boards. We are, however, *vitally interested in exploring the practical relationship between education and economic development* (emphasis mine).[231]

[230] Kojola,8.
[231] Harold Cardinal, *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians* (Alberta: Hurtig Publishers, 1977), 56.

In the end, Cardinal observes both a dearth of control of education and economic development, and a dearth of opportunity in Canada's Aboriginal communities. What can an organization like ATEC do to address such issues? With small steps, like control of an ATEC, a community like NCN can address big issues. As Cardinal fumed, so can we both observe and address:

> Sure, Ottawa and the provincial capitals, through the departments of manpower, put a lot of money into making certain that sufficient supplies of trained labour are on hand for big private enterprise development projects [or Crown projects, such as hydro-electric megaprojects, sic]. . . Ottawa and Edmonton [read, Winnipeg] supply the funding for apprentice journeyman programs to fill Syncrude's [read, Manitoba Hydro's] indicated need. No other training is being promoted. Management training for our people to get into the business community? Nothing available for that. As for the journeyman apprenticeship training, that is denied to our people too, *because they don't have the educational or skill levels that are a prerequisite for such training* [emphasis mine]. No priority is given to adult education or adult upgrading that would enable our people to qualify.

To end,

> The facts are we don't get the jobs, we don't get the training, we don't get the resources to help us help ourselves. It's a damned lie to say that we are a pluralistic society that thrives to give opportunities to all the people to develop on their own terms so that we can all have a beautiful Canada to live in. That's not what is happening *where it counts most* [emphasis mine].[232]

Where it counts most, for Cardinal, is in communities where Aboriginal peoples live, a significant subset of these being the communities that serve as home to Canada's more than 630 First Nations; Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation is one of these communities that benefits from an organization like ATEC that can help the address the need for capacity building and the development of the community's education and economic means. For ATEC, this means being allowed to develop and sustain relations in the community with other institutions that can help

[232] Cardinal, 55.

grow the community, such as Band Council, Housing, Human Resources Development Authority, and the band's Development Office.

In *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians*, Cardinal discusses then Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien's acceptance of the general notion of, what Cardinal notes as, the *Cultural Education Centre*. These centres, as introduced in the National Indian Brotherhood's policy paper of 1972, *Indian Control of Indian Education,* would go some way to addressing the needs of education for Aboriginal peoples as envisioned by Cardinal, the National Brotherhood of Indians (the precursor of the Assembly of First Nations), and set out by the Manitoba chiefs in *Wahbung*:

> By learning ways to apply traditional beliefs, values and skills to survival in modern society, and by learning modern skills and behaviours needed to participate in the benefits of economic and social development, the Indian will gain self-confidence and independence. The Cultural Education Centre will be designed to meet these needs and to make up for deficiencies in other educational programs.[233]

In the context of the fallout from the original white paper, the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969*, reasons for Chretien's and the federal government's support of such, for a Cultural Education Centre servicing First Nations in First Nations, run by First Nations, as a possible antidote to past government policy, seems obvious from our vantage point.

[233] Cardinal, 73-74.

6.4 Indian Control of Indian Education:

The policy paper of the National Indian Brotherhood, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, was released in 1972. It too, like *Wahbung* and Harold Cardinal's text, made recommendations that seem to be in the spirit of the original Northern Flood Agreement but at odds with later iterations of education institutes in the North (i.e., Limestone Training Centre, ATEC, UCN). In its section on Programs, the paper described what Aboriginal leaders envisioned for adult Aboriginal education in Canada. What is described goes some way to define the function that ATEC does or attempts to perform:

> **Vocational Training:**
>
> A new approach to qualifications for many jobs is needed, as well as a change in academic/vocational courses to meet new requirements. In many cases where these jobs are within the Indian community, job specifications should be set by the Indian people, and the training itself should be supervised by the local Education Authority, which is established and/ or recognized by the Band or Bands involved.
>
> Some of these positions might include teachers, counsellors, social workers, probation offices, parole officers, community development workers.
>
> On a wider scale, responsible efforts must be made to encourage business and industry to open up jobs for Indian people. Job training should correspond to job opportunity and the economic reality.
>
> The local Band Education Authority should be in a position to deal directly with Canada Manpower and other training institutions.
>
> **Adult Education:**
>
> Adult education programs, properly conducted can be a means for many Indians to find economic security and self-fulfillment.
>
> If the native language is spoken in the community then native instructors should be trained and employed to teach these adult courses. Grade advancement classes should be offered on and off the reserves, as well as basic literacy courses for those desiring to speak, read and write English. Basic oral English programs are also needed. Other adult programs which should be provided as the need demands, might include: business management, consumer-education, leadership training, administration, human

relations, family education, health, budgeting, cooking, sewing, crafts, Indian art and culture, etc.

Post-Secondary Education:

Considering the great need there is for professional people in Indian communities, every effort should be made to encourage and assist Indian students to succeed in post-secondary studies.

Encouragement should take the form of recruiting programs directed to providing information to students desiring to enter professions such as: nursing, teaching, counselling, law medicine, engineering, etc. Entrance requirements, pre-university programs, counselling and tutoring services, course requirements, are some factors which influence how far a student can progress. He would be further encouraged if the Indian language is recognized for the second language requirement and a native studies program has a respected place in the curriculum.

Considering the tremendous educational disadvantages of Indian people, present rigid entrance requirements to universities, colleges, etc., must be adjusted to allow entrance on the basis of ability, aptitude, intelligence, diligence and maturity.

Assistance should take the form of generous federal financial support eliminating the difficulty and uncertainty which now accompanies a student's decision to continue on for higher education. . . Those who have the motivation and talent to do post-graduate studies, should receive total financial assistance. Since it will be many years before the number of candidates for professional training exceeds the demand for trained professionals, each request for financial assistance to do post-secondary or post-graduate studies should be judged on its own merits, and not be general administrative directives.[234]

We find here in the guidance provided in the NIB policy paper many of the directives driving ATEC operations. Granted, many of the recommendations called for by the paper have been folded into existing services of the province's universities in the last decade. What is missing, though, are services available on-site, in the communities themselves. What is more, many of these services, be they provided by UCN, University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, Red

[234] National Indian Brotherhood, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, Policy Paper presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Affairs (1972), 12-14.

River College, do not meet the fundamental requirement of *Wahbung* and the other foundational documents, and that is the control and investment of the Aboriginal communities themselves.[235]

6.5 Second Thoughts? Neoliberalism and Aboriginal Economic Policy:

In concluding thoughts, we want to point to the clear connection of history and culture, geography, education and economic development. These different facets form a very complicated socio-economic picture that makes each and every First Nation community in Canada unique. There are many historical and geographic reasons: place, time, effects of imperial and national colonial policy, present day socio-economic conditions, advocating that organizational structures similar to that of ATEC, locally controlled, reactive to local economic and social conditions, are built and funded. Ideally, such organizations would form the connection between local and regional economies of scale, connecting the periphery with the metropole in a meaningful way, connecting industries, universities and colleges, and providing local Aboriginal peoples with opportunities for employment and mentoring.[236] There is a significant literature, though, advocating different approaches to remedying longstanding Aboriginal problems. Tom Flanagan, in his seminal 2005 *First Nations? Second Thoughts* is one

[235] Granted, here could be a conversation on the earliest iteration of First Nations University, based on the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College associated with the University of Regina. It would be interesting to analyse how this organization fits into the model advocated for by *Wahbung*. It is enough here to note that schools like that at Regina are significantly different in operation and scope than ATEC; geo-proximity to a large urban centre is one of those important differences.

[236] I am arguing from a position that building and maintaining services and opportunities only in the centre, purely for the sake of economies of scale, is not sustainable in a post-industrial society. Manitoba seems to be an extreme example, with Winnipeg dominating the remainder of the province in availability of services and centralization of investment in resources, thereby stimulating further changes in demographics benefiting the centre. Similar concerns could be voiced in other Canadian regions as well.

such example. Flanagan, we might point to, is illustrative of the neo-liberal or, perhaps, capitalistic approach to problems of a socio-economic origin.

In Flanagan's *First Nations? Second Thoughts* addresses concerns the author had with the then-contemporary discourse surrounding the publication of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996). It was the experience of the RCAP that Flanagan realized 'that I was confronting not just the report of a royal commission, but a new orthodoxy, widely and firmly accepted in all circles exercising any influence over aboriginal policy.'[237] It is questionable whether RCAP dominates the discussion of Aboriginal policy today. In Chapter Nine of his text, 'Making a Living,' Flanagan considers RCAP's recommendations in light of the Hawthorne Report of thirty years earlier. In analyzing RCAP, Flanagan notes four components the Royal Commission puts forward as strategies to develop Aboriginal economies: restoring control and securing resources; developing enterprises; mastering professional and technical skills and brokering employment; and relating income supplements to productive activity. For Flanagan, the attractiveness of these strategies are that they are, what he calls, "pro-capitalist". In essence, it has been illustrated here that an organization like ATEC would fill many roles in the development of these strategies.

Unfortunately, Flanagan does not prescribe greater spending in education or economic development by the federal government on First Nations. With the present conditions in land ownership and collective responsibility, not to mention the general tendency to the collective reliance on welfare, the present circumstances more often lead to, what Flanagan describes as,

[237] Tom Flanagan, *First Nations? Second Thoughts,* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 3.

"crony capitalism," where 'politicians control resources and allocate business opportunities to their relatives, friends, and supporters.'[238] What Flanagan's model of development resembles, taken together with his later publications, many of which can be found in the collections on Aboriginal policy at the Fraser Institute, is that put forward in the policy paper of 1969, that of the White Paper. The point we make here is not to do dis-service to Flanagan's intentions, and we do not claim that the intentions in the White Paper necessarily lead to integration and assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into a mainstream culture (though, nor do we deny this might be so); rather, Flanagan believes that the solution to Canadian Aboriginal policy lies not in the philosophy guiding recommendations found in RCAP or *Wahbung,* but rather in the transition of Aboriginal First Nations to free-tenure hold and the withering away of the Treaty relationship in Canada. While these two recommendations are not necessarily neo-liberal, they do fit within the neo-liberal framework of general economic and social policy in Canada over the past forty years. Flanagan would likely support the function and role of ATEC in Nelson House, but not necessarily the underlying principle that it be reliant on federal funding or controlled locally. The historical reality of ATEC existing within a narrative that is grounded in a legacy of hydro-electric development in the North, and its means of addressing this legacy by developing NCN economically and socially, may or may not bear relevance in the model of development put forward in Flanagan's writings. It is possible that in Flanagan's model of development, communities such as Nelson House are doomed to whither and way and die:

> There are dozens of First Nations in Canada whose reserves
> were selected in the 19th or early 20th centuries when their people were still making
> a living by hunting, fishing, and trapping. Those locations, connected by poor roads

[238] Flanagan, 190.

> or no roads at all to the outside world, may have made sense then but are often not conducive to economic advancement today.[239]

Roads, in and of themselves, are not enough to advance economic growth; and they can often hinder development as well, in their ability to bring in drugs and alcohol and other negative imports. Perhaps the greatest illustration of the ability for neo-liberalism to fix the problems found in Aboriginal communities can be found on the back cover of Flanagan's text, concluding that "aboriginal success will be achieved not as the result of public policy changes in government but through the actions of the people themselves."[240] As anyone who works in education in remote communities knows, this solution is one part wrong, but one part right.

Reflecting on the ATEC experience to 2023, and looking back at the historical context of hydro-electric development and First Nations, shows us much about the tangle of past, present and future of organizing ways that small, remote reserves and communities can be the gateways to opportunities. By taking advantage of local social and economic conditions, adapting programming to local needs; by investing in the local economy, training students to the requests of local employers and regional employment opportunities; by engaging in the local construction market by building houses and residences in the community, allowing students to attain vocational hours for their certification; ATEC has facilitated the means by which local, provincial and federal funding agencies can implement educational and vocational outcomes in Nelson House. This work of ATEC fosters Aboriginal agency and contributes to the

[239] Tom Flanagan, "Gaining Ground, Losing Ground: First Nations' Community Well-Being in the 21st Century," Fraser Institute, 2019: 17. Here, Flanagan is making a comment on the need for greater investment in transport. The disequilibrium in development, between South and North, for Flanagan will likely work itself out, if it is a concern at all.
[240] Flanagan, 17.

development and growth of the community and region, and this is very important work indeed. Lastly, the narrative of ATEC's success is a testament to the resilience of a First Nations people who have used education and vocational attainment to drive forward social, economic, and cultural fulfilment in the province of Manitoba.

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