CULTURAL CHASM: A 1960s Hydro Development and the Tsay Keh Dene Native Community of Northern British Columbia

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming
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ABSTRACT

This thesis identifies the "cultural chasm" between an isolated Athabascan community in northern British Columbia and the government representatives with whom it came in contact during construction of the Bennett Dam in the 1960s. The process of relocating these semi-traditional Athabascan people to make way for the dam was characterized by an overwhelming gap in communication for all concerned. Relocation was the sole option considered by government. While representatives of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority attempted to achieve what they believed was an appropriate balance for this Native community and visited it several times to identify lands in exchange for those which were flooded, their words were not comprehended. When their ancestral lands came under water as far as the eye could see and the wildlife, integral to their lifestyle, were drowning around them, the Native community was devastated. No words could adequately prepare them for what ensued. In fact, this hydro development project was so major that everyone associated with it had difficulty grasping or foreseeing the full range of its environmental impacts.

This thesis argues that a major reason why this Native community could not comprehend what was happening -- why some of its members still do not know what happened -- is an unbridgeable "cultural chasm" between the two worlds. Although they heard words describing construction of the dam,

they could not believe anyone would want to, or could, do such a thing. To violate nature on this scale for a power source of which they had no knowledge or need was beyond their comprehension. To compound this problem, the first of a series of floods occurred in Spring, a season during which the Native community moves gently in its surroundings so as not to disturb Nature in the process of rebirth.

To explore and substantiate the notion of this "cultural chasm", this thesis draws upon personal interviews with members of this Native community, known today as the Tsay Keh Dene Band, and anthropologic information relating to the unique worldview of northern hunting peoples. It also uses information from the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Province of British Columbia files, newspapers and other sources. This information provides the context for understanding the Native and non-Native realities around this event. Both stories are almost overwhelmingly different because they each mirror a vastly different worldview.

This flooding, although of catastrophic proportions for the Native people, represents but one in a continuum of events affecting this isolated Native community. This paper examines these events, which began with the first contact with white explorers, fur traders, prospectors and missionaries and culminated in a far reaching paternalistic federal government policy which resulted in residential schools and the attempt to segregate Native peoples onto government owned

reserve lands. The difficulties currently faced by the Tsay Keh Dene people, who are working hard to resolve them, mirror these events and the social and economic issues faced by most Native communities.

An analysis of how First Nations peoples have been treated within the Canadian framework is at the national forefront. We are learning that western society has ignored minority interests in the pursuit of the short-term common good, which in this case translated into low cost hydroelectric power. We have tended not to want to see the consequences of this approach for the minorities concerned and we still do not carefully weigh the full impact on minority groups as part of a balanced decision-making process. By documenting what happened in the case of the Tsay Keh Dene people, this thesis should contribute to a greater knowledge and appreciation of the full range of longer-term costs -- cultural, and economic and emotional -- of mega projects affecting isolated Native peoples.

Examiners:

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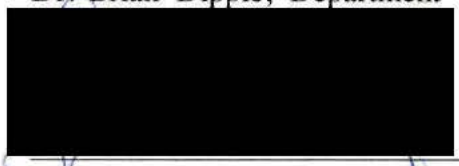

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PREFACE

This case study examines two perspectives of an historical event, the relocation of an Athabascan community in northern British Columbia in the 1960s. One perspective reflects the Native viewpoint, the other, the non-Native interpretation of government representatives. Care has been taken to provide both views as honestly and accurately as possible. The writer, a non-Native public servant with the Province of British Columbia, has worked with Native issues in a variety of capacities. It should be recognized that this case study represents the writer's own views, which are not necessarily those of the Provincial Government.

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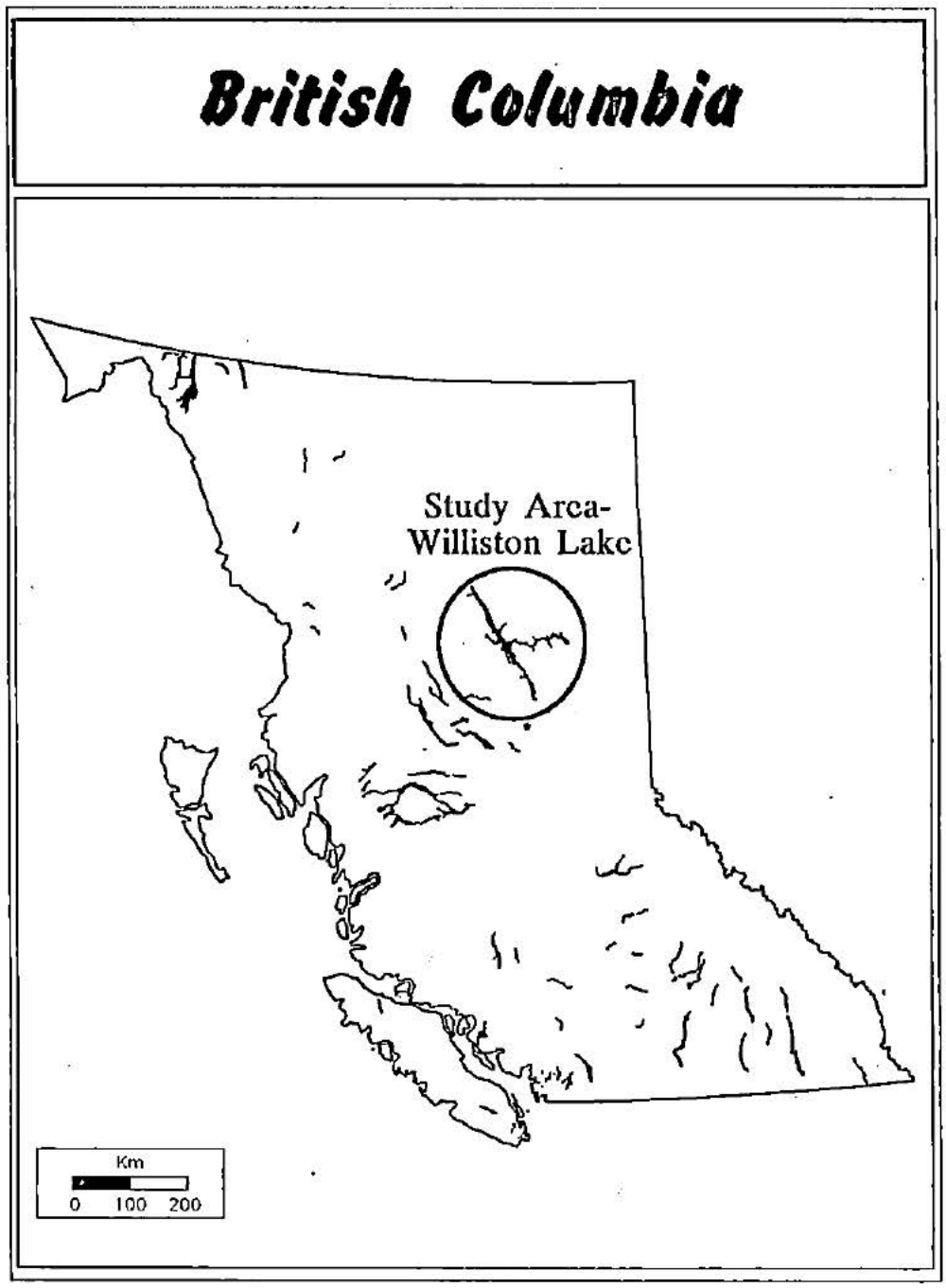
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

In the late 1950s, the Province of British Columbia commissioned a study of the potential of the Peace River for hydro-electric power. The Social Credit government was eager to be a part of the aggressive development of technology to leave a tangible, physical monument to its progressive outlook for posterity, to demonstrate its commitment to natural resource development and to provide large-scale employment opportunities. It decided to proceed with construction in 1961. By 1968, the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, (B.C. Hydro), a Crown corporation created to oversee the project, had completed the Bennett Dam, the Shrum power station and the Williston Reservoir. This hydro initiative, which generated almost one half of British Columbia's electricity in 1970, now yields approximately one quarter of the province's total electricity output.

The project contributed to the economic well being of the province as a whole and created the kind of monument the government desired. However, the construction of the dam and creation of the 410,000 acre Williston Reservoir - - the largest man-made lake in North America - - did not come without a price. Many individuals including ranchers, farmers, trappers, guides and miners, were forced to relocate to make way for the project. These people were negatively affected in the interests of the "common good" by the series of massive floods caused by the dam.


British Columbia
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Also forced to relocate in the public interest was a small Native[1] community of approximately seventy people known then as the Fort Grahame Band members of the Finlay River Band and now as the Tsay Keh Dene Band.[2] (See Table 1.) For this community, the move represented far more than simply a change in location; it caused an overwhelming and incomprehensible change in physical living space and way of life. The Williston Reservoir flooded the heart of their ancestral lands including the Finlay Forks Reserve, cemeteries and other places of spiritual significance, prime hunting and trapping areas, and the rivers which were the primary source of transportation and communication. Relocation also brought this community into sustained contact with the larger non-Native population and government bureaucracies.

Relocation of Native communities in the interests of development is in no way an isolated incident. Throughout the 1960s, it happened in the United States, Australia, Brazil, New Zealand and in several African countries. In Canada, relocation such as that experienced by the Tsay Keh Dene people is mirrored in Native communities like Grassy Narrows in northern Ontario, Cumberland House in Saskatchewan and South Indian Lake and Chemawawin in Manitoba. Many other

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[1] The term "Native" is used throughout this case study to describe peoples also referred to interchangeably as: First Nations, First Peoples, First Citizens, Aboriginal Peoples, Indigenous Peoples, Indians, North American Indians, and Native Indians.

[2] This case study focuses exclusively on the Fort Grahame Band members, while recognizing that their Fort McLeod and Fort Ware counterparts were similarly affected by the Peace River power development.

TABLE 1
EVOLUTION OF THE TSAY KEH DENE BAND

YEARS	EVENT
1805	The NorthWest Fur Trading Company established trading posts at Fort McLeod and Hudson's Hope around which Sekani peoples congregated during the spring to trade furs. The Hudson's Bay Company took over from the NorthWest Company in 1921 and subsequently established Fort Grahame in the 1870s and Fort Ware in the 1920s. The Sekani peoples gradually came to be known by the name of the three primary posts concerned: Fort McLeod, Fort Grahame and Fort Ware.
1916	The McKenna McBride Royal Commission recommended that the "Fort Grahame Band" be allocated two reserves: Finlay Forks and Police Meadows.
1923	The Provincial government formally accepted the above recommendation, but the Native people concerned continued to use the full expanse of their traditional hunting, fishing and berry picking territory.
1920s	The Fort Grahame Group split formally into the Fort Grahame Band and the Fort Ware Band owing to an internal dispute between two families arising out of an accidental hunting death.
1920s and 1930s	Elder recollections place the number of Fort Grahame Band members at 500-600. One of the Band's larger families lived at the Finlay Forks Reserve year round, whereas the Police Meadows Reserve was used primarily as a source of hay for the Band's horses. The Band still congregated at Fort Grahame during the summer.
1940s	Elders from the Fort Grahame Band recollect that their community was seriously reduced in number owing to a major 'flu' (tuberculosis) outbreak.
1954	The Fort Ware Reserve was officially established.
1959	The Fort Grahame and Fort Ware Bands were officially merged by the Department of Indian Affairs for "administrative ease" as the "Finlay River Band". The Fort Grahame group gathered primarily in the general vicinity of the Finlay Forks Reserve. The Fort Ware group congregated primarily at Fort Ware.
1959-71	
	Although the two groups maintained close ties through river transportation, the Fort Grahame members were not represented on the Finlay River Band Council. The Fort Grahame members numbered approximately 70.
1968	The first of a series of floods associated with the W.A.C. Bennett Dam physically separated the two groups as the water ways were no longer navigable.
1970	The majority of Fort Grahame members of the Finlay River Band began to return to a former traditional gathering place at Ingenika Point. The remainder dispersed to Fort Ware, Prince George and Mackenzie.
1971	The Former Fort Grahame Band members elected to be known as the "Ingenika Band".
1992	The Ingenika Band adopted "Tsay Keh Dene" as its name because it denotes the broad Sekani nature of its membership rather than the specific location of members at Ingenika Point.

Native peoples have had their traditional hunting, gathering, trapping and fishing territories altered unrecognizably by hydro development. Several bands currently live under the threat of such projects. With hindsight, it is obvious that from a culturally sensitive perspective each relocation should have been handled differently. All have proved traumatic for the communities concerned. Each demonstrates the need for more heightened awareness and a better understanding of such cultures and their needs. Each forced relocation reinforces the argument that Native communities must be given special consideration within the resource development process.

The key problems associated with all relocations of Native peoples in Canada are a profound lack of cultural awareness and lack of cross-cultural communication. The relocation of the Tsay Keh Dene people offers an excellent example of the huge cultural gap between Native communities and the Canadian population at large. This case study emphasizes the dramatic difference between the perceptions of government officials, representing the larger population, and Native peoples who hold an entirely different worldview and a rich, highly complex tradition which differs dramatically from that of western society. Likewise, this study attempts to capture the majority attitudes toward and understanding of Native peoples during the 1960s.

The countless examples of the devastating effects of relocations on Aboriginal peoples world wide mean there is no longer any excuse for lack of sensitivity regarding their interests. Yet Native peoples in Canada are still forced to justify and defend traditional and semi-traditional ways of life. The larger population continues to lack any comprehension of Aboriginal culture so it accepts encroachment on Native

hereditary territories through resource development. Its actions demonstrate a belief that Native peoples can only benefit from contact with what is assumed to be a more advanced and desirable culture, and that integration within the larger population is inevitable. Canadians refuse to explore their own values regarding resource exploitation because to do so would reveal less than flattering conflicting beliefs. While Canadians strongly support individual rights and embrace the concept of a cultural mosaic, they allow the desires of the majority to take precedence. Essentially, they espouse the notion of sacrificing minority interests, be they Native or non-Native, for the "common good" without identifying or wishing to see the full implications of this approach.

Until recently, historians did little to explain Native issues. History which focuses on Native perspectives has tended to rely primarily on fur trade, church and government records and on specific studies undertaken by ethnologists and anthropologists or individuals commissioned by government. Historians have only recently begun to approach Native peoples themselves and to use the wealth of oral histories as primary sources to let Native people step "forward to become important players in the pageant of the past."[3] A growth in historical writing on Native peoples in Canada since the early 1970s has resulted from their growing assertiveness and political power, a heightened interest in social history as it relates to the disadvantaged and dispossessed, and the creation of ethnohistory as a blend between the techniques of

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[3] Robin Fisher and Kenneth Coates, eds., Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), i.

anthropology and history. In addition, more Native peoples have completed post-secondary educational programs and can present their perspective in a manner which is heard by the larger population. This trend and the continuing analysis of complex constitutional issues such as Native land claims and self-government should help maintain this new found interest.

It is important, however, to ensure that traditional Native ways of communicating are not lost in the process. Unlike non-Native historians, many Native historians follow an oral tradition which, although a valid approach to history, is very different from the western emphasis on documentation. Their oral history includes dreams and visions in a manner foreign to European thinking. Fundamental to this approach is the belief that "it encourages a living culture, one that is not dictated to by the past...only reality at any given point is important."[4] Survival of this means of communicating past and future events is increasingly threatened. Elders die and young Native people are unable to preserve knowledge as they lose their traditional languages and value systems through integration with the broader community. Very few Native people have documented their history in the European style. What recorded history there is, therefore, tends to represent a European bias reflecting the outlook of bureaucrats and missionaries.[5] Indeed, it has been argued that as "history" is an

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[4] John Friesen, ed., "Native Cultures in a Cultural Clash," The Cultural Maze: Complex Questions on Native Destiny in Western Canada (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1991), 24.

[5] Ibid., 12.

intellectual tool forged by Europeans, it cannot be used to fashion a true understanding of the past as experienced by Native peoples.[6]

Robin Ridington, an anthropologist at the University of British Columbia, suggests that the true history of northern peoples such as the Tsay Keh Dene will have to be written in mythic language. Myth and history are as one for these peoples. Explaining that "For hunters, dreams and visions validate and explain the past in terms of present experience," he warns that in writing the history of hunting peoples, historians cannot use documents but "must find ways of recognizing the validity of personal experience without violating their own scholarly traditions of obtaining valid information about the past."[7] This case study uses government documents but it also accepts at face value the personal experience of the Tsay Keh Dene people. The Native and non-Native views are very different and are viewed by each to be entirely valid. In its attempt to provide insight into the Native perspective, this study also incorporates anthropological and cultural information regarding the worldview of northern hunting peoples.

Nevertheless, the argument that "history" as we know it cannot capture events as Native peoples have understood them is valid but unavoidable. Until Native peoples write more history, the writings of non-Native people will continue to offer the dominant perspective. The problems of bias and "cultural baggage" with this

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[6] Ibid., 2.

[7] Robin Ridington, Little Bit Know Something: Stories in a Language of Anthropology (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre,1990), 12.

unbalanced approach are well captured by George F. Stanley, a Canadian historian who has studied Native issues:

> Anyone embarking on a discussion of Indian-white relations in Canada is faced, from the outset, with a virtually insoluble dilemma. Since every man is the product of the culture into which he is born and in which he is nurtured and educated, of necessity his thinking will follow certain well-defined lines. To change the direction of thinking is as difficult as changing the colour of skin, and probably more painful...It might come easier to me were I a poet rather than an historian.[8]

Native history written by non-Native people can serve a valuable role. Without it, the impact of events on Native peoples would remain largely unrecognized within the larger community. As the historian James W. St. G. Walker notes, specialized works in Native studies will contribute to more scholarly Canadian historical works in general.[9]

Groups such as the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, British Columbia are providing the Native voice necessary to reflect their contributions and perspectives. In the fall of 1989, the Centre became the first Native degree granting creative writing school in Canada.[10] At the same time, the British Columbia Ministry of Education initiated a project to integrate Native history within its core curriculum. The influence

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[8] George F. Stanley, introduction in As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies, ed Ian A.L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 1.

[9] James W.St.G. Walker, "The Indian in Canadian Historical Writing, 1972-1982," in As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Studies, ed. Ian A.L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 341.

[10] H.J. Kirchhoff, "Training Native Storytellers," The Globe and Mail, 6 July 1989.

of such documented history should not be underestimated. Native leaders hope the Native input into the educational system will be subtle but pervasive and firmly etched in the future Canadian consciousness.

Because this case study is written by a non-Native person, it is important to identify and address a number of methodological concerns. Historians write what they think they know about the past. They must, however, have a clear understanding of a broad range of perspectives and biases to reveal the past as objectively as possible.[11] As noted by the historian, Carl Berger, "Written history represents a self-conscious effort to establish the meaning of experience for the present and is subtly and unpredictably coloured by the milieu in which the historian lives."[12] This study presents the Native perspective and the non-Native view as seen by B.C. Hydro and federal and British Columbia government representatives, thereby offering two different stories of how relocation unfolded.

Native sources consist almost exclusively of personal discussions with Tsay Keh Dene Band members as well as general discussions with Native peoples in British Columbia regarding their worldview.[13] Non-Native sources include B.C. Hydro,

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[11] J.H. Hexter, "Historiography," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Volume 6, 373.

[12] Carl Berger, The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing: 1900 to 1970 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), i.

[13] As Director, Social Policy and Special Projects, British Columbia Ministry of Native Affairs, the author was responsible for staffing and attending a Culture, Heritage and Language Committee comprised of Native members who deliberated over the future of Native cultural issues at Native cultural centres throughout the Province.

federal and provincial publications and records and interviews with employees and former employees. Studies on hydroelectric power development and the displacement of Native communities elsewhere in Canada such as Grassy Narrows, Moose Lake and Easterville provide a broad perspective and comparisons. Secondary sources such as autobiographies written by anthropologists and Native people outside the Tsay Keh Dene community provide background and a cultural context.

The written sources are primarily non-Native. There is virtually no Native documentation on this relocation or the history of hunting peoples in northeastern British Columbia. Moreover, the Tsay Keh Dene people were only one of three players in this forced relocation. The other two are non-Native: B.C. Hydro and the federal government, with minimal direct involvement from the British Columbia government, other than as initiator of this massive hydro development. The majority of the available information on Native attitudes and perceptions in northeastern British Columbia is translated through the eyes of non-Native writers. The inherent bias presented by this focus must be acknowledged.

Another methodological challenge to the non-Native historian is the claim by some ethnologists that it is impossible to understand a culture fully without a thorough knowledge of its language.[14] Although ethnosemantics may be used to analyze Native vocabularies to capture feelings and attitudes towards life, many ethnologists admit that a non-Native person requires a profound understanding of Native cultures as

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[14] Fisher, Out of the Background, 33.

well as languages to feel confident interpreting oral histories told by Native Elders. This oral tradition includes beliefs regarding creation, for example, which are fact for Native peoples but myths or legends in the eyes of non-Native people. Moreover, accepting myth as an integral part of history under oral tradition means viewing events as returning within the continuing cycle of life. For Europeans, "the events of history are unique and particular to their time and place...Our cultural past and future are linked lineally rather than in a cycle like that of the seasons."[15]

To complicate matters, in recent years, non-Native writers have had to overcome the tendencies to be overly defensive or overly sympathetic about Native issues. Since contact, Native peoples have experienced profound and often culturally devastating changes. Racist attitudes, attempts to annihilate their cultures and force assimilation, and abuses such as those perpetrated through residential schools have resulted in a litany of social injustices. Many Native peoples and their political leaders focus on the past to understand the massive social and personal upheaval which confronts them daily. Past tragedies, such as sexual abuse in residential schools, are further emphasized because they are only just coming to light and have had a cumulative impact over time. Such negative events, however, must be seen within the historical context in which they occurred.

Another methodological problem is illustrated by the work of Anastasia Shkilnyk, a government contractor who researched the impact of the forced relocation

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[15] Ridington, Little Bit Know Something, 11, 141.

of 1964 on the Grassy Narrows Band in northern Ontario. Shkilnyk's A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community describes the impact on the Band of its forced relocation by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.[16] The purpose of the relocation was to provide this community with access to education, medical attention, electricity, and water and sewage services. Shkilnyk gathered information for her book, used also for her doctoral dissertation, over years of contact with the Band which included living on the reserve for extended periods. James Waldram, an anthropologist who has written extensively on hydroelectric power development and the displacement of Native peoples in Canada, points out that Shkilnyk did exactly what she emphasized the Grassy Narrows people did not want. Her book exposes their community and the full range of its social problems -- suicide, family violence, substance and alcohol abuse and poverty resulting from relocation -- as she perceived them, to the world at large. One photograph even shows "an easily recognizable individual involved in a "pathological" activity.[17] Members of the Grassy Narrows Band feel violated by Shkilnyk's work and do not want her to return to their reserve under any circumstances.[18] It would be understandable for any community to express similar sentiments were their past and current social problems

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[16] Anastasia M. Shkilnyk, A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[17] James B. Waldram, critique of A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community, by Anastasia M. Shkilnyk, Native Studies Review 1, (1985): 116.

[18] Senior Ontario Government Native Affairs' Secretariat employee, discussion with author, Victoria, August 1989.

made public and fully documented as part of an academic exercise.

This case study recognizes that the relocation and flooding significantly exacerbated major social and economic problems for the Tsay Keh Dene people including alcoholism and family violence. It does not, however, focus or dwell on these problems or in any way imply that their social community has been destroyed along with their traditional territory. Instead, it stresses that the enormous and complex impact of relocation represents part of a continuum of cumulative impacts generated by contact with non-Native people. It must be acknowledged that the Tsay Keh Dene people have demonstrated considerable strength and fortitude in attempting to overcome these cumulative impacts. They are successfully building a new community, attempting to find a way of life for future generations, and aggressively addressing the social problems which represent the outward manifestation of the upheaval they have endured since contact with non-Native society.

The situation arising out of Shkilnyk's work illustrates two important issues for the researcher. First, Native peoples, like any group, are highly sensitive to individuals outside their culture commenting on their social circumstances. Second, they are deeply concerned about the tendency to focus on "shattered communities" which perpetuates unflattering stereotypes of Native people. Apart from being resented by the communities concerned, as Waldram highlights, such descriptions offer nothing positive to build on. It is also possible, however, to err in the other extreme by focusing exclusively on Native peoples. In As Long as the Rivers Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada, Waldram

himself leaves the impression that only Native communities have been forced to relocate for the common good. As demonstrated by Eric Pollen and Shirlee Smith Matheson in This Was Our Valley, their account of the flooding behind the W.A.C. Bennett Dam, non-Native interests were also negatively affected. Two wrongs which transcend racial barriers do not make a right but a comparison of the treatment of both groups is required to place the situation of the Tsay Keh Dene people in historical context.

A further methodological problem concerns the reliability of information gathered by non-Native researchers from Native individuals. As a generalization, Native people respect individuals for who they are without judgement. They assume that those from outside their community will disclose as much as they want to about themselves in due course. Also as a generalization, non-Native people tend to speak quickly and pose questions rapidly, even with strangers. Native people unused to dealing with non-Native individuals may view this as a serious personal intrusion. Sophie Pierre, former chief of the Shuswap Band in British Columbia, recounts an incident where a non-Native historian went into a Native community and asked questions concerning a chief.[19] He was given the chief's name which he carefully spelled and referred to throughout his research. A subsequent researcher discovered that the name translated into Chief "He's not going to tell you his name." As this example demonstrates, no culture appreciates the feeling of being viewed from under a

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[19] Ms. Sophie Pierre, conversation with the author, personal, Victoria, 3 August 1989.

microscope. Failure to solicit information in a culturally sensitive manner may result in factitious responses.

This case study must further contend with the fact that the Tsay Keh Dene people were not in a position to document their perspective on the move at the time it occurred. Thus, it is necessary to rely on their perceptions, combined with those of government representatives and other individuals, seen through today's eyes, almost thirty years after the event. All the above methodological concerns exemplify the complex cultural gap explored throughout this case study. They also demonstrate that this study cannot claim to offer the definitive perspective of the Tsay Keh Dene people on their forced relocation. Rather, it attempts to capture how the relocation unfolded and why, and offer insight as to who the Tsay Keh Dene people were in the 1960s and what displacement meant to them.

Most members of the Band were shocked at the element of force involved with this relocation. Some Tsay Keh Dene people had to be physically evacuated from their homes as the water rose around them. As well, no options were presented to the Native community other than to move. In his examination of "forced migration", Joseph Trimble, a psychologist at Western Washington University, identifies a number of common factors. He observes that movement is initiated by an external agent and is required to exploit natural resources. Little or no effort is made to prevent deleterious psychological and psychosocial effects and the group is forced to relocate

against its will.[20] As demonstrated in the chapters which follow, for the Tsay Keh Dene people there was no resettlement program. Rather, what occurred was a physical removal from one location to another conducted primarily in the interests of expediency.

[20] Joseph E. Trimble, "Forced Migration: Its Impact on Shaping Coping Strategies," George V. Coelho and Paul I. Ahmed, eds., Uprooting and Development: Dilemmas of Coping with Modernization (New York: Plenum Press 1980), 450.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT

Anthropologists speculate that Aboriginal peoples originated in northeast Asia and have lived in northwest Canada for ten to one hundred thousand years. Many Native people, however, resent attempts to pinpoint when they came to inhabit North America. Their mythology and traditions hold that they have done so since creation. As Hugh Brody observes:

> When archaeologists and other "experts" challenge the Indians' own idea of their history, they implicitly undermine the Indians' sense of absolute and eternal belonging to particular places.[1]

Both Native and non-Native people agree that non-Native sources about the activities of Native peoples in North America are extremely recent. Sufficient information exists regarding the forebears of the Tsay Keh Dene peoples and events in northeast British Columbia, however, to set the stage for examining both views of the series of floods which commenced in 1968.

British Columbia has the most culturally diverse Native population in North America owing in large measure to its complex geography. An image which effectively captures the scope of this complexity is to imagine most of this diversity pulled upwards into the northwest corner of the continent in British Columbia. Wilson Duff, an anthropologist with the British Columbia Museum in the 1960s, attempted to

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[1] Hugh Brody, Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1988), 15.

reduce this complexity to manageable proportions by dividing Native peoples throughout the province into ten major ethnic groups. (See next page.) Duff proposed this division, determined primarily along linguistic lines, because it had "gained acceptance by long usage." Despite some inconsistencies, each group comprised "the speakers of one language or a number of related languages, occupying a continuous area and sharing basically a similar culture."[2]

The Tsay Keh Dene people represent one of approximately twenty-six Northern Athabascan[3] groups in North America: Athena, (Great) Bear Lake, Beaver, Carrier, Chilcotin, Chipewyan, Dogrib, Han, Hare, Ingalik, Kasku, Koyukon, Kutchin, Mountain, Sarci, Sekani, Slavey, Tagish, Tahltan, Tunana, Tsetsaut, Tutchone, Upper Koyukuk, Upper Tanana, and Yellowknife.[4] The Tsay Keh Dene are Sekani peoples within this highly fluid categorization. Information

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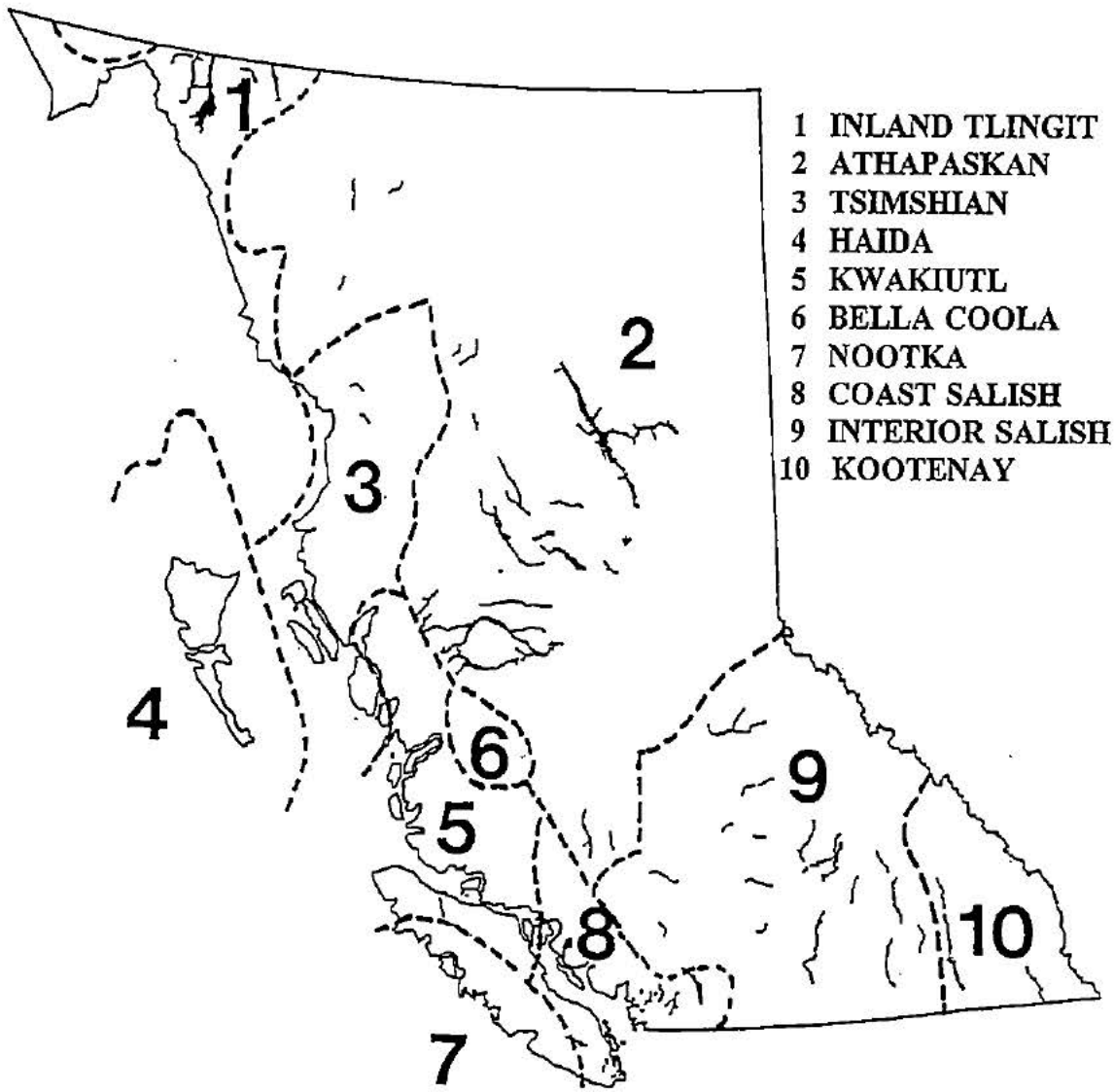
[2] Wilson Duff, The Indian History of British Columbia, Volume 1, The Impact of the White Man, Memoir No. 5 (Victoria: British Columbia Museum, 1969), 12.

[3] As Duff highlights, there is considerable inconsistency in the spelling of Native names. Duff explains that the problem is two fold, one is to establish English spelling and the other is to devise phonetic symbols which accurately capture Native sounds. In some cases a single spelling has become established by usage and in others there are several alternatives from various sources. "Athabascan" for example, is also Athapascan, Athapaskan, and Athabaskan. Likewise "Sekani" is also spelled Sekanni, Secanni, Sehkanni, Seccani, Sicanni and Tsekani. For the purpose of consistency, Athabascan and Sekani are used throughout this case study, with the exception of some direct quotations.

[4] Shepard Krech, "Northern Athapaskan Ethnology: An Annotated Bibliography of Published Materials, 1970-79," Arctic Anthropology xviii-2, 1980, 68.

MAJOR ETHNIC DIVISIONS OF NATIVE PEOPLES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



Adapted from: Wilson Duff, The Indian History of British Columbia, Volume 1 The Impact of the White Man, Memoir No.5 (Victoria: British Columbia Museum, 1969), 13.

regarding the majority of these twenty-six groups including the Sekani is limited, particularly with respect to their worldview and cultural background. Indeed, with the exception of Father Morice who worked with northern Athabaskan communities, the noted anthropologist Diamond Jenness appears to have been the only person to conduct fieldwork in the early part of this century with northern Athabascan communities including the Sekani. Although academics use the term "Sekani," the people so labelled originally had no common collective name for themselves.[5] In fact, Duff noted that prior to non-Native attempts at identification, Native peoples made no effort to categorize themselves and had no specific terms for different ethnic or tribal groupings. Only non-Native anthropologists felt the need to name and categorize various groups in order to understand them. Vine Deloria Jr., a Sioux from the United States, has commented that "Indians are...certain that Columbus brought anthropologists on his ships when he came to the New World. How else could he have made so many wrong deductions about where he was?"[6]

Although Native groups were aware that groups around them shared a similar cultural background and recognized them as part of their "people," they did not necessarily feel strong kinship with one another. In some cases, the members within these ethnic groups fought among themselves to protect hereditary hunting and

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[5] Diamond Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," Department of Mines and Resources, Canada, Bulletin No. 84, Anthropological Series No. 20, (Ottawa: 1937), 1-2.

[6] James Wilson, "Canada's Indians," Minority Rights Group, Report No. 21 (London, England, 1982), 9.

gathering rights. The term "Sekani," therefore, is vague at best. It describes a hunting people who moved in rhythm with the seasons and available wildlife. They had no permanent or semi-permanent dwellings and were comprised of a number of bands with no central organization. The Sekani people split, amalgamated and regrouped among themselves and intermarried with other Northern Athabascan groups.[7] Within this evolving structure, however, anthropologists report that the Sekani and other Native peoples of northeastern British Columbia had a clear sense of themselves and their relationships with one another.

Glenda Denniston, in the Handbook of North American Indians remarks that, at least since 1825, "Sekani" has been applied to Athabascan peoples from the mountainous regions of British Columbia drained by the Finlay and Parsnip branches of the Peace River.[8] Any attempt to place the Sekani geographically, however, is approximate given their wide-ranging trapping, hunting, fishing, and gathering way of life. They were primarily hunters in pursuit of caribou and moose on the plateaus and mountain slopes from November until mid summer. Until the hunting season recommenced in November, they moved to the lakes to fish or visited and traded with tribes beyond their borders.[9] A plateau drained by the upper Finlay, Stikine and Laird Rivers included a large grassy area which Jenness viewed in 1924 and described in

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[7] Glenda Denniston, "Sekani," in Subarctic, Handbook of North American Indians, June Helm, ed., (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), Volume 6, 434.

[8] Ibid., 433.

[9] Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," 1-2.

1937 as "still one of the finest game areas on the continent." He noted that caribou and groundhogs were abundant, that there were sheep and goats on the neighbouring mountains and that moose were plentiful. Although there are no salmon in the Mackenzie drainage system, the vast network of lakes, rivers and streams offered whitefish, trout and other freshwater fish. This water network also provided the Sekani with their principal means of transportation and communication because their traditional lands are rugged and densely forested.

A half century later, Brody wrote that:

> Perhaps nowhere else in the New World can Indians more properly affirm that theirs is a cultural presence and an economic entitlement of a depth and significance beyond our comprehension.[10]

The territory used by the Sekani was determined by the availability of natural resources and relationships with neighbouring tribes. Pursuit of game, fish and berries brought the Sekani in contact and in competition with other Native peoples. Fluctuating and shifting alliances with these groups meant that the territory frequented by the Sekani had no rigid boundaries. To the south they competed with the Shuswap and Carrier groups, to the west they intermittently fought with the Gitksan.[11]

The first non-Native influence on this land use occurred in the early nineteenth century when the Beaver and Cree to the east acquired fire arms from non-Native traders.[12] This forced the Sekani to reduce their former range to areas where

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[10] Brody, Maps and Dreams, 21.

[11] Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," 18.

[12] Denniston, "Sekani," 435.

resources were less plentiful.[13] Jenness noted, however, that:

> After the middle of the nineteenth century, peace reigned in the Sekanni country. The surrounding tribes, greatly reduced in numbers, had become outwardly Europeanized, and were more concerned in protecting their own territories from the encroachments of white settlers, traders, and prospectors, than in raiding their neighbours.[14]

Their constant moves over a vast expanse offers one reason why anthropological information regarding the Sekani is sparse. The various groups were difficult to locate especially because of the sheer inaccessibility of the northeast part of the province. As well as being remote, the Sekani were not numerous. Wilson Duff estimated that prior to contact they numbered one thousand.[15] Jenness' fieldwork included two weeks in 1924 when he visited the Hudson's Bay trading posts of Fort McLeod and Fort Grahame, where he noted thirty-six Sekani adults at the former and twenty-five adults at the latter. A Department of Indian Affairs census conducted in 1923 identified a total of only 160 Sekani people.[16] This vast reduction is partially explained by the decimation faced by this and all Native communities with the introduction of diseases such as smallpox, polio and tuberculosis.[17] However, census

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," 26.

[15] Duff, The Indian History of British Columbia, 60.

[16] Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," 13. Jenness also determined that although the people were predominantly Sekani, some were intermixed with Beaver and Carrier peoples. His observation exemplifies the difficulty encountered in trying to categorize northern Athabascan peoples into separate, distinct groups.

[17] Margaret Whitehead, ed., They Call Me Father (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 37.

takers probably did not reach all members of the Sekani people because they were so isolated and had no permanent dwelling place. Sekani Elders say that their population numbered several hundred in the 1920s.[18] Francis Isaac, a Tsay Keh Dene Elder, recalls Elders describing gatherings of five to six hundred Sekani at Fort Grahame in the 1920s and 1930s, prior to a major tuberculosis outbreak in the 1940s.[19] He recollects hearing that ravens were unable to fly across the encampment because of the heat and smoke generated by all the cooking fires.[20]

As well as being remote, the Sekani did not generate material objects like those of coastal communities such as the Haida. The less transient way of life of coastal communities and greater abundance of natural resources, combined with their larger populations and very different cultural orientation, resulted in a wealth of permanent and material evidence of their cultures. Long houses, totem poles, masks and other ceremonial items integral to these cultures were attractive to anthropologists, particularly those interested in acquiring artifacts.

The Sekani were not, however, without relatively early contact with white men. Information about the Sekani began appearing in the records and journals of traders and explorers of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies at the end of the

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[18] Tsay Keh Dene Elders, interview by author, personal, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

[19] The Tsay Keh Dene Band Manager and his Assistant are attempting to outline a family tree for the Band. During their research they discovered that many of its members cannot be traced past the 1940s. They suspect that this gap is a consequence of the tuberculosis epidemic. Two Elders remember that ten members of one of their families succumbed to a major "'flu" outbreak in the 1940s.

[20] Mr. Francis Isaac, interview by author, personal, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

eighteenth century. Their first direct contact appears to have occurred in 1793 when Alexander Mackenzie, an explorer for the North West Company, became the first non-Native person to reach the Pacific Ocean over land through the Rocky Mountains. The Sekani of the Finlay and Parsnip Rivers, forebears of the Tsay Keh Dene people, had probably already heard of white men, ships, horses and new diseases.[21] Mackenzie observed that they possessed iron through trading links with coastal groups in contact with white men since 1774 when the Spanish first arrived on the northwest coast.[22]

Another North West Company explorer, Simon Fraser, established trading posts at Fort McLeod and Hudson's Hope in the northern interior of the province in 1805 and referred to trading with various Sekani groups throughout the area in his journal of 1806.[23] In 1821, the North West Company was taken over by the Hudson's Bay Company which established its trading posts along the coast, starting in 1827 with Fort Langley.[24] Trading posts played a major role in the formation of what were to evolve into bands because Native groups gathered around them during the spring fur trade.

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[21] Duff, The Indian History of British Columbia, 55.

[22] Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1174-1890 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), 31.

[23] Jenness, "The Sekani of British Columbia," 6.

[24] Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 25.

Indeed, the federal Department of Indian Affairs, created in the 1870s, kept records on Native peoples by the name of the trading posts at which they dealt. Thus, the forebears of the Tsay Keh Dene Band came to be known as the Fort Grahame Sekani because they assembled at the Fort Grahame trading post, established in the 1870s.[25] This nomenclature practice possibly originated in eastern Canada when various bands came together at one post to sign a treaty with the government and then returned yearly to receive annuities and other treaty benefits. It is also likely that, as the names of such groups were difficult to pronounce, non-Native people simply called them by the trading posts at which they gathered most frequently. According to Denniston, the Sekani frequented approximately sixteen trading posts at various times in what was to become northern British Columbia.[26] Jenness noted in 1924 that the Sekani:

> centre at the present time around two posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, one at Fort McLeod and the other at Fort Grahame; but a few of them trade sometimes at other places, such as Takla Lake, Fort Babine on Babine lake, Lower Post on Liard river, McDame Creek on Dease River, and even at Telegraph Creek on the Stikine.[27]

Missionaries were the second group of white men with whom the Sekani had direct contact. Both Protestant and Catholic missionaries became a presence on the northwest coast in the 1830s. There was considerable rivalry between the two groups.

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[25] L.J. D'Amore and Associates Ltd, "Community Profile of the Ware and Ingenika Bands in Northern British Columbia," commissioned by the Cyprus Anvil Mining Corporation, (Quebec: 1980), 9.

[26] Denniston, "Sekani", 439.

[27] Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," 10.

Each felt as strongly about spreading Christianity as they did about ensuring that the Native population was not subjected to the other group's interpretation of it.[28] Their rivalry resulted in the two religions each carving a niche within distinct areas in the northwest. The Catholics became established in the interior and the south coast, and the Protestants concentrated on the central and north coasts.[29] It was Catholic priests, therefore, with whom the Sekani came in contact. The Catholic missionary and French Canadian fur trader influence is evident in the Tsay Keh Dene community today in the French names of Band members such as Gordon Pierre and Francis and Jean Isaac. The northern interior was assumed as part of the diocese of Quebec, and the first priest to arrive was Modeste Demers in 1842 at Fort St. James. His visit only lasted a few days and there does not seem to have been a concerted attempt to minister to northern Native peoples until 1873, when Fathers Jean Marie Lejacq and Georges Blanchet opened Our Lady of Good Hope Mission at Fort St. James. The mission primarily served the Carrier peoples, some of whom had intermarried with French-Canadian fur traders, and the predominantly Irish and Italian miners who came into the area in search of gold.[30]

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[28] Whitehead, They Call Me Father, 8.

[29] Paul Tennant, Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 51.

[30] Whitehead, They Call Me Father, 25-26. Fathers Petitot and Morice made reference to Sekani people in the area by the close of the nineteenth century. (Jenness, "The Sekani of British Columbia," 9).

Gold was first discovered in the Peace River in 1861. The ensuing gold rush, although short lived, had a major impact the northeast region of the future province. It drew the attention of colonial authorities to a significant resource potential and led them to extend the boundary of colonial British Columbia eastward by one hundred and fifty miles. Fur traders had worked in what has been described as a mutually advantageous relationship with Native peoples.[31] Miners, on the other hand, had little need for Native assistance and were intolerant of anything which hindered their quest for gold. Like miners, settlers had little need to understand the Native peoples with whom they competed in hunting, fishing, trapping and berry gathering. Settlers also tended to lack any appreciation of the vastness of land required to sustain a largely traditional Native way of life.

In 1870, miners began to encroach upon the traditional hunting territory of the Sekani of the Finlay and Parsnip Rivers during the Omineca gold rush. They established the small town of Omineca on the west bank of Germansen Creek; by 1871 more than one thousand miners worked the Manson River gold fields.[32] Encroachment on traditional territory during the gold rush was short lived and, as the rest of the territory was essentially unencumbered, Native peoples could avoid this temporary intrusion. Non-Native encroachment within the region was, nevertheless,

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[31] Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 34-42.

[32] "History of Ingenika," The Native Voice, The Native Brotherhood of British Columbia Volume 17, No. 2, April/May 1989.

relentless. The development of northeast British Columbia continued to follow a boom and bust cycle typical of northern development throughout Canada. The Peace River gold rush of 1861 was followed by minimal non-Native activity in the area until the Yukon gold rush in the late 1890s.[33] Although Native peoples may have noticed little new or permanent non-Native activity, political developments were unfolding which would have a lasting impact on their way of life.

In 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company surrendered its charter to the Northwest, or Rupert's Land, to the Dominion of Canada in return for financial compensation and certain lands. The three year old Dominion of Canada assumed responsibility for Rupert's Land and the Native peoples who dwelt there. The Hudson's Bay Company had provided social services such as inoculations and famine relief to Native peoples within its territory. It was in the company's fur trading interests to foster positive relations with the Native population. Its dealings with Native peoples, including the Sekani in the Athabasca-Peace River, "were generally marked by a sense of trusteeship and strict integrity."[34] Assistance to the Native population deteriorated markedly when responsibility for their social interests was transferred to the new Dominion. Canada had difficulty establishing control over its vast new territory, "to say nothing of fulfilling its obligations and responsibilities to Indian inhabitants."[35] Under the

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[33] Tennant, Aboriginal Peoples and Politics, 65.

[34] Dennis K. Madill, Treaty Research Report: Treaty Eight Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Treaties and Historical Centre, (Ottawa: 1986), 3.

[35] Rene Fumoleau, As Long As This Land Shall Last: A History of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 1870-1939 (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart Limited, 1973), 24.

British North America Act, 1871, British Columbia was formally admitted into the Canadian federation, effective July 20, 1871. Section 91(24) of the British North America Act, 1867, gave the Dominion government jurisdiction over "Indians, and Lands reserved for Indians". Article 13 of the British Columbia Terms of Union restated this role. The federal government, therefore, acquired primary responsibility for Native issues.

Although the relationship between the Hudson's Bay Company and its Native trading partners appears to have been symbiotic, the new relationship between the Dominion and its Native "subjects" was paternalistic and racist by today's standards. Not only did the province deny Native people the right to vote in provincial elections as of 1872 but, under the Indian Act, 1880, the Dominion Government began to "administer" Indians. A Department of Indian Affairs was created under the act, the primary thrust of which was "to protect Indians until they acquired the trappings of white civilization." The Department also:

> assumed that able and competent Indians would desire to leave their reserves, to live and work among non-Indians, to have the federal franchise (which was denied to registered Indians), and to become, in a phrase popular among federal officials, "full British subjects." The Indians, in sum, "were supposed to abandon their reserves and their special status and disappear into the general population."[36]

Under the Act, Indian reserves were defined as federal crown lands held in trust for Indian peoples under a complex administrative framework controlled by the Department of Indian Affairs. This framework imposed an elected chief and council

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[36] Tennant, Aboriginal People and Politics, 45.

structure which disrupted traditional hereditary chieftain lineages for many Native communities. In order to administer Indian lands and peoples, the Department of Indian Affairs established fifteen Indian Agencies throughout the province by 1900.[37] Each Indian Agent was responsible for the administration of surrounding Native communities, some of which covered vast expanses. The forebears of the Tsay Keh Dene Band were administered through the Stuart Lake Agency[38], although their limited numbers and remote location meant they rarely came in contact with federal officials.

As well as establishing a framework for "administering" Native peoples, Canada sought to extinguish Native title to the lands within its new domain to permit unchallenged resource extraction and make way for settlers. Toward this goal, the federal government implemented a treaty policy similar to that undertaken for the 123 treaties and land surrenders signed with eastern Native groups prior to Confederation. Between 1871 and 1877, Canada negotiated seven treaties, none of which were in British Columbia. The only treaty signed under this policy in British Columbia, Treaty Eight in 1899, included the northeast part of the province and what is now northern Alberta. As elsewhere in Canada, the actual signing process, whereby bands and their members formally aligned themselves with the terms and conditions of the

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[37] Ibid., 74.

[38] The Stuart Lake Agency was responsible for all Carrier and Sekani peoples and operated initially out of Vanderhoof. In 1964 the Agency moved to Prince George. (Duff, The Indian History of British Columbia, 65)

treaty, was ad hoc. Federal government representatives went by horseback into isolated areas in an attempt to communicate with the bands concerned, but as these small Native groups pursued a highly seasonal way of life over a vast territory, not all such communities were contacted. Since the forebears of the of the Tsay Keh Dene Band fell into this category they were not covered under the treaty.[39]

Some population data specific to these forebears is available through the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission on Indian Affairs. This Commission, established jointly by the federal and British Columbia governments in 1912, re-examined the size of every reserve in the province to provide "a final adjustment of all matters relating to Indian Affairs in the Province."[40] In 1914, two Commissioners, Shaw and Carmichael, reported to the Commission's Chairman that they calculated the Fort Grahame Sekani at 57 people.[41] The Commissioners met a small hunting party of band members during their review but none were present at the Fort Grahame site because they were hunting and fishing. The Commissioners described them as Roman

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[39] Dennis Madill, "British Columbia Indian Treaties in Historical Perspective," Research Branch, Corporate Policy, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa 1981, 50.

[40] Tennant, Aboriginal People and Politics, 88.

[41] Commissioners Shaw and Carmichael, "Report to the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs," Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, File Number E5673-36/7 Volume 1, 26.

Catholics who met the priest at Fort McLeod Lake or Bear Lake or Fort Connelly and were:

> nomadic in their habits - they wander over a very extensive area of country there between the Finlay river and they go as far north as Laird and Nelson rivers, and they generally return to Fort Grahame in the spring and fall time and they have two or three little houses just back of the Hudson's Bay Company building.[42]

The final report of the McKenna-McBride Commission recommended in 1916 that two reserves be established near Fort Grahame for all Sekani who frequented the post.[43] Government moved slowly and Native land issues had a low priority. The Province of British Columbia and Canada did not accept these recommendations until 1923 and 1924 respectively, and not until 1938 did the province formally convey both reserves in trust for the use and benefit of the Sekani concerned.[44] The two reserves, called Finlay Forks Indian Reserve #1 and Police Meadows Indian Reserve #2, were within the traditional territory of the Fort Grahame Sekani. Although the Sekani concerned "traded at Fort Grahame and maintained several houses at the fort for summer use, their more important and permanent settlement was at Finlay Forks, 50 miles south."[45] Consultation with the Native people regarding the selection of both

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[42] Ibid.

[43] The allocation of these reserves further substantiates that the Tsay Keh Dene Band today is outside Treaty Eight because the Commission deferred action on all treaty lands to a future date.

[44] Ingenika Band, "Specific Land Claim," B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs' Ingenika File, Volume 3, 17 July 1987, 2.

[45] "The History of Ingenika," The Native Voice, April/May 1989.

sites appears to have been minimal at best. As was generally the case, the reserves were given non-Native names.

The Finlay Forks Reserve was located on 168 acres close to Fort Grahame. It became a year round village site for one of the large Sekani families because it was located next to its trapline.[46] The Police Meadows Reserve, situated on 320 acres, was so named because the North West Mounted Police had wintered there before heading to the Yukon. The Sekani used the site to raise hay for their horses, of which the Native community had several.[47] The area was sufficiently isolated that allocation of these reserves had little effect on the Sekani community which continued to use the full range of its traditional lands for hunting, trapping and fishing. The selection of these reserve lands, to the extent that the Fort Grahame Sekani were even aware of it, probably had little or no meaning for them. Their way of life was sufficiently isolated that it suffered no alteration.

This contention is supported by the recollections of six Tsay Key Dene Band Elders who, in 1992, were between the ages of sixty-seven and eighty-four.[48] All recall hunting and trapping in the bush and wearing some traditional clothing, particularly snowshoes and moose hide mittens and moccasins. All these Elders were born in the bush and speak Sekani most of the time but can communicate in English to some extent. They had peripheral contact with white prospectors, trappers and

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[46] Ingenika Band, "Specific Land Claim," 2.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Tsay Keh Dene Elders, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 - 10 June 1992.

Hudson's Bay clerks as far back as they can remember and from these contacts and their parents they learned some English. One Elder recalls transporting white people in the boat along the area's complex river network. Three Elders recollect going to Fort Grahame with their parents for supplies including ammunition and such staples as flour, tea, and sugar, all used to only a limited extent to supplement hunting. These Elders remember living entirely separate from but parallel to the few white people in the area. They were almost exclusively in the bush without access to medical or other services. One Elder gave birth to all of her seven children in the bush. Although all these Elders used Fort Grahame in particular as a gathering place, they had no sense of being confined to the reserve boundaries.

Photographs indicate that by the 1920s these Sekani people wore essentially store-bought clothing from the two trading posts with the exception of moose hide moccasins.[49] It would be misleading, however, to interpret non-traditional attire as indicative of acculturation. The people at Fort Grahame likely wore such clothing because they had direct access to it through the Hudson's Bay Company trading post. A provincial government social worker who worked with the Fort Ware Sekani recalls

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[49] Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia". Photographs of Sekani people discovered by Provincial Ministry of Forests employees in 1966 at Fort Grahame demonstrate that in the period 1938-47 Sekani people who gathered at the Fort wore primarily non-traditional clothing. These photographs show families preparing sleighs and snowshoes in the winter, building cabins, and playing guitar and violin. They are also shown with dog teams and a pack horse and there is one image of a float plane landing on a lake. The Ministry of Forests forwarded these photographs to the British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Victoria. (Accession No. PN13749-PN13854, British Columbia Archives and Records Service, Victoria, British Columbia.)

that as late as the mid 1970's some Sekani Elders wore part traditional garb.[50] Photographs in the period 1938-47 show Sekani people from the Fort Grahame area playing guitar and violin, skills likely gained not through in depth acculturation but through past exposure to French Canadian fur traders with the Hudson's Bay Company. Likewise, both the men and women Elders chew tobacco today, a habit acquired from fur trading times.[51]

Francis Isaac, an Elder in his forties, recalls his grandmother making traditional groundhog blankets and his mother making moose hide moccasins and mittens and, on one occasion, a winter coat of fox for his brother. His great grandfather wore traditional moose hide clothing. Francis Isaac is the only Band member who still operates a trapline and does leather work. He remembers hearing that, shortly after the allocation of reserves to the Fort Grahame Sekani, the group fragmented into the Fort Grahame and the Fort Ware communities. Fort Ware was established as a Hudson's Bay trading post in the 1920s and a number of the group traded there rather than travel south to Fort Grahame. Francis Isaac heard that this separation was initiated through a hunting trip at which a young man was accidentally shot by a member outside his family. According to Francis Isaac his people will go to all lengths to avoid conflict, such that a group of Elders determined that the two families concerned should separate. Thus the Fort Grahame community was split into the Fort

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[50] Mr. David Letchford, interview by author, telephone, Victoria, 27 February 1991.

[51] Tsay Keh Dene Elders, interview by author, personal, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

Grahame and the Fort Ware bands and ultimately in 1954 a reserve was formally established for the latter at Fort Ware.[52] Members of the two communities used the Finlay River to communicate with one another and maintained traditional meetings at a place called Ingenika. Both bands were comprised mostly of Sekani people, and they regularly intermarried.

It is likely that more pervasive and culturally intrusive non-Native contact commenced with compulsory attendance for some of the children at the Catholic Residential School of LeJac constructed in 1921 just outside Fort Fraser on the shore of Fraser Lake. This intrusion did not, however, alter the community's semi-traditional way of life, including its fluid approach to community membership. Residential schools such as LeJac were institutions specifically for Native children. Funded by the federal government and operated by missionaries, their purpose was to promote assimilation by suppressing all aspects of Native culture in what amounted to a form of "cultural annihilation". Federal officials believed the most effective means of achieving this goal was to remove the children from their parents and traditional homes. Residential schools provided a "Christian" environment where children learned to read and write English and were trained to be farmers and farmers' wives. The emphasis on farm work combined with religious requirements such as attending Mass meant that the reading and writing skills acquired by most of the students were minimal. The schools, which have become notorious for instances of physical,

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[52] D'Amore and Associates, "Community profile, 9.

emotional and sexual abuse, reached full development in the 1920s and were not phased out until the 1960s. There were a total of sixteen throughout the province, nine Catholic and seven Protestant.[53]

Commencing in the 1930s, a total of approximately twenty-four children from the Tsay Keh Dene community attended the large, austere and institutional looking brick building that was Lejac.[54] LeJac replaced the mission school at Fort St. James which no Fort Grahame Sekani attended probably because they were too remote for either the missionaries or the mounted police to locate them. The mission school, run by nuns from the Sisters of Child Jesus, had mainly served the Carrier peoples at Fort St. James. The new residential school was located at its isolated setting on the shore of Fraser Lake to remove the children completely from their parents and to acquire sufficient land for agricultural training.[55] The larger size of this new school, which eventually held approximately four hundred children, may have encouraged the missionaries to go further afield to find students from Native communities other than the Carrier peoples.[56]

Mary John, a Carrier, recalls reaching the newly opened Lejac residential school in February, 1922, by horse drawn sleigh and train. Because the new school

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[53] Tennant, Aboriginal Peoples and Politics, 79.

[54] Don Reynierse, Prince George Regional Office, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, interview by author, telephone, Victoria, 6 August 1991.

[55] Bridget Moran, Stoney Creek Woman (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1989), 37.

[56] Don Reynierse, Prince George Regional Office, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, interview by author, telephone, Victoria, 6 August 1991.

was comparatively modern, Mary and other children had high hopes that it would be less austere and strict than the Fort St. James mission school but this proved not to be the case. Mary remembers that:

> When a large plate of porridge was served for breakfast the next morning, I had my first warning that despite the modern building, nothing had changed. The pupils were separated according to sex as rigidly as they had been in the old Mission School. They were segregated in the classroom, the play areas, the chapel, the dining room. The nuns and missionaries were determined that the boys and girls - even those related to each other - should be kept apart. On my second day in Lejac, a boy was whipped in front of the whole school because he had wet his bed the night before. Soon after, the first girl was beaten for dropping a note near a boy's desk. In the first week, three boys ran away. They were brought back by the Mounties and thrashed in front of the whole school. The Indian language was forbidden as it had been in Fort St. James, and any student who broke this rule was punished. By the end of the first day I was hungry.[57]

One Tsay Keh Dene Elder recalls going by boat and train to LeJac in 1930. It is unclear for how long he attended the residential school, however, he is unable to read English today. He is able to sign his name after years of practise, but the process is very laborious for him. Francis Isaac attended at LeJac from 1941-1951 without going home because there was no transport from Prince George to Fort Grahame. He can speak, read and write English without difficulty. Upon returning home, he discovered that his grandmother had died and that everything looked strange and unkempt through his residential school eyes. After a difficult period of adjustment, he determined to reclaim his Native culture. He came under the wing of Jean's grandfather who taught him to hunt and helped him regain his Native roots. Francis

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[57] Moran, Stoney Creek Woman, 42-43.

Isaac did not enjoy residential school, but states today that while he was there, "I learned everything I need to know about the white society. This helped me a lot."[58]

Jean Isaac attended LeJac from September to June for seven years commencing in 1954 when she was five years old and remembers being confused, frightened and hungry. Before going to residential school she had never seen a car, a bathtub or any "modern things."[59] She had no idea what the nuns were saying and did not understand English until the end of the year. She remembers it as an oppressive institution where she was forbidden to speak her own language, was forced to attend Mass and made to feel ashamed of her culture. The LeJac experience was even more traumatic for Sekani children like Jean and Francis Isaac than for Carrier children because they were in the minority, had difficulty fully understanding the Carrier language as well as English, and were conscious of being in Carrier territory rather than their own - - a very important distinction for Native peoples. Francis Isaac recalls that when he returned to his people he spoke a Carrier influenced version of his language which was not quite the same as the Sekani spoken by the Fort Grahame group.[60] Jean Isaac coped with the situation by "deep inside always keeping a part of me locked away, linked closely to the Creator." She also called upon the gentle humour of her people and recounts what she refers to as one of several jokes she and her friends used at the residential school to keep their spirits alive. When they were

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[58] Tsay keh Dene Elders, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

[59] Mrs. Jean Isaac, interview by author, telephone, Prince George, 19 August 1991.

[60] Mr. Francis Isaac, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

told to sit down, they would do so, but would think to themselves, "we may be sitting down but in our hearts we are standing up."[61]

Tragically, many Native children died at residential schools. The children were forced to undertake hard manual labour as part of their training for future farm work and to produce food to augment the federal funds allocated to the church for operating the schools. They received meagre, non-traditional food and the stress induced by being homesick, afraid, facing a totally foreign culture and language, and being in an abusive relationship with the missionaries who viewed them as "savages" and who continually eroded their self-esteem was overwhelming. This emotional trauma, combined with being herded together in large and often cold dormitories where they ate and slept, helped lower their already weak resistance to diseases such as tuberculosis which had only recently been introduced to their peoples.[62] Given what they endured at residential school, it is understandable that the children who returned home were anxious to put the experience behind them and were not interested in pursuing close contact with non-Native peoples. Besides, life in communities such as that on the Fort Grahame Reserve was not uncomfortable. Jean Isaac describes her people's way of life there as follows:

> We had a reserve there, it was quite a size. The people used to do their own farming, growing potatoes, carrots, peas - peas grew real well up here - turnips, cabbages. Very rich soil, in the flats - all under the water now. It's not doing us any good now. We went hunting and

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[61] Mrs. Jean Isaac, interview by author, telephone, Prince George, 19 August 1991.

[62] Whitehead, They Call Me Father, 62.

> fishing from that area because it was our "stomping ground," so to speak. So we hunted and did our thing there in the summer, and in the winter everyone went trapping, brought in furs and sold them to the Hudson's Bay. The post was right at Fort Grahame. The trader's name would have been Larry Campbell. We were very self-sufficient people. That was around 1940-45.[63]

Francis Isaac remembers acquiring vegetable seeds through the Hudson's Bay Company, and that relations with the company clerks, although not close, were generally positive.

For all Native peoples in the northern interior, however, the likelihood of contact with non-Native people escalated dramatically commencing in 1942. In the course of nine months, the fifteen hundred mile long Alaska Highway was constructed to provide the United States with secure all weather access to Alaska for defense purposes during World War II. This project, which cut through the traditional territory of several Native peoples including the Sekani, injected considerable capital into the northeast economy into communities such as Dawson Creek and Fort St. John.[64] The Alaska Highway also established the groundwork for a transportation infrastructure which saw the initiation of regularly scheduled flights to the region. The development of oil and natural gas resources around Fort St. John, installation and maintenance of the mid Canada radar defense warning system, and grain sales to the U.S.S.R. and

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[63] Earl K. Pollen and Shirlee Smith Matheson, This Was Our Valley, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1989) 335.

[64] This project appears to have affected the Fort Grahame community only to the extent that its members infrequently came across non-Native land surveyors.

China brought a new level of economic activity to the region in the 1950's and 1960's. The most dramatic economic development, however, was the construction of the Bennett Dam.

The Fort Grahame community was too remote to witness much impact from the construction activity unfolding in preparation for the dam. As the primary non-Native settlement in the area, however, Hudson's Hope was inextricably linked with the dam's construction. Although the area had a non-Native presence for many years, not until the advent of the Bennett Dam did the community experience significant growth. By 1962, the community had grown to the extent that it was large enough to be recognized as a provincial "Improvement District".

The period 1962 to 1967 saw considerable investment in capital projects, including road improvements in Hudson's Hope and the surrounding area. A new bridge provided road access to Chetwynd and a new civic and community centre was erected. B.C. Hydro arranged for the construction of fifty houses for use by senior officials and teachers for the rapidly growing school population. While the community was still an "Improvement District," B.C. Hydro contributed to the cost of constructing a water supply and sewage systems; provided ninety percent of the cost of building an elementary and junior secondary school and gave grants for an indoor curling rink and a swimming pool. Such expenditures were necessary to attract and retain construction workers. By 1965 growth was such that the Improvement District was incorporated

into the municipal "District of Hudson's Hope".[65] Although the Bennett Dam brought considerable capital and prosperity to the region, not all members of the Hudson's Hope community benefitted. Unemployed men in the region hoped to get high paying jobs working on the project but hiring appears to have been conducted primarily out of union halls in Vancouver.[66] Decisions regarding the Dam's construction as well as the relocation of Native and other people were controlled from afar rather than by local individuals with a direct interest in the long-term consequences.

While the groundwork was being laid for the dam's construction, the Fort Grahame people continued to pursue an isolated, highly mobile semi-traditional way of life with minimal interference. They relied primarily on their traditional pursuits of hunting, trapping, fishing and berry picking. Babies continued to be born in the bush. Suzanne Tomah, an Elder, remembers that every spring she and her husband walked sixty-five kilometres with a dog team to Fort Grahame to trade their winter's furs. "We'd stay there a while and buy some rice, flour, tea, sugar and butter and walk back to the trap line...It was a good life, we were safe out there."[67] This way of life was

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[65] Beak Consultants Limited and Strong, Lamb & Nelson Ltd., "Socio-Economic Impact of Site One Hydro Development: A Report for B.C. Hydro and Power Authority," B.C. Hydro Reference Number A0275, September 1974, 8.

[66] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 140-141.

[67] "At 22, Russell Part of a Lost Generation," The Vancouver Sun, 12 June 1987.

augmented by occasional work at portable saw mills, as recounted by a band member:

> The young boys used to go out in the summer to work and come back in the fall with what money they had made and go trapping. They used to go out from river boats right from here (Ingenika) and from Fort Grahame and Fort Ware all the way down to McLeod Lake for jobs in the sawmills and all that when Catermole Timber moved to Finlay Forks in 1965. We lived in Finlay Forks for a couple of years, with the men working in logging camps.[68]

The whole area was exceptionally isolated and the only real contact with non-Native people was through Finlay Forks and the Hudson's Bay Company. Four Sekani families worked in the portable saw mills and their relationship with the owners was one of harmonious co-existence. Francis Isaac recalls that on rare occasions, a federal government Indian Affairs representative would visit for a couple of hours from Prince George, but there was no ongoing rapport with anyone from the federal government. He remembers being happy and healthy, and that his family used traditional medicine and food to remain that way. His people continued to use their traditional lands widely and had little sustained contact with outsiders.[69]

Federal government representatives who had little contact with this isolated Native community made administrative decisions without the community's knowledge. In 1959 they merged the Fort Grahame and Fort Ware Bands for administrative ease; as members of the former were based primarily at Finlay Forks, the two groups were

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[68] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 336.

[69] Mr. Francis Isaac, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

renamed the "Finlay River Band".[70] The Fort Grahame portion of this new Band, however, was not represented on the Finlay River Band Council. The series of floods which commenced in 1968 physically separated the two groups by water. In 1971, the Fort Grahame Group, which had relocated to a traditional gathering place at Ingenika, successfully petitioned the federal government to become the Ingenika Band, and the Fort Ware Group reverted to its former name as the Fort Ware Band. The confusion created by this constant shifting and changing of names which began with contact contributed to a lack of consultation prior to the flood, particularly as the Fort Grahame people, who were the most seriously affected, had no representation on the Finlay River Band Council. Their isolation and lack of representation and sustained contact with non-Native people, combined with the "cultural chasm" between their world and that of federal officials, helped contribute to the two entirely different views of this event.

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[70] Internal Indian Affairs correspondence, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 1, Box 75549, 2 April 1971.

CHAPTER 3

CULTURAL CHASM

An attempt to identify the "cultural chasm" between Native and non-Native interests is necessary to understand the dramatic differences in perception presented in the following chapter. The Tsay Keh Dene people have a different set of values and behaviours than Europeans. These differences are highly complex. They vary from being beyond the realm of understanding for outside cultures, to very subtle nuances within behaviours recognized and understood by both cultures. This "cultural chasm" creates a communication gap which:

> is the result of two totally different ways of looking at life, both of which are incredibly rich in unconscious values, customs, and patterns of sentiment, thought, language and action. Native and Non-Native people in Canada have lived for three centuries in an uneasy relationship based on two totally different ways of organizing and strengthening human relationships, two different ways of proving one's individual worth, two different ways of identifying and solving problems which affect a whole community, and two totally different ways of reaching group decisions.[1]

There is a saying that to capture a quick understanding of Native peoples is like compressing a caribou herd into a single bouillon cube. Both cultures have had difficulty understanding one another in what has been historically a relatively short period of contact. This problem is particularly acute in British Columbia where

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[1] David Smith, Chairman, Special Committee on the Disabled, "Follow-up Report: Native Population," Canada: House of Commons, December 1981.

sustained contact has been more recent than in other Canadian provinces. Both cultures are highly complex and have evolved over thousands of years. An analysis of the key differences, based on generalizations, however, helps to explain the extent of the cultural chasm between them.

Traditional North American Native culture emphasizes social order and communal values. European society tends to be highly individualistic and competitive. Such differences have evolved from adaptation to different continents resulting in:

> radically different answers to the problems of human existence. By the time of Columbus, after millennia of adjustment to the New World, the North American Indians had diversified into six hundred or so distinct groups, embracing a wide variety of language, culture and ways of life, but all well equipped to survive efficiently in their own areas... American Indians had developed their own characteristic ways of looking at the world which were profoundly unlike those of Europe.[2]

Native peoples emphasize achieving group goals through voluntary co-operation. Within this ethic, each person's independence is highly respected and any attempt to instruct, coerce or persuade another person to do something is unacceptable. So too is any demonstration of anger since it threatens the voluntary co-operation required for closely knit groups to survive in a subsistence environment. Consequently, even were a largely traditional Native group such as the Tsay Keh Dene to be offended or angered, such feelings would likely not be apparent to non-Native observers such as

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[2] Wilson, "Canada's Indians", 9.

government officials. The emphasis is on group survival as opposed to personal prosperity. Individuals take no more than they require and share the remainder with the rest of the community. No expression of thanks is expected or required.

The Native approach to learning has caused considerable problems for Native people taught by European methods. Native instruction starts at an early age and occurs throughout the day as informal modelling rather than formal shaping. Children and adolescents are encouraged to copy their parents and other members of the community as a matter of course without the use of formal times for instruction as in a European school setting. Residential schooling such as that provided at LeJac, therefore, represented a totally foreign, highly controlling experience. To learn about things of which they had no understanding or prior experience, traditional Native people had to see a tangible example. For the Tsay Keh Dene Band members to appreciate the implications of the proposed dam, they needed to witness a similar project. Verbal descriptions or even pictures would be insufficient to augment their existing worldview.

As Northern Athabascan hunting people, the Sekani of the Tsay Keh Dene Band "walk in the spirit and share the same source of power" as Beaver peoples.[3] Whereas meaningful anthropological information exists regarding the worldview of Beaver peoples, little appears to exist for the Sekani except for the insights provided by Tsay Keh Dene Elders such as Jean Isaac and her husband Francis. The Sekani

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[3] Mrs. Jean Isaac, interview by author, telephone, Prince George, 19 August 1991.

and Beaver peoples have the same appearance and share the Beaver-Sarce-Sekani branch of the Athabascan language such that distinctions drawn by non-Native anthropologists between the two groups appear to have been arbitrary. Jenness and Denniston maintained that they were one peoples who divided into several groups with minor differences in language and customs.[4]

Information on the Beaver peoples, as well as the insight provided by Elders, helps provide insight into the perspective of the Tsay Keh Dene people. Key sources on the Beaver peoples are provided by Hugh Brody, a writer and film maker who described his experiences living among them in Maps and Dreams and Robin Ridington, a University of British Columbia anthropologist, who details his experiences living with a Beaver community in two books: Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community and Little Bit Know Something: Stories in a Language of Anthropology. Ridington portrays the "thoughtworld" of the northern Athabascan "Dunne-za", or "Real People." His work, an oral history of this Beaver community, also examines the dynamics of change for them including the loss of their summer gathering place through expropriation by the federal government in 1945. He describes how their lack of exposure to the non-Native worldview left them defenceless against the interests of outsiders who wanted their land.[5]

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[4] Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," 6; Denniston, "Sekani," 443.

[5] Further insight into the adaptive capacity of northern Athabascan peoples such as the Tsay Keh Dene community is provided by P.I. Dickman, a District Director with the Manitoba Department of Health and Welfare. Dickman had direct experience with the Chipewegan peoples who were relocated to Churchill, Manitoba in 1960s. He observed

Ridington observes that the Dunne-za assume events occur after people have known and experienced them in myths, dreams and visions.[6] Through myths and dreams, human beings are integrally linked with animal, rock, wind and natural forces "people." He describes their perceptions of time and causality as follows:

> A moment in Indian time includes every other moment shared in the individual and collective memories of individuals, community, and culture. A single moment is meaningful in relation to every other moment that is part of shared experience. Communication within a small Native community relies extensively on a background of shared experience and unstated mutual understandings. Every moment is meaningful in relation to all moments that have gone before. Every event makes sense in relation to shared knowledge and experience. Communication within a particular moment refers back to the unstated understandings that connect people's lives together.[7]

The observations of Brody, Ridington and Dickman suggest that major changes through twentieth century technology would be incomprehensible to any isolated

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that, unlike future driven European peoples, Athasbascan peoples do not project forward in time to assess the various courses of action available prior to making a decision. Dickman speculates this is probably because of the subsistence and present oriented focus of their traditional way of life. He states that, given the absence of this concept of future among Athabascan peoples, there is considerable reason "for the disastrous effect urbanization and relocation has had upon the majority who have experienced it." Dickman, "Spatial Change and Relocation," John Rogge, ed., Developing the Subarctic, Manitoba Geographical Series 1, Department of Geography, The University of Manitoba, 1973, 148.

[6] Robin Ridington, Little Bit Know Something, xi.

[7] Robin Ridington, Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988) xiii-xiv.

Athabascan community even though it had an adaptive capacity. As Hugh Brody observes:

> The aboriginal inhabitants of what is now northeast British Columbia are the inheritors of one of the purest forms of hunting economy...Everything about the Indian of northeast British Columbia points towards a readiness to change and to move: hunting techniques, clothing, spiritual and religious systems that govern relations among people and between the people and their land, reliance upon knowledge and skill (which of course are carried in the head), and a resolute indifference to any accumulation of wealth... A readiness to adapt to new environments, to use different resources, and to seize new technological advantages has always been at the heart of Athapascan culture.[8]

No amount of flexibility within their traditional worldview and no shared vision or community memory could begin to capture an event such as flooding of the magnitude created through the Bennett Dam. These experiences clearly demonstrate the difficulty in informing such Native communities about major changes beyond the scope of their shared knowledge and understanding.

An informal attempt to describe the proposed dam to the people of Ingenika appears to have been made by a B.C. Hydro employee, Charlie B. Cunningham, in 1962. Cunningham recalls the general response of these Native people was "I guess I go someplace else when the waters rise."[9] Such comments were likely made in stoic acceptance and he recorded in his journal that "they expressed sadness that they would lose their good beaver traplines."[10] In fact, the people neither comprehended the

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[8] Brody, Maps and Dreams, 85.

[9] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 381.

[10] Ibid., 335.

magnitude nor the permanence of the flooding but Cunningham concluded that there was no Native hostility toward the dam. He showed maps to the Sekani people at Fort Ware and had the sense that they were useful in explaining the dam and related flooding.

Conversations with the Sekani Elders of the Tsay Keh Dene Band today, reveal a massive communication gap between the cultures which a non-Native person like Charlie Cunningham would have difficulty bridging. The Elders are very obliging and willing to please to the point where they will say yes and nod in response to facial cues, even though as the conversation unfolds it is clear that they do not understand what is being asked. Although they have a considerable English vocabulary, there is a vast difference between understanding words versus the way in which they are presented. Jean Isaac, who can bridge the cultures, explains that it is difficult to communicate with non-Native people because all conversations hold a number of "breaks" during which it is evident that the non-Native person no longer understands what is being discussed. She also describes non-Native people as assuming a "wary" look when an Elder such as herself attempts to explain Native spirituality.[11] A conversation with one Elder showed that the only point of mutual understanding was acknowledgement that communication between the two cultures is extremely difficult. While talking to non-Native people, the Elders find it necessary to break into Sekani

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[11] Mrs. Jean Isaac, interview by author, telephone, Prince George, 19 August 1991.

among themselves to help each other figure out what is being said.[12]

The extent of this gap between the two cultures is highlighted in an example provided by Ken Powell, a Hudson's Hope resident, in an interview with Earl Pollen and Shirlee Matheson. Although he often tried to explain the proposed dam to the people of Ingenika, they clearly could not comprehend what he meant:

> The only and biggest dam they had ever seen or heard about was a beaver dam, and when I would try to explain to them that a white man was going to build a dam on the other side of the mountain that would fill the whole valley, they seemed to think I had a few shots of whisky along the way.[13]

A.C. Geddes, also of Hudson's Hope, agreed "we were talking about a hydro dam, and they were talking about a beaver dam...They didn't speak very good English, they weren't educated people, they just didn't know."[14] The irony may well be that the ability of the Tsay Keh Dene people to speak English contributed to the communication gap. Government representatives may have been genuinely mistaken in assuming that a people who spoke English understood the concepts framed by the language.

The extent to which all the Tsay Keh Dene people understood any of the implications of the dam is difficult to determine. Even assuming they had some understanding of the magnitude of the project proposed, their concerns would likely

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[12] Tsay Keh Dene Elders, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

[13] Pollen, This Was our Valley, 322.

[14] Ibid., 333.

not be immediately apparent. Hugh Brody characterizes the Native peoples of northern British Columbia as:

> inclined to be gentle and self-effacing. Many of their elders regard displays of anger, noisy confrontation or polemic hyperbole as infantile and self-defeating. They prefer to speak quiet truths.[15]

Also important for appreciating the reaction of the Tsay Keh Dene people to relocation is the tendency of Native peoples to respond to dangerous or anxiety producing situations by displaying what may appear to non-Native people as a bewildering withdrawal characterized by increasingly slower and quieter behaviour."

The Native leader, Harold Cardinal, notes that whereas Europeans respond to an unfamiliar situation with aggressive experimentation described by the motto "Try and try again", the Native person "puts faith in observation. He waits and watches until the other actors show him the correct patterns."[16] The anthropologists Ron and Suzanne B.K. Scollon have similarly identified a broad range of the misunderstandings and stereotyping specific to Athabascan-European differences which demonstrate the need for cross-cultural knowledge and sensitivity in dealing with Native groups. (See Table 2.)

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[15] Brody, Maps and Dreams, x.

[16] Harold Cardinal, The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians, (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1969), 75.

TABLE 2

What's confusing to English speakers about Athabaskans	What's confusing to Athabaskans about English Speakers
They do not speak.	They talk too much.
They keep silent.	They always talk first.
They avoid situations of talking.	They talk to strangers or people they don't know.
They only want to talk to close acquaintances.	They think they can predict the future.
They play down their own abilities.	They brag about themselves.
They act as if they expect things to be given to them.	They don't help people when they can.
They deny planning.	They always talk about what's going to happen later.
They avoid direct questions.	They ask too many questions.
They never start a conversation.	They always interrupt.
They talk off the topic.	They only talk about what they are interested in.
They never say anything about themselves.	They don't give others a chance to talk.
They are slow to take a turn in talking.	They aren't careful when they talk about things and people.
They ask questions in unusual places.	
They talk with a flat tone of voice.	
They are too indirect, unexplicit.	
They don't make sense.	
They just leave without saying anything.	

Source: Ron and Suzanne B.K Scollon, Narrative Literacy and Face in Interethnic Communication. Norwood New Jersey: Abex Publishing Corporation, in "Cross Cultural Communication: Through the Looking Glass," Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Training Package for British Columbia Ministry of Native Affairs, 1989.

Not only are there communication problems but Native peoples and Europeans differ in their valuation of the importance of material wealth. The Native subsistence way of life is sharply focused on the community rather than the of belonging and a strong spiritual link with nature and the rhythm of the seasons. Thus, like similar northern Native peoples, the Tsay Keh Dene placed no value on owning permanent residences carefully maintained year round. The few temporary cabins they occupied, like the Beaver cabins encountered by Hugh Brody, were likely littered with a profusion of odds and ends of supplies such as empty sacks, pieces of leather and chopped wood. Brody, in describing a cabin owned by Joseph Patash, a Beaver person, explains what these dwellings represented to their owners:

> It is in this blur of stuff, this texture, that causes visitors to see dirt and untidiness where there is often in reality a minor store of all manner of spare parts...Beside Joseph's house is all the paraphernalia of an encampment, so much so that the house itself is diminished, and becomes a far less dismaying sight than if it were a home as such, a place to which domestic life is restricted. The appearance of poverty has its place in a more complicated system of life: Joseph's reserve home is one of several camps, cabins and accumulations of equipment that together are far more important than the condition, size or furniture of the house we are now visiting.[17]

Government representatives likely saw these cabins as confirmation that their owners could benefit from access to non-Native services and material wealth. Failure to recognize any value for all but two of the cabins used by the Tsay Keh Dene people partially explains why they received no compensation for loss of way of life. Federal

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[17] Brody, Maps and Dreams, 5.

government representatives, and at least some members of the Native community, regarded access to Mackenzie and its services as a positive move and assumed that their way of life would be dramatically improved by sustained access to non-Native culture and its broad range of services. For the Tsay Keh Dene people, however, close involvement with the Mackenzie community proved to be very different from their initial, limited contact with non-Native people.

The problems in attempting to access this non-Native community socially and the resulting difficulties associated with direct access to alcohol are not unique to the Tsay Keh Dene Band members. Brody explains that negative stereotyping of Native people in northern British Columbia has evolved from and is reinforced by the context within which Native and non-Native people generally meet. Non-Native people meet Native people:

> in the bars, on the street of towns where Native people do not live, in many situations that involve a plea for money, for a ride, for a sympathetic ear...Alternately, they meet Indians in places of employment where, in order to be a success, the Indian must somehow demonstrate ability at many non-Indian social and technical skills. In all these settings, Indians are forever being judged and found wanting by the standards of the dominant society. They are vulnerable to these standards when they are away from home and are conspicuous. They wander from the streets and sit in bars. Visits to town are often an aspect of spree drinking, and visibility strengthens the white man's idea that Indians spend much of their time, maybe most of it, drunk.[18]

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[18] Ibid., 251.

Robert Page, an historian, points to the curious dichotomy in the way some northern Native people such as the Tsay Keh Dene use alcohol. Conspicuous consumption demonstrates the financial wherewithal to succeed in the broader society, yet at the same time is used to escape from a world where Native people experience social alienation.[19] For the Tsay Keh Dene people, the problems of alcohol and negative stereotyping were interwoven with their inability to adjust overnight from a semi-traditional way of life to a wage economy.[20]

Perhaps the most profound cultural difference in terms of relocation is the Native sense of unity and kinship with nature and the land as contrasted with the European view. Ridington encountered northern Athabascan peoples who believed their:

> right to the land was demonstrated, at least in their own thinking, by their knowledge of it. They had not paid for the land or possessed it by changing it. Their right was the right of belonging. It was the right of knowing. Their relationship to the land was more complex, more deeply rooted, more spiritual than simple material possession. The Indians acted as if they and their ancestors had been on the land as long as the animals themselves...In spirit, they were autochthonous, born of the land. I felt in them a sense of place I had never before experienced.[21]

Within this spiritual sense of place and the tie to traditional lands, water holds a special significance for northern communities such as the Tsay Key Dene. Waldram

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[19] Robert Page, Northern Development: The Canadian Dilemma (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart Limited, 1986), 221.

[20] Mr. Francis Isaac, interview by author, personal, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

[21] Ridington, Trail to Heaven, 19.

states that it can be argued that:

> the true backbone of the northern Native community was not, and is not, the land, but rather the lakes, rivers and streams. Their service as transportation corridors was evident; but perhaps less evident was the interrelationship among the waterways, the Natives and the animals they hunted. As one Indian analyst described it: "Water is life. The rivers are the veins of Mother Earth for Indians."[22]

This belief meant that the dramatic change in the role played by water after the flood, even the inability to acquire safe drinking water, was devastating for the Tsay Keh Dene people.

Their intense, spiritual identification with all aspects of nature contrasts markedly with the western view. Alexander Spoehr in "Cultural Differences in the Interpretation of Natural Resources" offers valuable insight into how the differing views of Aboriginal and western peoples create a "cultural chasm". Aboriginal peoples live under a moral order which binds man, nature and the gods. Western man views himself as separate from nature, and God as separate from both man and nature. He sees nature as something to be dominated, controlled and manipulated to his advantage. Spoehr suggests the concept of "natural resources" may be unique to western man.[23] The exploitation of such resources is derived from his relentless

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[22] Waldram, As Long as the Rivers Run, 5.

[23] Alexander Spoehr, "Cultural Differences in the Interpretation of Natural Resources," in Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth, ed. William L. Thomas Jr., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956). (The Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Series in Geography, 99).

pursuit of new and more intensive uses for nature's raw materials. As indicated by the historian William Cronon, western peoples view such resources as being there for the taking as "extractable units" separate from the ecosystem as a whole.[24]

Construction of the Bennett Dam typifies this western attitude toward nature. The exploitation of northern resources is part of a larger philosophy best described as the Canadian "northern myth", or vision, of "the true north strong and free" which played a critical role in Canada's emergence as a sovereign nation.[25] It has also provided generations of Canadians with a sense of purpose and identity and with heroes such as coureurs de bois, Arctic explorers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Its historical roots are based on Canadian attitudes toward the north and resource exploitation which are fundamental to our cultural heritage and technological society. The north came to represent a sense of superiority symbolized by "energy, strength, self reliance, health, and purity,"[26] As recently as 1958, one year after formal steps were taken to assess the viability of constructing a major dam in northeast British Columbia, a federal government handbook stated that, "It is a curious fact that civilization has been expanding northward ever since the dawn of history...converging from both sides of the world toward a common centre."[27] Paradoxically, this

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[24] William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 21.

[25] Page, Northern Development, 2.

[26] Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 129.

[27] Ibid.

powerful and pervasive northern myth left no room to accommodate different resource attitudes and cultural needs such as those of Native peoples. This northern vision played a key part in creating the "cultural chasm" that allowed Native considerations to be overshadowed by the construction of the Bennett Dam.

Failure to recognize and accommodate Native interests in public policy decision making is not unique to Canada. Non-Native decision makers have tended to view Native communities as merely inhabitants of frontier lands awaiting civilization. Julian Berger in Report from the Frontier: The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples, indicates that in capitalist and communist countries alike, Aboriginal peoples are "often deemed to live in a kind of physical and philosophical unclaimed territory which is up for grabs."[28] Such attitudes foster the sentiment that Native subsistence economies are uncivilized and therefore unworthy of recognition or continuation. Moreover, it supports the paternalistic contention that the groups concerned will have considerably more if they are successfully integrated. Hugh Brody takes this notion a step further by suggesting that traditional Native hunting groups in northern Canada have not been recognized as maintaining a viable economy because:

> This self serving opinion removed, at an ideological stroke, any prospect for legal or moral opposition to European expansion into places where hunters lived. The possibility of a conflict of economic interest between frontiersmen and hunters was hypothesized into irrelevancy.[29]

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[28] Julian Burger, Report From the Frontier: The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1987), 15.

[29] Brody, Maps and Dreams, 55.

Lack of sensitivity to Native needs within this ethnocentric European view has been further compounded in recent decades by urbanization which removes man "from his biological moorings" and so immerses him in the immediate problems of urban living that he becomes an "egocentric man in a homocentric world ." [30] Bureaucrats, as representatives of the population at large, approached the relocation of the Tsay Keh Dene people from this urban perspective. They had little comprehension of the impact of relocation on the people concerned because they did not recognize their very different worldview. Just as the non-Native approach was incomprehensible to the Tsay Keh Dene people, so too was the Native worldview beyond the realm of full understanding for non-Native bureaucrats.

[30] Alexander Spoehr, "Cultural Differences in the Interpretation of Natural Resources," 100.

CHAPTER 4

TWO REALITIES

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

A single set of events unfolded before and after September 28, 1968, when W.A.C. Bennett turned on the first three generators of the dam named after him at its official opening. Yet this single set of events generated two radically different realities; a Native and non-Native perspective. The following chronological overview attempts to capture the key events surrounding the series of floods which commenced in 1968 to create the Williston Reservoir behind the Bennett Dam; it does not explore in detail the extensive and time-consuming federal and provincial negotiations to clarify such items as mineral rights and road access to potential sites examined as replacement reserve lands. Following this overview is first the Native and then the non-Native interpretation of these key events.

The Department of Indian Affairs, (Indian Affairs)[1], first investigated the potential of the Bennett Dam affecting Native interests in December, 1959. While attempting to discern which reserves could be at risk of flooding, it noted in 1961 that the Native community which had grouped around the Finlay Forks Reserve close to

[1] In 1959, the federal government agency concerned with Native peoples was the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. In 1968 it was named the "Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development." The Agency responsible today is "Indian and Northern Affairs Canada." For consistency's sake, the federal government department responsible for Native issues is referred to as "Indian Affairs" throughout this chapter.

the former Fort Grahame trading post had moved onto provincial crown land at Finlay Forks.[2] Indian Affairs constructed six houses on skids to accommodate these people until a satisfactory replacement reserve could be selected after the extent of flooding was fully determined.[3] With no concept of being restricted to a defined reserve area, the Native community continued to pursue a highly mobile and seasonal way of life throughout its traditional territory.

By 1962, Indian Affairs was regularly corresponding with B.C. Hydro because it was well aware that Native interests would be affected by the Bennett Dam. As a result of the Department's investigations, particularly with regard to compensation for flooded traplines, the Provincial Comptroller of Water Rights, a government agency established to oversee water management throughout the province, advised Indian Affairs that it must formally register any objections on behalf of Native peoples by April 21, 1962. Indian Affairs advised the Comptroller on April 12, 1962 of its objection to granting a water license for the Peace River hydro project, as it had received no formal information from which it could accurately assess the project's

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[2] Internal Departmental correspondence, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4-0 Volume 3, Box 302282.

[3] Ibid. This move from the Finlay Forks Reserve close to Fort Grahame represented the culmination of a gradual shift away from the area after the Hudson's Bay Company closed its store at the former trading post in 1949. The Fort Grahame group dispersed to a number of centres, but notably southwards to the Finlay Forks area where they were employed in lumber mills and on booms or in construction as far south as Prince George. They travelled down the Parsnip River to their place of employment in the summer and returned to a more traditional Native environment in the fall. (Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number B8260-294 Volume 1, 8 April 1971.)

impact on Native interests. Although Indian Affairs surveyed some Native trappers, the Native community as a whole was neither consulted nor invited to participate in this process. In May, Indian Affairs and B.C. Hydro officials agreed to co-operate in determining compensation for inundated traplines and general land concerns and ensure that the Bands concerned authorized the final settlement of all land issues.

In response to Indian Affair's concerns regarding Native interests, the Comptroller called a public hearing at Chetwynd on August 2 at which an Indian Affairs representative, contending that the Native way of life throughout the area to be flooded would be deleteriously affected, explained that the Department was concerned "mainly with a fair and reasonable compensation" for any immediate and future losses of tangible and intangible Native assets."[4] On August 7, 1962, immediately after the hearing, a senior Indian Affairs official in British Columbia reported to Ottawa that "there would appear to be no doubt that the Hydro Authority will compensate for trapline flooding." He further indicated that the relationship between Indian Affairs and B.C. Hydro was "of a very high standard and we expect to be given the fairest of treatment."[5] This treatment, however, was defined very narrowly as compensation for flooded traplines. Loss of a way of life and damages caused by forced relocation were not negotiated. On December 21, 1962, a water license was issued for hydro

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[4] Public Departmental Statement at Chetwynd, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 2 August 1962.

[5] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 7 August 1962.

power generating purposes on the Peace River and its tributaries, without full consideration of Native interests.

Indian Affairs representatives first visited the Native community in December, 1963 with regard to the series of anticipated floods.[6] Two months earlier, B.C. Hydro advised the Department that the flooding would affect only the Finlay Forks Reserve.[7] The Native community, however, had no comprehension of what was discussed. By September, 1964, B.C. Hydro had indicated to Indian Affairs that this reserve would not be flooded until the spring of 1968.[8] Although the Department realized that this provided a fair amount of lead time, it had difficulty in bringing the various groups of the Native community together to discuss the selection of replacement lands, particularly as many of the men were working in widely scattered locations.[9] Throughout 1965 Indian Affairs continued to work with B.C. Hydro to settle the issue of compensation for traplines and B.C. Hydro provided $807.00 for two Native cabins

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[6] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 16 December 1963.

[7] B.C. Hydro correspondence to Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 24 October 1963.

[8] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 16 September 1964.

[9] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 7 April 1964.

which were to be flooded.[10]

By November, 1966, however, the Native community approved selection of the Tutu Creek and Parsnip River Reserves in a Band Council Resolution. Although some Band members signed the Resolution, they did not understand its implications and had no authority to speak on behalf of the whole Native community. The details of the land exchange were finalized in 1967 and the Finlay Forks Reserve lands, including a Native cemetery site close to the former Fort Grahame trading post, were flooded in the spring of 1968.[11]

THE NATIVE REALITY

For the Tsay Keh Dene people the information provided prior to the physical impact of flooding held little import because they could not comprehend it. The project, the flooding and the resulting need for relocation was entirely foreign to their worldview. When the first of a series of floods occurred in the Spring of 1968, the Finlay River Band numbered approximately two hundred people. Fort Grahame, Fort Ware, Finlay Forks and a traditional gathering place at Ingenika were the Band's key camps. Band members were also dispersed throughout the Sekani Trench in fledgling groups living out of log cabins abandoned by non-Native trappers and prospectors

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[10] B.C. Hydro correspondence to Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 4 March 1965.

[11] Tsay Keh Dene community, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1991.

from which they hunted, trapped and fished. They were utterly bewildered when they say the water level start to rise.

Jean Isaac said, "the lake is just like something we never dreamed would happen - like a bad dream."[12] Prior to the flooding, their contact with non-Native people was limited and few members of the Native community were fully comfortable communicating in English. Band members had no access to newspapers or television. Francis Isaac and Gordon Pierre confirm there was no established relationship with the Indian Affairs agent responsible for their region. In fact they have only vague memories of a federal representative coming to their area, and still joke ruefully today if anyone coming to see them stays for more than the usual "two hour stop over."[13] Jean Isaac recalled that by the time they were aware that something was happening, "things were already partly done, the machinery was already there - that's how they caught us."[14] In 1987, Chief Edward John of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council observed that "To this day even, many of them still don't know what happened."[15]

From the Tsay Keh Dene perspective, rumours about the Bennett Dam and a flood first occurred in the early 1960s through occasional contact with non-Native trappers and Hudson's Hope residents. Jean Isaac recalls "When we first heard

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[12] Mrs. Jean Isaac, interview by author, telephone, Prince George, 19 August 1991.

[13] Tsay Key Dene community, Interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1991.

[14] Mrs. Jean Isaac, interview by author, telephone, Prince George, 19 August 1991.

[15] Terry Glavin, "Dam Flooded Valley, Claiming Tribal Life," The Vancouver Sun, 12 June 1987.

rumours of a flood we knew they could not be true. We could not believe that anyone would ever do such a thing to this valley."[16] B.C. Hydro and federal government officials initiated discussions but offered no meaningful descriptions of the magnitude of the dam. And, what they did say was only partially heard. Jean Isaac explains that her people put aside the information they do not understand, then smooth away the parts they do not like, and finally, accept the parts they do understand. No Band member received any written information or advice as to how to put forward concerns. Few members would have been comfortable reading any documentation or exploring options around formally resisting the hydro initiative even were they presented to them.

As a teenager, Albert Poole thought that rumours of the dam and the jobs it would create were "exciting. They were talking about jobs and stuff. But we never knew what would be the long-term effect of a dam. We figured it wouldn't affect us here, up at the Ingenika."[17] Some of his elders were concerned when non-Native people working on the project were less than forthcoming about what was happening. When Thomas Toma, Jean Isaac's father, saw surveyors, he asked them what they were doing. They were very evasive and replied that they were surveying for timber cruising.[18] Similarly, Maggie Pierre's father asked the surveyors "how would they

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[16] Susan Klassen, "The Great Flood, Part Two of the Heart of Ingenika," The Mackenzie Times, 7 March 1989.

[17] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 336.

[18] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 335.

feel if I went to the city and started hanging ribbons all over the place and told you that was for smashing down your houses?"[19]

Subsequently, Albert Poole observed, "There was never an impact assessment done by any of them, Hydro, or the Indian Agents, or you may as well say the B.C. government. Nothing. Not of this area."[20] Jean Isaac remembered that:

> No one ever came to explain...They never said anything to that point until the day that they came, in 1965, around that area. The DIA went to certain people, and it was only the people whose traplines the water was going to affect. They told them "There's going to be a flood and we want to give you so much money. Twenty-seven hundred dollars to each head of the family". And then what they did was, they didn't give the money to the people. They told them, "We'll hold it in office for you". This was Mr. Preslosky at the time, the Indian Agent. He didn't give the money to them, he gave them maybe $100 or $200 for spending money. Then what he did with the rest of it, he bought bedrolls and motors and power saws for the older people, who owned traplines down below the south part. They were older men, really old, old men. So the older men didn't mind getting the new bedrolls, new power saws, yet they didn't realize they were paying for it themselves. Then all of a sudden they had no more money, because they'd got it paid to them with these things. And no trapline to boot.[21]

Communication between Indian Affairs officials and Band members concerning financial compensation for traplines also resulted in conflicting interpretations. B.C. Hydro viewed the $35,000 paid for the entire Native community, as a one-time pay out.[22] Band members, in contrast, understood that the compensation offered was for

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[19] The Native Voice, April/May 1989.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4-0 Volume 3, Box 302282, 26 October 1962.

one year only, and that additional compensation would be discussed once the reservoir's water level was stable.[23] As further consultation and compensation never occurred, many Band members did not receive the additional amounts they expected. Moreover, some Band members claim that their traplines were never identified for compensation.

After hearing rumours about a flood, receiving promises of trapline compensation and seeing surveyor's ribbons along the new water line, the next tangible indication that something was happening occurred when B. C. Hydro officials burned several cabins situated below the flood line. Some, but not all, Band members were advised in advance that their cabins would be burned and their belongings set aside for later collection. Most of the band was at Finlay Forks working at contract logging. When Francis Isaac returned to Fort Grahame, he discovered that:

> They burned our houses with everything in them. Some of the men had guns and stuff underneath the floorboards, so nobody would know where they were, and all that was burned. And our pots and pans. Everything. There were five houses, our church and everything, burned in Fort Grahame, and another five or six houses - six houses to be correct - right here in Ingenika Point.[24]

Albert Poole recalls how his father, a trapper, "came home one day to find his cabin burned...Everything was burned: guns, pictures, all that. It was all gone." Poole's

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[23] The Native Voice, April/May 1989.

[24] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 338.

father received a total of $2,700 compensation for his flooded traplines but nothing for his property or loss of way of life.[25]

When the first of a series of major floodings occurred, most of the Band was at Finlay Forks where the men were seasonally employed at the sawmill. In the spring of 1968, some of the Band's young men who were not at Finlay Forks returned from hunting moose and trapping beaver, lynx and marten:

> They stood on the hillsides and stared in disbelief. In the distance, the valley was slowly disappearing beneath a flood of rising water. They hurried to the abandoned Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Grahame to find their homes deserted, burned to the ground.[26]

For the twenty-two villagers who had remained at Finlay Forks, the flood rapidly became a nightmare. Jean Isaac remembers that in May, 1968:

> what happened was we saw the water rising and we thought it was just from the run off. Then it started to go over the banks and came quite close to our homes. Then the DIA called John Harvey, a DIA helper, and he came down and he said, 'We're going to move you people out because the river is already rising and you have no chance to do anything'. So what he did was he just hooked up our houses, those that could be moved, and he started moving them. He moved the whole thing. On skids. Some people weren't as lucky: they could only take the bare necessities. The rest of their stuff they left for overnight, and by the time overnight came, the houses were floating away.[27]

The fact that the first of a series of floods occurred in May had special significance for the Tsay Keh Dene people. According to Jean Isaac, her people feel a profound link with the seasons which they followed traditionally for their livelihood.

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Glavin, "Dam Flooded Valley, Claiming Tribal Life," The Vancouver Sun.

[27] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 337.

They believe that "you don't touch anything in the spring because Nature is coming forth." Her people see the new seedlings try to grow and the new generation wildlife come into being. When this new life was interrupted so violently by the flood, "Nature was crying out, and we felt it."[28] The Band attempted to save as much of the wildlife as possible, but once the flood was unleashed, animals drowned even as Band members attempted to rescue them. One member recalled:

> One time we were coming up Five Mile Creek we heard a moose calling. Here a bull moose was caught under a tree. We chopped at it but by the time we got it loose he had already drowned. When we got to shore a moose calf was nearby which we brought to shore...We even used to rescue squirrels, bring them to dry land.[29]

Elders still remember the stench of rotting moose and other animal carcasses floating on the water's surface.[30] Around them, the pristine environment had become a living nightmare.

The Isaac family at Ingenika Point had to move their makeshift tent to higher ground. "We were never really told how high the water would come. At one point word was spread that the lake would reach "the 250 foot level."[31] This description was meaningless to them. Not until the water started to rise dramatically did the Band and government officials begin to recognize the full extent of destruction to the environment. The Tsay Keh Dene people watched as the flooding covered their burial

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[28] Mrs Jean Isaac, interview by author, 15 August 1991.

[29] The Native Voice, April/May 1989.

[30] Tsay Keh Dene Elders, interview by author, personal, Ingenika, 9 June 1991.

[31] Klassen, "The Great Flood," The Mackenzie Times, 7 March 1989.

grounds and sacred gathering places. Bill Bloor, a non-Native person who ran a small store at Finlay Forks, remembers that:

> One evening as the waters were coming up, I went over to where the Natives were. They had campfires lit, all in a row. They were seated around the campfires. It was as though I had come to a funeral. Like a vigil, they were watching what was happening. The older people were weeping. They were saying, "no more good land". They knew it was no longer safe. It was a very, very sorrowful sight.[32]

Not only did the flood destroy the land, the creation of the Williston Lake reservoir formed a physical barrier between the Fort Grahame and Fort Ware groups of the Finlay River Band. When the area around Fort Grahame at the Finlay Forks Reserve was flooded, the Native community felt it had no choice but to move to the two replacement reserves arranged with them and B.C. Hydro and Indian Affairs. These new reserves, named Tutu Creek and Parsnip, were several miles further away from the Fort Ware portion of the Finlay River Band but were close to a number of services and provided access to jobs at nearby Mackenzie sawmills. Indian Affairs assumed that more contact with non-Native people, their services and their jobs would benefit the Native community. As well, the department could minimize the costs associated with providing adequate services to an exceptionally isolated community. But this approach overlooked the problems associated with small town northern British Columbia including negative sentiments toward Native people. No attempt appears to have been made to prepare the Band for direct and sustained contact with non-Native

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[32] Ibid.

society. Because alcoholism is part of the stereotype of Native peoples, employers in Mackenzie were reluctant to hire them. They also had virtually no opportunities to meet on equal social grounds with the members of the community.

The Band was unable to trap on the two new reserves and the surrounding area because they were already being trapped by other Native groups or logged. And, it could not pursue other aspects of the traditional way of life because travel on the debris strewn reservoir was hazardous. Some Band members simply remained in the homes provided for them on the new reserves and turned to drink. Gordon Pierre, Chief of the Tsay Keh Dene Band, remembers that "Everybody was drinking. It was bad. Something had to be done."[33] As a first step to regaining a sense of autonomy, the group at the Parsnip Reserve established themselves as the Ingenika Band in 1970. This made them distinct from the Finlay River Band, the head office of which was located at Fort Ware approximately eighty miles away. By the close of 1971, the Tsay Keh Dene people had abandoned both the Parsnip and Tutu reserves. Approximately sixty Ingenika Band members moved to Ingenika Point but a few returned to Fort Ware and some went to Prince George and other surrounding non-Native communities. The move to Ingenika Point represented an attempt to regain a sense of community by pursuing a more traditional way of life to become free from the pervasive and damaging influence of alcohol and its related despondency and family violence. Ingenika Point was chosen because it was on the unflooded portion of the Band's

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[33] Ibid.

traditional territory and the surrounding area was good for hunting.[34]

Although Ingenika Point represented new hope, those who returned to it were anxious because they did not know the extent of the impact of flooding. Jean Isaac, one of those who returned, explains that:

> When we moved back up here from Finlay Forks we came on the barge - a long ride- one night and half day. Pretty dangerous with so much kids, windy day too. We got lost at the Ospika. Imagine getting lost in your own country. It became windy, we had to crowd in the back of the boat to keep above the waves. We could hardly even recognize our own country.[35]

The impact of flooding on the landscape and climate was devastating. The large expanse of open water on the reservoir generated winds which in turn created dust storms with the newly deposited silt. These storms interfere with the traditional method of drying meat and fish in the open, cause eye and upper respiratory problems and create massive log jams as they push debris into bays on the reservoir. Land around the perimeter of Williston Lake erodes continuously, yet B.C. Hydro has authority to adjust the reservoir level by up to forty feet without warning. Boat docks and the boats moored at them can be irreparably damaged by changing levels of water and people travelling on skidoos on the frozen lake surface have fallen through to a previously frozen lake level several feet below. Moreover, only a small portion of the Sekani Trench was cleared prior to the flood. As the submerged timber decays, it

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[34] The Native Voice, April/May 1989.

[35] Ibid.

shoots toward the surface like missiles and endangers travel. The rotting timber also contributes to the reservoir's high coliform count which makes it unpotable. Because of the flood and logging, wildlife in the area has declined and trapping no longer provides an economic base. Flooding has also reduced the fish population and changed the species mix.

As well as this environmental devastation, the Tsay Keh Dene people had to contend with a maze of bureaucratic technicalities. The new location at Ingenika was on provincial crown land, not recognized as a reserve by the federal government. The Band was ineligible, therefore, for federal capital programs for community infrastructure or for tax concessions applicable to reserves. Technically, the Band was "squatting" on provincial crown land. The provincial government claimed the entire issue was solely a federal responsibility. The circumstances of the people of Ingenika, therefore, fell into a grey area for which neither jurisdiction was prepared to take any action.

The Tsay Keh Dene perspective of these events is best summarized in a legal document prepared in 1987 by a lawyer hired by the Band.[36] This lawyer worked closely with Chief Edward John of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council of which the Tsay Key Dene Band became a part.[37] The Band alleges that the federal government

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[36] Ingenika Band, "Specific Claim," 17 July 1987.

[37] The Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council was established by Native peoples to represent those of Carrier or Sekani ancestry residing on or off reserves. From 1968 - 1979 it was known as the Lakes District Council of Chiefs. In 1979 it was incorporated under the B.C. Societies Act under its present name. INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number B8260-

failed to uphold its fiduciary obligation whereby it must ensure that Indian land is not put to uses incompatible with Indian title unless the Native people affected agree. Specifically, the Band states that both its traditional territory and the Finlay Forks Reserve within it were not protected and that the federal government failed to present the Band's full interests to B.C. Hydro and the Provincial Water Comptroller. The document stresses that the Band did not simply lose 168 acres of reserve lands but access to hundreds of square miles of traditional territory which formed the basis of its spiritual and cultural survival. The Band also lost its traditional means of livelihood and the water transportation network integral to its economic wellbeing and internal communication.[38] No compensation was provided for the timber which was flooded, although the Band's interest in timber is for the forest and wildlife habitat rather than the monetary aspects of logging.[39] Moreover, the disruption caused by relocation caused an entire generation of the Band to lose access to schooling, a problem which still causes consternation.[40]

The Band also charges the federal government with failing to prevent B.C. Hydro from flooding their territory and transferring the Finlay Forks Reserve without the informed consent of a majority of Band members. Furthermore, the Band lacked

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[38] Ingenika Band, "Specific Claim," 17 July 1987.

[39] Internal Departmental "Report on Ingenika Band of Indians in occupation of Crown Lands at Ingenika River," INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File 985/8-4-0 Volume 3, Box 302282, 13 April 1974.

[40] Chief Gordon Pierre, interview by author, Ingenika, 10 June 1992.

any representation when the transfer took place because when Indian Affairs amalgamated the Fort Grahame and Fort Ware Bands in 1959, the Band Council consisted of members of the Fort Ware group only. The Band feels strongly, therefore, that prior to the transfer of its reserve, the Department's "consultation" with it "amounted to no more than forcing isolated and unrepresentative groups of Band members to agree to DIA's choice of replacement lands."[41] The Band also alleges that the Department used undue influence to obtain the consent of some Band members to exchange the Finlay Forks Reserve for the Tutu Creek and Parsnip Reserves.

THE NON-NATIVE REALITY

The non-Native reality is that, during the late 1950s when the provincial government first considered Peace River hydro development, neither government representatives nor the general population recognized or understood the Native interests involved. Apart from the trappers and loggers who had some contact with Sekani peoples, the only non-Native people even aware of the Sekani presence in the area to be flooded were Indian Affairs representatives. None of these people had close or long standing ties with the Native communities. The trip to Finlay Forks and the surrounding area took approximately one and a half hours by float plane from Indian Affairs' Prince George Regional office. Moreover, the prevalent view of the larger

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[41] Ingenika Band, "Specific Claim," 17 July 1987.

population was that the northern interior was an undeveloped, yet to be exploited hinterland with significant potential for servicing the stable, permanently settled lower mainland. The non-Native reality was further coloured by the political will of the day, mirrored elsewhere throughout North America, which stressed growth and job opportunities tied to economic development. Moreover, the full impact on the environment simply was not appreciated. As Gordon Pierre, Chief of the Tsay Keh Dene Band observed, "They just went ahead and done it. I don't think they ever dreamt it would flood such a big area. I honestly believe that."[42]

The provincial government's lack of awareness and understanding of Native interests was exacerbated by the selection of a British engineering firm, Thomson-Houston Co., to explore the area's hydro development potential. This well established firm had undertaken projects in Canada since at least the turn of the twentieth century. It was probably employed for this initiative because no Canadian engineering firm had experience with projects of the scale contemplated. Thomson-Houston Co. indicated in its final report, presented to the provincial government in 1958, that the Peace River was almost completely undeveloped and virtually uninhabited. The only human activity identified was ranching, "Otherwise, the reservoir area at the moment is largely virgin forest, with less than a hundred permanent inhabitants."[43] No mention

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[42] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 343.

[43] The British Thomson-Houston Co. Ltd., "Report on the Feasibility of Constructing Dams on the Peace River for the Generation of Hydro-Electric Power in the Province of British Columbia: Volume 1 - Text and Appendices," B.C. Hydro Reference Z0812 (London: 1958), 1.

was made of three hundred or more Native people in the area because the British engineers had no knowledge of these isolated, completely inconspicuous people scattered across a wide territory.[44]

In addition to failing to identify the Native community and its interests, the feasibility study only speculated on the full environmental implications of constructing the dam and creating as a reservoir, "one of the largest artificial water surfaces ever considered." Although there was no body of knowledge based on previous experience in a similar terrain on which the report could draw, the study indicated that "developed to its full extent, the reservoir could provide useful water communication along its length, and open up hitherto untapped natural resources."[45] It also suggested that silting would not pose serious problems because of the volume and length of the reservoir.

This positive assessment helped provide the impetus for the provincial government to proceed with the project although it had no real comprehension of the overwhelming magnitude of the dam's impact on the environment. On February 3, 1960, Ray Williston, Minister of Lands and Forests, told the Legislative Assembly that the "dramatic explosion affecting British Columbia's hydro-power development in the nineteen sixties," would bring the province to the attention of the entire industrial

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[44] D'Amore & Associates Ltd., "Community Profile" (Quebec: 1980), 9.

[45] Thomson-Houston Co. Ltd., "Peace River Feasibility Study," 1.

world. "This hydro explosion," he explained:

> will be fused in the Power Trench of the Province - a phenomena of our geography which could be likened to the human spinal cord that makes possible the coordinated activity of the human body. In simile, the flow of the nerve impulses in the Power Trench would be regulated flows of water and transmitted energy. The resulting coordinated development of our whole Province could then be likened to the activity of a normal adult person rather than the partially trained and non-coordinated child which seems now to be our condition.[46]

This political will was ultimately translated into the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority (B.C. Hydro), a Crown corporation established under a new British Columbia Power Development Act on August 3, 1961 to implement and manage both the Peace River and Columbia River power projects as publicly owned resources. However, work on the Peace River project had already begun.

The provincial government and its agency, B.C. Hydro, firmly believed that the Government of Canada was solely responsible for protecting any Native interests associated with this project. In any case, B.C. Hydro was more concerned by the sheer magnitude of the project which, along with the contemporaneous Columbia River hydro development, represented the largest hydro initiative attempted at one time anywhere in the world. Between them, the provincial government estimated that employment and industrial activity in British Columbia would be assured for the next two decades. By 1966, almost 3,000 people in Hudson's Hope alone were working on the Peace River project. Financing the project and recruiting technical engineering

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[46] Honourable R.G. Williston, "Address in the Speech from the Throne Debate, British Columbia Legislative Assembly," British Columbia, 3 February 1960, 1.

experts and manual labourers were B.C. Hydro's sole priorities. Native relocation, to the extent that it was even recognized, was not an issue for the fledgling Crown corporation in charge of the $1.0 billion Peace River project and the $1.5 billion Columbia River development.[47]

Indian Affairs first became involved in December, 1959, when an employee with the Stuart Lake Agency discerned from publicity that up to five Indian reserves could be affected. It did not, however, alert any Native communities because it did not have specific details. The employee set about getting a better understanding of what was at stake so the Native interest could be fully identified. He informed the Vancouver Regional Office that there had been considerable publicity in the newspapers relating to the proposed flooding of the Rocky Mountain Trench and requested information about the Bennett Dam, particularly any maps from which to evaluate the impact on Indian reserves throughout the reservoir area.[48] The Vancouver Regional Office forwarded numerous maps and technical studies to the Stuart Lake Agency over the next three years to pinpoint where the eventual waterline would flood reserves. It is evident from the files that the engineers involved with constructing the project were themselves trying to determine what the full impact would be.

On May 2, 1962, Indian Affairs initiated a meeting with several B.C. Hydro

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[47] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 175, 195.

[48] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 16 December 1959.

representatives to discuss Native concerns. They agreed there would be full co-operation "towards settlement of inundated trapline claims and general land matters" and "that final settlement of land matters must pass through the Band for their authorization."[49] The two parties also exchanged trapline lists and numerous maps. On August 2, 1962, when Indian Affairs publicly objected to B.C. Hydro's water license application to the Provincial Comptroller of Water Rights, it felt it was representing the Native interest when it expressed concern that the project would:

> dispoil [sic] the Indians' lands with attendant mineral rights, timber rights and resort value as well as seriously interfering with the livelihood of many who continue to follow the age-old pursuit of trapping...In view of the lack of many specifics involving the behaviour and eventual rhythm of the project, it is impossible to determine or forecast the terminal result of the flooding on the lives and lands of the Indian people involved...Perusal and application of one inch to the mile maps indicates that exact water levels and their subsequent effect cannot be determined until the filling of the reservoir takes place. The element of suspense and the undetermined result indicates that compensation for the aforementioned loss of reserves by inundation must be carried out by equitable transfer of suitable lands, should the water license be granted...Loss of the age-old pursuit of trapping and hunting either wholly or in part, constitutes a real problem to those who follow this vocation. Replacement is virtually impossible. While traplines encompass many square miles, flooding usually annexes the productive low-lying areas including trails, trapsets and in many cases, cabins...Older trappers, among them women, set in their ways and unskilled in present day crafts, are the main victims of this proposed change. Advancing and receding lake levels force fur bearers - particularly aquatic animals - to forsake their normal range. They easily become victims of predators or starvation. Linked together, this change of events quickly leads to the demise of a trapping fraternity. It seems only reasonable, therefore, to expect compensation for the loss of a resource use which has become a dominant factor in the lives of the

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[49] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 2 May 1962.

Indian people in question since time immemorial.[50]

Indian Affairs officials privately took the position that "regardless of legal obligation, when a development has the effect of wiping out a person's means of livelihood, the developer should recognize the moral obligation to compensate affected persons."[51] Although Indian Affairs wanted to see recognition and compensation for Native interests, nowhere in its files is there any indication that it considered preventing this hydro development project to protect the semi-traditional way of life in the area. It is likely that Indian Affairs viewed this "progress" as inevitable and accepted it without question, provided some form of compensation was made.

Field staff from the Stuart Lake Agency made several trips into the area to discuss the project and genuinely solicited the input of the Native community.[52] During December 10-11, 1963, for example, a regional Indian Affairs official visited the Fort Grahame and Ingenika settlements and spoke with six families, noting that the remainder were absent tending to their traplines. He left with the understanding that the six heads of households wanted a land exchange rather than a cash settlement.[53]

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[50] Public Departmental Statement at Chetwynd, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 2 August 1962.

[51] Internal Departmental correspondence, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 25 April 1962.

[52] Internal Departmental correspondence and notes to file, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618.

[53] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 16 December, 1963.

He also noted that a number of the group had adapted to the wage economy in the area's forest industry. Two weeks later, B.C. Hydro advised Indian Affairs that two, rather than the five reserves initially identified, would be flooded -- Finlay Forks and Police Meadows.[54] Over the next year, B.C. Hydro refined its assessment of the reservoir's impact and by October, 1963, informed Indian Affairs that only the Finlay Forks Reserve of the Fort Grahame community would be affected.[55] At that time, B.C. Hydro thanked Indian Affairs for its assistance, particularly for its "dealings with Indian trappers."

Throughout 1964, Indian Affairs entered into a detailed analysis of potential sites in exchange for the Finlay Forks Reserve, focusing on obtaining a "fair exchange" for it. On February 19, 1965, it held a meeting at the Catermole Timber Company where thirty-three residents at the Finlay Forks Reserve worked to discuss land that might be exchanged for this Reserve. The Indian Affairs official who presided reported that the two and three quarter hour meeting allowed for a full discussion of the matter including a complete exploration of the questions raised by the eight Native people affected who were present.[56] According to Francis Isaac, the other band

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[54] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 27 December 1962.

[55] Correspondence from B.C. Hydro to the Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 24 October 1963.

[56] Departmental minutes, "Meeting with Finlay River Band Members normally Resident on Finlay Forks Indian Reserve #1 held on February 19, 1965 at Cattermole Timber Company Camp 2," INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618.

members were out trapping.[57] The Native people at the meeting asked whether the decision was final. They also sought answers to a number of technical questions such as the exact acreage of Finlay Forks Reserve, the right to sell the timber on it before an exchange was made, and the transfer of existing mineral rights to new reserve lands. Further, they enquired if houses would be provided on new reserve lands and whether the move would enable them to send their children to public school rather than the Lejac Residential school.[58] These questions appear to have left the Indian Affairs official with the impression that the Native people had a fairly sound understanding of what would take place when the first floods occurred.[59]

The eight Native people present signed a Band Council Resolution stating that they would like the federal government to petition the British Columbia Government to exchange their Finlay Forks Reserve for three land parcels of equal acreage.[60] No locations were identified. The presiding Indian Affairs official advised the federal Indian Commissioner for British Columbia on February 23, 1965, that:

> It was evident that this group of Indians wish to participate in the larger Canadian community rather than remain as an Indian community. The question of provincial and community facilities and utilities was taken

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[57] Mr. Francis Isaac, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

[58] Departmental minutes, "Meeting with Finlay River Band members normally resident on Finlay Forks Indian Reserve # 1 held on February 19, 1965 at Cattermole Timber Company Camp 2," INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1.

[59] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 23 February 1965.

[60] Band Council Resolution, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 19 February 1965.

> into consideration but at the same time full weight was given to such matters as fishing, hunting, trapping, timber and semi-isolation which are still akin to their way of life...The selection was the decision of the group and I concur with their views.[61]

From Indian Affairs' perspective, the Department was persistent in ensuring that it fully consulted the Native community.[62] It undertook several further meetings to determine what areas Band members would consider suitable for their new reserve and to assist and advise them in making this choice. At a meeting on September 17, 1966, Indian Affairs attempted to select a new location which best reflected what the Native community seemed to want. Selection of the Tutu and Parsnip reserves in principle resulted at this meeting. The Indian Affairs field official:

> felt that to move these people into an area surrounded by a white population would not be in their best interests, as their adjustment would be too great. Consequently, to move them to either the new townsite of Mackenzie at Morfee Lake or to the townsite of McLeod Lake was considered unwise. The Indian people themselves felt that they would prefer to be apart from the white community. At the same time it was felt that they should be close enough to white communities to take advantage of the amenities which exist in these communities.

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[61] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 1, Box 38618, 4 March 1965.

[62] The federal government's stated policy regarding Native peoples at this time was one of self-determination and economic self-sufficiency. As attainment of these goals unfolded, the federal government planned to "progressively adjust" special supports and protections historically provided to Native peoples. Translated, this terminology meant a goal of full integration with the non-Aboriginal community with a gradual cessation of funding for Native programs.

The two sites selected meet these requirements.[63]

In March, 1968, selection of the Parsnip River and Tutu Creek reserves was formalized in a Band Council Resolution signed by twenty-four Finlay River community members.[64]

Indian Affairs attempted, based on such discussions, to reach a balance which would allow the Native community to thrive parallel to, but not close enough to be absorbed by, the larger non-Native community, and to enjoy such amenities "of modern civilization" as schools, medical and shopping facilities, job opportunities and hydro power. Indian Affairs also confirmed that the two new sites were on waterways as it recognized that the Native community used the Peace River and its tributaries as their sole avenues of transportation and communication. Indian Affairs recommended selecting two reserves rather than one to enable the Band to reside at one and hold the other for future development, either by itself or through leasing. Based on this meeting, Indian Affairs concluded that the Parsnip site was "the first choice of the Indian people" because it would give access to the Parsnip River.[65] Henceforth, the Department worked to resolve any technicalities and formal transfer requirements between jurisdictions and outside interests to effect the necessary land transfer.

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[63] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4-0 Volume 3, Box 302282, 25 March 1975.

[64] Band Council Resolution, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4-0 Volume 3, Box 302282, 26 March 1968.

[65] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4 Volume 3, Box 302282, 7 November 1966.

In September, 1970, Mr. Bob Hall, a Union of British Columbia Indian Chief's (UBCIC) representative visited Finlay Forks to ascertain the next steps for the Native community.[66] He appears to have become involved in the planning to ensure that this isolated Native community's needs were fully understood and adequately addressed. Indian Affairs knew the UBCIC was "showing interest in this group and holding a critical eye towards the Department" to assess whether it was doing all that it could.[67] Mr. Hall obtained a Band Council Resolution with thirty-two signatures requesting relocation to the Tutu Creek Reserve. Indian Affairs responded by authorizing one of its planning engineers to visit the site; he prepared a preliminary design for eleven new homes and related services at an estimated cost of $200,000. However, at a referendum held at Finlay Forks in November the Finlay Forks and Fort Ware groups determined that they should separate, and only two of thirty people polled wanted to relocate to Tutu Creek. Twenty-one of those in attendance wanted to move to a traditional gathering place at Ingenika on the west side of Williston Lake because it had better access to hunting, fishing and traplines. They also wished to avoid close proximity to liquor and beer parlours as the Tutu Creek Reserve was only nine miles outside Mackenzie. Heavy drinking had resulted in "an appalling number of shooting

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[66] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 1, Box 75549, 2 April 1971.

[67] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 1, Box 7559, 2 March 1971.

incidents both at Finlay Forks and Fort Ware."[68]

On January 22 - 23, 1971, an Indian Affairs representative visited Finlay Forks with Chief Ron Seymour, UBCIC area representative, to resolve the problems regarding relocation. Indian Affairs recognized that it was having difficulty communicating with the Native community and had requested Mr. Seymour's assistance because "he attended school with a number of the adults and consequently could talk quite freely with them." After consulting with various families, Chief Seymour concluded that the Native community did not know where it wished to settle. "He felt that each family probably wanted two or three cabins so that they could move with the seasons or game as they did in the past." He also expressed doubt as to whether relocation at Ingenika or Tutu Creek would be completely successful. These impressions were shared by the Indian Affairs representative.[69]

On March 19, 1971, subsequent to the floods, Indian Affairs officials again visited Finlay Forks to confirm the residents' preference as to a new location. Indian Affairs planned to include Bob Hall to help select a location but he became ill and had to remain at Mackenzie. At the meeting, Indian Affairs discovered there was no unanimity. Several families wished to settle at Ingenika and have their children attend

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[68] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 1, Box 77549, 2 April 1971.

[69] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 1, Box 75549, 2 February 1971.

Lejac but others had different ideas. One member who had lived most of her life at Ingenika, wished to return there and have her children attend LeJac. Three other members wanted to be relocated at Ingenika, and one couple desired a cabin in the area of their trapline near Black Canyon on the Omineca River and wanted their children to attend LeJac. Yet another couple had no desire to settle at Ingenika or Finlay Forks. Concerned about the impact of drinking and violence on their children, they preferred to be relocated closer to Mackenzie, probably at the new Tutu Creek Reserve. Of two other couples, one wanted to live in the area of Mackenzie, the other planned to return to Fort Ware permanently over the course of the summer. An Elder couple would only go to Ingenika if the majority chose to relocate there, and expressed some desire for construction of a one room school for the children. By this point, Indian Affairs officials were more than a little confused.[70]

After meeting more Band members at a different site, Indian Affairs officials discovered a further complication. The people there did not believe that the 168 acres offered to match their former reserve allocation would provide sufficient land for more than two families, as the Band was used to accessing a far wider expanse without impediment. In fact, the 168 acres was a meaningless measurement to them, until they started to comprehend that in the future they might be restricted to this amount of land. They wanted to live at Ingenika on a trial basis for two years without

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[70] Internal Departmental memorandum to file, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 1, Box 75549, 22 March 1971.

relinquishing any of their reserve lands.[71] Indian Affairs officials and a UBCIC representative shared concern as to the likelihood of success past two or three years because although Ingenika appeared to recur as an area of preference for the Native community, it was entirely isolated from services and employment.[72] Nevertheless, Indian Affairs accepted that the Band should relocate wherever it preferred, even if the above were to occur. The Department believed that its officers had consulted extensively with the Native community and "the decision has been the Band's and at no point have we attempted to force them to relocate against their wishes."[73] A representative of the Department visited the Ingenika group in September, 1971 and, in response to its request for a reserve, drew up a petition for them to request a parcel of land of approximately four to five hundred acres. He subsequently learned that this approach was unacceptable, as only one person signed the petition. In a memorandum to a colleague he stated that "It appears to me that when I or one of my staff visit these people we obtain an opinion that is immediately changed on our departure." He warned that the attempt to gain consensus around developing a presentation to the province for more land would "take several visits and many meetings."[74]

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 1, Box 75549, 8 April 1971.

[73] Departmental correspondence to L.S. Marchand Esq., M.P., INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 1, Box 75549, 18 February 1971.

[74] Internal Departmental correspondence, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/19-4 Volume 2, Box 104021, 22 September 1971.

SUMMARY

The Tsay Keh Dene people believe strongly that the information provided prior to the flooding was meaningless. The series of floods were incomprehensible and traumatic, and the steps taken to ameliorate the situation were minimal, ineffective and not based on any real understanding by the non-Native community that a semi-traditional Native way of life was being eroded forever. Moreover, the Band members' interests were not addressed in a comprehensive, meaningful fashion which considered the true scope of their needs. The Native reality is that their interests were consumed in a fragmented cross jurisdictional dispute for which no government body was prepared to take full responsibility. Their reality is that they were left to endure third world living conditions for more than twenty years. Moreover, they now feel that they were coerced into a situation over which they were powerless, and that DIA failed to look after their best interests.

Indian Affairs believed it did everything required to address the Native situation and that some of its staff, particularly in the field, went to considerable effort to identify and respond to the Band's needs. It also worked constructively with B.C. Hydro and the provincial government to resolve myriad technical and legal issues concerned with the transfer of appropriate lands. Indian Affairs, sometimes in partnership with B.C. Hydro officials, sent representatives to explain to the Native community what was to take place. These representatives thought that they were doing everything possible to communicate effectively with the Native people, sometimes with the assistance of UBCIC representatives. Further, Indian Affairs

ensured that B.C. Hydro compensated the Native community for flooded traplines in exactly the same way it compensated non-Native trappers. Neither population received compensation for loss of way of life. Subsequent to the flooding, Indian Affairs provided two model reserves which it hoped would provide both a balanced way of life for the Native community and access to cost-effective services.

Although B.C. Hydro was a secondary player to Indian Affairs because the Department was responsible for protecting Native interests, the Crown corporation fulfilled what it saw as its responsibility. It sent representatives to the area to talk with the Native community. It also participated in facilitating the selection of alternate lands which it recognized had to be suitable for residential use and required access to roads, schools and other social amenities as well as employment opportunities. B.C. Hydro representatives felt the Parsnip land near the Hart Highway fully satisfied all these conditions.[75] What it did not recognize was that the Native community concerned was not in a position to understand the implications of these requirements. The Native community simply acknowledged these suggestions but did not sanction them.

These two realities clearly demonstrate the saying that "where one stands depends on where one sits." From the Tsay Keh Dene view, individual members did not meet Indian Affairs and B.C. Hydro officials more than perhaps four or five times

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[75] Internal Departmental "Report on Ingenika Band of Indians in Occupation of Crown lands at Ingenika River," INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 985/8-4-0 Volume 3, Box 302282, 13 April 1984.

during the period 1962-1968 for at no time were all members of the Band assembled at one meeting. From Indian Affairs' perspective, a meeting with all the Band's members appeared to be impossible to arrange. Some Band members living for prolonged periods in the bush likely met no Indian Affairs or B.C. Hydro officials. For those who did meet officials, it was usually for no more than two or three hours. No established relationships or trust developed over time with these non-Native individuals, whose faces frequently changed.

It may also be that Band members who went through the residential school system had learned to agree with whatever was asked of them by non-Native people rather than create an issue. It is also evident that some Band members were more capable than others of communicating with non-Native people but were not in a position to speak on the Band's behalf. The Department's officials had no established rapport with this Native community or any of its individual members to understand this or that the loose community structure based on amalgamations of separate families each with its own head precluded the use of spokespeople. Indian Affairs representatives likely thought concurrence by the Chief and Councillors represented approval on behalf of the entire group but this was not the case. Consequently, Department officials probably did not press the issue of ensuring that all members, including those in the bush tending to their traplines, were present at every meeting.

Indian Affairs undertook considerable activity on behalf of the Tsay Keh Dene people, of which this isolated Native community was totally unaware. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada files hold extensive records of correspondence dealing with

technical issues associated with the land transfer, such as water levels, mineral claims, third party interests, road access, timber potential and land valuations and a proliferation of maps analyzed to gain a more precise indication of the Native interests likely to be affected. Although the 1960s approach under the Indian Act tended to be paternalistic, Indian Affairs field officials attempted to communicate and consult with the Tsay Keh Dene people to the best of their ability. Indian Affairs records betray a sense of paternalism in terms only of "looking after the best interests" of the Native community. Nowhere do they demonstrate any blatant or covert sense of racism, other than full acceptance of the hydro development project even though it would radically and irreparably alter a semi-traditional Native way of life for which there was no voice other than that of the Department.

These two realities indicate that the Native and non-Native interests worked at cross purposes. The Native community simply wanted to continue its way of life prior to the flood. This meant access to all its traditional lands because this isolated Native group had never understood or been confined to the technical boundaries drawn by bureaucrats around its designated reserve lands. On the other hand, the non-Native perspective was to try to get a commitment from the Native community that it would in future "own" only a small portion of this territory. There were fundamental cultural differences as to how land access and use was perceived. This "cultural chasm" was further compounded by the seasonal nature of the Native community's way of life. On each visit from non-Native representatives, the Native individuals consulted may have expressed a different preference as to relocation dictated by the seasons as they were

not used to residing in any one place year round.

These two realities also demonstrate the difference between the holistic Native approach to life versus the fragmented non-Native worldview. Clearly, the Tsay Keh Dene people who experienced this relocation, or dislocation, which fundamentally altered every aspect of their lives, perceived it within the context of their entire culture. They had no cause to separate or compartmentalize what happened to them into various components or responses. The non-Native approach to this relocation, typical of the way all issues are handled in western culture, was highly fragmented. Each aspect of the relocation was neatly allocated into different actions and responsibilities. B.C. Hydro had its role to perform as did the federal and provincial governments. Lack of cultural knowledge and understanding was without malicious forethought but reflected the underlying western racist attitude of inherent cultural superiority. These approaches meant that identification of the full magnitude of relocation of this Native population fell through the cracks. As an Indian and Northern Affairs Canada official later admitted off the record, the Department's biggest mistake was in not identifying and insisting on full compensation for the irreplaceable loss of a way of life.

CHAPTER 5

SEEKING COMPENSATION

> The people didn't know what was happening. The water was rising and they were told to leave. Our cabins were destroyed. They were burned. But now we can talk to them - we can read. Like hell we are going to sit back and let them do to us what they did to us in the past.[1]

Compensation of both non-Native and Native interests affected by the flooding was minimal. Neither group received any consideration for loss of way of life. In the case of the Native community, the only compensation provided by B.C. Hydro was cash pay outs for flooded traplines and cabins, it did not offer alternative traplines. Non-Native interests such as guide trapping and outfitting businesses received equivalent cash amounts for their losses based on a formula assessed by a retired conservation officer hired by B.C. Hydro.[2]

Several non-Native frontiersmen who pursued a remote, isolated way of life were also affected by flooding. A poem written in 1962 by one these frontiersmen, Earl Pollen, demonstrates his sense of loss.

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[1] Glavin, "Dam Flooded Valley," The Vancouver Sun, 12 June 1987.

[2] Pollen, This Was Our Valley, 221.

Lost in Time

The campfire's burned to a bed of coals,
The stars above are a glittering maze,
We lay upon our spruce-bough beds
To muse awhile of the bygone days,

On the north side shore we can hear the roar
Of the "turnapuls", saws and Cats,
As they clear the earth for a bed of birth
For a lake on the river's flats.

A jet flies high in the starlit sky,
A Sputnik makes its way...
That must be Echo Number Two,
At least so I've heard them say.

Our spruce boughs wince as from a pain.
We hear a mighty roar
As the dynamite blasts the divert shafts
On the Peace's southern shore.

We're lost in time, like tortured souls,
No place for such as we.
I ask you, pardner, friend of mine,
Where can frontiersmen flee?[3]

Jim Beattie, a rancher flooded out by the dam, claimed that the combined loss of livelihood and way of life caused at least two "frontiersmen" to take their own lives.[4] Clearly, both the Native and non-Native communities sustained massive change and disruption. A major difference between the two, however, was that the non-Native population had some comprehension of what was taking place.

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[3] Ibid., 143.

[4] Ibid., 221.

As well as the differences between the non-Native and Native communities, there were variations within the Native community. The situation for the Ingenika group was dramatically different from that of the Fort Ware Band, which was situated on a recognized Indian reserve. Although the Fort Ware members of the Finlay River Band did not have their homes flooded, they lost a significant portion of their traditional hunting, trapping and fishing territory. Because of their official reserve status, however, the federal government provided them with a school, a community hall, and health clinic and telephone service. As well, they received running water, their own reservoir and proper housing.[5]

Senior Indian and Northern Affairs Canada officials knew that something was very wrong with the way in which relocation had occurred and the continuing problems were being handled. In February, 1976, a senior official in the Department brought the plight of the people of Ingenika to the province's attention because he could not "help feeling that they have something coming to them."[6] He indicated that disruption to the Native community was acute and that it wanted "to become totally independent and self-supporting and to be free of ongoing government assistance."[7]

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[5] Terry Glavin, "Reserve Status Makes Big Difference, " The Vancouver Sun, 12 June 1987.

[6] Indian Affairs correspondence to the British Columbia government, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number B8260-294, Volume 1, 20 February 1976.

[7] Since Ingenika lacked reserve status, it did not formally have federal support. The provincial Ministry of Human Resources was responsible for adult and child welfare services. These included income assistance and alcohol rehabilitation and foster homes. By 1980, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs was providing salaries and costs associated with operating a school for fifty children and community health centre visited

He suggested that the Native community's need for a larger tract of land should "be accommodated on the simple basis of equity."[8] The province responded in June, 1976, that the Band's request for resource control over several hundred square miles of territory was "more in the nature of a comprehensive land claim."[9] As the province did not recognize aboriginal title, it referred the problem back to the federal government.[10] The impasse between the two jurisdictions continued both because the province refused to become involved in land claim issues and because the Ingenika Band was so remote. Out of sight, out of mind. Their plight was unknown to the general public and few of the government representatives aware of the situation had ever been to Ingenika.

Not until a decade after the flooding did B. C. Hydro realize that Native issues were a factor for hydro development plans throughout the Province and establish an Indian Affairs Steering Committee. The purpose of this committee was specifically to identify Native communities likely to be affected by potential northern hydro projects, to determine the financial liability associated with failure to address Native concerns

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monthly by a nurse. Additional sources of income for the community included construction for band projects, hunting and trapping, fighting forest fires and removing lumber from Williston Lake. (D'Amore & Associates, "Community Profile.")

[8] Ibid.

[9] Correspondence from the Province to Indian Affairs, INAC (Vancouver B.C.) File Number B8260-294 Volume 1, 17 June 1976.

[10] Ibid.

and to address all Native issues on an interdivisional basis within the Corporation.[11] In September, 1979, the corporation prepared an internal reference entitled "Indian Bands in British Columbia: A Cross Referenced Index" to highlight areas of concern in dealings with Native peoples and hydro development. This document identified tangible Native assets such as traplines which could potentially be harmed by flooding but offered no assessment of the cultural, or social impacts of flooding or relocation. To the extent that such impacts were appreciated, B.C. Hydro viewed them as a federal responsibility. The corporation saw its role as limited to identifying assets and providing compensation for them, in the same manner as it would for any other individual or community within the province. A report entitled "Northern Development and Native Peoples: Report and Recommendations" approved by the Indian Affairs Steering Committee almost a year later in August, 1979, did acknowledge that northern Native peoples had a unique way of life but admitted that "present knowledge of Indian way of life in these areas is pretty sketchy."[12]

Although the larger population continued to have little idea as to the way of life of isolated Native communities in northwestern British Columbia, by 1986, the Band at Ingenika had grown from fifty-two people to over one hundred. The community had established a school, a store, clinic and more than twenty-five houses

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[11] B.C. Hydro, "Indian Bands in British Columbia: A Cross Referenced Index," B.C. Hydro Reference A0478, 9 September 1979.

[12] B.C. Hydro, "Northern Development and Native Peoples: Report and Recommendations," 31 August 1979, 2.

with minimal federal government assistance.[13] Unable to pursue their semi-traditional way of life spread across several thousand acres, the Band's members were increasingly restricted to Ingenika. In the spring of 1986, the community faced a serious outbreak of intestinal disease. Health and Welfare Canada identified the cause as high levels of salmonella and other water borne diseases. A report, prepared at the Band's request by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, indicated that sanitation at Ingenika failed to meet minimum nationally accepted standards for community public health. There was no potable water or a community water distribution network and the sewage disposal system and housing was substandard. The report stated that incidence of respiratory illness, communicable diseases and infectious skin disorders were consistently above the norm.[14] A permanent water and sewage disposal system became imperative.

A few months later in October 1986, the election of Gordon Pierre as Chief signalled the beginning of major improvements for the Tsay Keh Dene people. Chief Pierre, although he was young at the time, can remember the flood. His attachment to the land is so strong that he is loath to leave even for short excursions. Under Chief Pierre's leadership, and in partnership with Chief John of the Carrier-Sekani Tribal

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[13] Ingenika Tribal Council, "Application to Obtain B.C. Crown Land for Village Use in the Finlay and Ingenika River Watersheds," B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Ingenika Files (Victoria B.C.) January 1987.

[14] Indian Affairs correspondence to Chief Gordon Pierre, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Vancouver B.C.) File Number 150-5-4 (76), B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs Files "Ingenika - 1987," 25 February 1987.

Council who had attended LeJac with him, the Band formally applied to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for reserve status in January, 1987. As well, Chief John, on behalf of the people at Ingenika, lobbied the producers of CTV's W5 television program documentary station until "they agreed to come out" and do an expose of their plight. In April, Chief Pierre threatened to blockade the area from logging activity associated with the Mackenzie sawmill unless the federal and provincial governments took action. The Band also warned that unless it received some serious consideration it would appeal for foreign aid.[15]

From a non-Native viewpoint it is difficult to understand why the Band waited almost twenty years before aggressively lobbying the federal and provincial governments and publicizing its case. The difference in approach between the two cultures offers a further example of the "cultural chasm." Francis Isaac explains that "we waited for the people who did the damage to us to come and talk to us - but they never did." He recalls that, finally "we checked everything out carefully to make sure we were right before going to them."[16] This Native community went to great lengths to avoid conflict of any kind. Further, the first few years after the flood involved a period during which the Band members operated purely in survival mode, with no energy for anything else. Moreover, it was difficult for a Native community with no members educated past grade seven to lobby any government effectively. Putting

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[15] Chief Gordon Pierre, interview by author, Ingenika, 10 June 1992.

[16] Mr. Francis Isaac, interview by author, personal, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

together the necessary documentation to present their case to the federal government was a formidable task. Chief John, a lawyer, was instrumental in documenting the Ingenika Band's position with the assistance of another lawyer hired specifically for the purpose. Chief Pierre is convinced that the negative publicity generated by the Band was the sole catalyst which caused the federal and provincial governments to take action.[17]

In June, 1987, Stephen Rogers, then Minister responsible for the recently created Provincial Native Affairs Secretariat, visited the area.[18] The Native Affairs Secretariat was established primarily as an advocacy voice for Native peoples and was designed to resolve the growing number of outstanding issues throughout the Province, especially with regard to specific land claims which had not been substantively resolved through the Ministry of Attorney General.[19] The provincial rationale for stepping in was twofold. First, the issue presented an "easy hit" for the provincial government to look good at the expense of its federal counterpart. The Native Affairs Secretariat, in comparison with other British Columbia government agencies, took a strong "fed bashing" stance. As well, the Assistant Deputy Minister concerned

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[17] Chief Gordon Pierre, interview by author, Ingenika, 10 June 1992.

[18] Terry Glavin, "Officials Rediscover Remote Indian Band," The Vancouver Sun, 12 June 1987.

[19] The are two kinds of Native land claims: comprehensive and specific. Comprehensive claims are filed in areas not covered by treaty, as opposed to specific claims which involve disputes over treaty obligations or the allotment and administration of reserve lands.

genuinely believed the situation at Ingenika was wrong and required immediate resolution.

In 1987, Stephen Rogers agreed to establish a three-party committee with B.C. Hydro and federal government representatives and promised minor financial aid to improve the water supply. The Province also funded the repair of the Band's grader so the air strip near the community could be cleared in winter and food flown in. This financial assistance came from the First Citizens' Fund, a twenty-five million dollar special purpose account established in 1967 to further Native culture, post-secondary education and business opportunities.[20]

In September, 1989, the Tsay Keh Dene Band, B.C. Hydro, the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada concluded an agreement after two years of negotiations among all four parties.[21] The agreement demonstrated an awareness by all three non-Native interests of the need to make concrete commitments to assist the people of Ingenika to help themselves. Under the Agreement, the Band will select 2,000 acres at the Finlay River site, 1,000 acres at Mesilinka, and five acres at the Ingenika Point Cemetery Reserve. In return, it relinquished any further financial or land claims against B.C. Hydro, the Province and Canada regarding construction of

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[20] B.C. Ministry of Intergovernmental Relations, Press Release, 17 September 1987.

[21] "Agreement Between the Ingenika Band of Indians, the Provincial Government of British Columbia, the British Columbia Hydro and Power and Authority, and the Government of Canada," 22 September 1989.

the Bennett Dam and creation of the Williston Reservoir and any claim to the Parsnip and Tutu Creek reserves.

B.C. Hydro is to pay the Band $2,000,000 cash. Of this, $300,000 is for the installation of an electric system, $100,000 is for employment training funds, and the remainder for the development of a community infrastructure. B.C. Hydro also provided $10,000 to clear logs and other debris at the Finlay River site caused by operation of the Bennett Dam. The Province is to release the land selected by the Band, worth approximately $500,000, from Crown land status and will provide up to $150,000 through the First Citizens' Fund for assets associated with licensed guide outfitting and a commercial fishery, should they prove viable. The Province is also required to invite applications for two woodlot licenses in the vicinity of the new Indian reserves, to provide Band members with an opportunity to apply for timber sale licenses, subject to the availability of timber, and to try to hire Band members to work on a provincial wildlife project.

The federal government, the major contributor under the Agreement, will give the land selected by the Band reserve status under the Indian Act. Once it is confirmed, which the Band anticipates will happen by September, 1993, the Band's members will formally be entitled to a broad range of federal financial assistance including welfare and tax exemptions, both of which it currently receives informally. The federal government started in 1989 to provide $10,200,000 over four years to relocate and establish the Band at its new reserve site. Complete servicing will be provided for a fifty-two lot subdivision of forty homes and twelve community

buildings. As well, the federal government will construct thirty-six new homes, education facilities and public buildings such as a fire hall and community centre. This development is well under way. Approximately twenty new homes and accommodation for a principal and two teachers was completed in 1991 and a school was completed by September, 1992. Residents finally have running water, light, sewage disposal and a heat source other than wood.

Under this agreement, the federal and provincial governments, B.C. Hydro and the Band agreed to establish a working group to design economic development plans, to identify economic opportunities and to provide resources to assist with ensuring the future well being of the people of the community. The Province has committed itself to consult with the Band on resource development and any future activities near the new reserve lands. The agreement is not a comprehensive land claim. Its purpose is to resolve the social and economic crisis faced by the Tsay Keh Dene people as a result of the flooding and does not preclude them from submitting a comprehensive land claim.

This agreement serves in some measure to address rather than redress the problems which arose from the forced relocation of the Tsay Keh Dene Band. Both governments and B.C. Hydro have been careful to avoid any suggestion that the original relocation had unfolded less than satisfactorily. The provincial government news release issued on September 15, 1989 stated that the agreement represented "more than two years of efforts by the Province, Band and federal government to restore to the Ingenika people the social and economic stability that was lost when

they were displaced in 1968."[22] This statement fails to acknowledge that for the people at Ingenika, the agreement represents the culmination of more than twenty years throughout which they were essentially left to their own devices to address an almost insurmountable problem. Shortly after the agreement was signed, Lyn Cockburn, a journalist with the Vancouver Province wrote:

> It sounded so nice, so clean, so generous. It was easy to forget that the Ingenika people already had three villages: Fort Grahame, Finlay Fork and Old Ingenika. Three villages which the water wiped out. And how many old people died during that 22 year wait? How many dreams were buried? How many dreams were deferred? [23]

Moreover, how can one begin to calculate the sense of trauma, displacement and violation of the Tsay Keh Dene Band for all its members and the nature so integral to their lives?

Today, the Tsay Keh Dene Elders lament the loss of the "bush life". One Elder describes it as the happiest period of her life and states openly that she has no use for her current way of life which is a jarring juxtaposition of a typical non-Native suburban way of life in a remote setting. She is lonely living by herself in her federally provided bungalow. In the bush, she would have lived with three generations of her own family in a one room cabin, which, although cramped, would have provided her with company and a sense of belonging and usefulness helping with her

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[22] B.C. Ministry of Native Affairs, Press Release, 15 September 1989.

[23] Lyn Cockburn, "Dreams Deferred by Greed," The Vancouver Province, 24 September 1989, 31.

grandchildren and daily tasks.[24] This sentiment is echoed by another Elder, who has no use for his community's current way of life, and would prefer to be in the bush. Francis Isaac would like to teach the next generation the way in which he was brought up, but regrets that they do not appear to be interested. "They are dying slowly from the things they get used to", such as a livelihood supported by the federal government and entertainment by television and videos. He says that "one day my bed will be empty. I will have returned to the bush."[25] Jean Isaac considers that the change which occurred as a result of the flood was so rapid, her people have difficulty keeping in touch with their former ways. "Young people hear so many voices nowadays." She is trying to instill in her children "that what is natural is best for them." Hearing the Elders' perspectives first hand reinforces their sense of loss and pain. In an attempt to assess the facts it is all too easy to forget that people were profoundly hurt in this resource development process. Jean Isaac observes that her people are not passive, they have deep emotions about their land and what has happened to it, and that no people should have been forced to be as defensive as the Tsay Keh Dene to see some form of action taken.[26]

The Tsay Keh Dene Band was satisfied with the agreement at the time it was signed. It is now having second thoughts as to whether it was successful in getting the compensation required for it to establish a viable community. Moreover, subsequent

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[24] Tsay Keh Dene community, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1991.

[25] Mr. Francis Isaac, interview by author, Ingenika, 9 June 1992.

[26] Mrs. Jean Isaac, interview by author, telephone, Prince George, 19 August, 1991.

events have demonstrated that their problems are far from over. B.C. Hydro's interest in constructing the Site C Project on the Peace River, although currently on hold, looms large on the horizon. This project would raise the Williston Reservoir several feet. As if these problems were not enough, clear-cut logging is occurring only a short distance from the new village and oil slicks from these operations are visible on the reservoir. Moreover, a test range for low level bomber training missions passes over their territory. It would appear that the problems faced by this community in having its traditional territory damaged and encroached upon so dramatically have only just begun.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Native peoples in Canada, like many Aboriginal peoples in other nations, have been remote from every day life and politically insignificant because they tend to live on the periphery of the larger society. This situation has evolved since the start of white settlement. When Europeans were few in number they valued Native peoples as guides, trading partners and military allies. In these roles, Native peoples maintained preeminence over their hereditary lands. As Europeans became increasingly established in the Americas they reached the point where Native people were no longer indispensable to their survival. Settlement became the primary goal and waves of immigrants exploited the natural resources in the new land. Native peoples became a hindrance to settlement based on European concepts of land ownership and control over the environment.

Governments attempted to solve the "Indian Problem" by placing Native peoples on reserves, often in areas removed from white settlement and free of obviously exploitable resources. The Canadian government's policy toward Native peoples was based on aggressive assimilation designed to achieve an eventual disappearance of the "white man's burden" as outlined in Rudyard Kipling's famous poem. On reserves:

> under the stern and moral guidance of dedicated missionaries and government officials the Indians could somehow be enabled to retain their childlike simplicity and innocence while at the same time being

> taught the merits of industry, Christianity and the other attributes of a superior civilization.[1]

After several centuries of this approach, the Native community cried out against an assimilationist position paper released by the federal government in 1969. In response, the federal government formally withdrew its stand but some evidence suggests it informally maintained an integrationist policy. Only since the Oka crisis of 1990 and the constitutional debate of 1992 regarding Native self government has the federal government been prepared to acknowledge unique status for Native Canadians.

Indeed, the majority of Canadians have been indifferent to the treatment of Native people. This situation applies almost as equally today as it did when the W.A.C. Bennett Dam was constructed. In no instance is it demonstrated more clearly than with the recent Gitksan-Wet'suet'en land claim ruling. On March 8, 1991, Chief Justice Alan McEachern of the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled that Aboriginal title to the territory claimed by the Gitksan-Wet'suet'en chiefs has been extinguished.[2] This court case, which affected an area almost the size of New Brunswick in northwest British Columbia, has profound implications for Native peoples and Canada as a whole. The British Columbia Television Network noted publicly the following Monday, however, that it had received unusually few calls from the public for a matter of such import. Instead, the station received an overwhelming

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[1] Wilson, "Canada's Indians," 5.

[2] Chief Justice Allan McEachern, "Reasons for Judgement: Delgamuukw," Supreme Court of British Columbia, 8 March 1991.

response regarding the polka dot bow-tie worn by news anchor, Tony Parsons, when announcing the Gitksan decision. Even more recently, the Citizen's Forum generated out of the Spicer Commission's review of Canada's future determined that Canadians across the country feel uninformed about Native issues and are reluctant to make specific recommendations on such issues as Native land claims and self government.[3]

Basic ignorance of and indifference to Native issues are aggravated by the fact that Native people in Canada comprise less than four percent of the total population. Native culture and history have only recently been considered for inclusion in the core curriculum of schools. Moreover, as most Canadians never come in direct contact with Native peoples their knowledge of them is limited and coloured by stereotypes. Small minorities about whom little is known and who lack political or economic clout tend to be overlooked. Few non-Native Canadians noticed the forced relocation of several Native groups and aggressive assimilation through such means as residential schools and hence raised little or no concern. Today, of the few Canadians who are aware of the past, many cannot accept that their governments sanctioned such actions and protest that they must be grossly exaggerated.

The way that this relocation unfolded validates James Waldram's contention that the process of hydro development parallels the treaty processes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both were based on the unquestioned assumption that it is acceptable to remove Native people from their land and livelihood

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[3] "A Country in Crisis Seeks Solutions," The Victoria Times-Colonist, 29 June 1991.

to make way for non-Native settlement and resource exploitation. The implicit philosophy throughout the treaty making process was that the non-Native approach is superior. In the case of hydro development, provincial governments and their Crown corporations have assumed that the federal government will take care of any Native "problems". Within the parallel between hydro development and treaty making, however, Waldram raises a broader philosophical and ethical issue. Many treaties state that they will be in force "as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow, and the grasses grow." Waldram questions whether, "When the water levels in lakes and rivers downstream from hydro dams become bone dry as water backs up in huge reservoirs, has there been a violation of the treaties?"[4]

The way in which relocation of the Tsay Keh Dene Band was handled also substantiates Waldram's observations that hydro development has followed the same path as treaty making with Native peoples:

> The processes are similar: a resource is identified as valuable to the general society, and the Natives who are using that resource must be convinced that they should surrender it for the "common good"...Once the resource has been secured and the Native people have been appeased, they are largely ignored. Poverty and hardship frequently result, as the people discover that they can no longer make a living from the resources, and particularly the waterways, of their traditional territories...Legal action or mediation frequently is employed by Natives to seek redress, but generally their interest is made subservient to that of Canadian society.[5]

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[4] Waldram, As Long as the Rivers Run, 4.

[5] Waldram, As Long as the Rivers Run, 4.

As Waldram observes, relocating both Native and non-Native people to make way for industrial development is "justified" by "the common good" or "the public interest".

There are critical differences, however, between expropriating land from a non-Native property owner versus a traditional Native community. Geoffrey York, a Canadian journalist, provides a succinct analysis of the key differences.[6] First, a non-Native property owner can generally be compensated adequately with money whereas traditional Native communities cannot. Further, it is difficult to find substitute areas free from non-Native encroachment. Even where an "equivalent" area is found, it is likely to trespass on the territory of other Native groups, thereby generating further problems. Loss of traditional lands worldwide has meant destruction of Native livelihoods and loss of dignity associated with dependency on the larger community. Second, non-Native individuals legally own land whereas Native peoples on reserves in Canada do not. Native peoples lack the leverage, therefore, to insist on adequate compensation. Because the federal government legally controls land for use by Native peoples, it has been able to transfer it to a province or corporation without carefully identifying or acknowledging full compensation. Third, Native peoples pursuing an isolated, largely traditional way of life are further disadvantaged during expropriation because they are not used to dealing with bureaucrats and lawyers, or for that matter, with non-Native people in general. In this case study, the ability of the Native people to use English may well have worked to their detriment.

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[6] Geoffrey York, The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada, (London: Vintage U.K., 1990), 114.

Because they could understand words, non-Native officials assumed that they also fully appreciated the concepts being described.

Fourth, non-Native individuals generally benefit from the "common good" concerned. In the case of hydro development, this presents a sad irony. Although Native people have had their way of life destroyed by such projects, their communities are frequently too isolated to access the power generated. This was certainly the case for the Sekani people at Ingenika and on the Fort Ware reserve. A social worker in the region in the early 1970's noted several electric washers and dryers rusting outside Native homes on the Fort Ware reserve. They had been sent by a federal bureaucrat miles away who was unaware that the community had no access to the hydro power generated by the Bennett Dam.[7]

This case study points out additional differences generated by the impact of dispossession. Although some non-Native families have lived for generations in areas which have been expropriated, their attachment to the land cannot match the deep spiritual and cultural significance held by Native peoples for the lands their ancestors have occupied for thousands of years. As well as eliminating a way of life and a livelihood, the physical source of Native spirituality is destroyed. Moreover, when a non-Native person is relocated in Canada he or she does not face the shock that a traditional Native person faces of being forced into close proximity to a dominant culture which is less than accepting of Native people and places intense stress on their

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[7] Ms. Alison Meredith, interview by author, Victoria, 30 November 1991.

traditional values. Also, Non-Native people who are relocated generally do not have to alter their diet overnight or face new or increased access to alcohol and drugs.

The net result of the relocation of semi-traditional Native peoples raises fundamental questions about how our society operates. Those who have, get more; those who have not, get less. Since Native people living on the periphery of society have very few material possessions non-Native people tend to assume that they do not require more. How else can one explain why the people of Ingenika were left to fend for themselves with such little assistance? Geoffrey York points to the fact that farmers are highly subsidized by both the federal and provincial governments and protected from low prices and drought through the redistribution of public wealth. Yet farmers do not face the same public rancour as Native people do when they receive assistance in the same order of magnitude. Neither do the fisherman who are heavily subsidized in the Maritimes.[8] Because farmers and fishermen have formed effective lobby groups, they tend to receive such benefits immediately and with minimal debate. One cannot overlook the fact that these groups are predominantly non-Native. The Native community at Ingenika had to wait twenty years while living in third world conditions before their situation received serious attention.

To suggest that actions undertaken in the 1960s were entirely wrong based on 1990s hindsight would be overly simplistic. Moreover, the public bodies concerned cannot be held up as separate entities accountable in isolation from the Canadian

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[8] York, The Dispossessed, 136.

population as a whole who elected them. Looking to the future, therefore, the key issue is twofold. The first aspect is whether or not people have learned that Native peoples have unique needs associated with resource development. The second aspect is whether, recognizing the damage created by past events, governments and their agencies acknowledge their responsibility to implement solutions in equal partnership with Native communities.

There are now too many examples of the tragic consequences of drastically altering the Native way of life for such concerns to be dismissed arbitrarily or viewed as less than a priority. Yet, how many of these examples are publicly documented? And where are there clearly articulated public sector policies and strategies to ensure that future cases are conducted in a culturally sensitive and fair manner? Why do current resource development review processes not specifically address Native needs? How meaningful and culturally sensitive are the solutions posed to date, such as the compensation package offered twenty years after the fact to the people of Ingenika? Why do we still insist on viewing incidents such as those examined in this case study as unfortunate, isolated exceptions? The magnitude of the problems faced by communities such as the Tsay Keh Dene when forced to relocate will never be fully appreciated until carefully examined and documented. Documentation such as this case study must be widely distributed to raise the awareness of the public and of all levels of government decision makers.

Careful analysis through culturally sensitive eyes and documentation is essential for pragmatic as well as humanitarian reasons. Joseph Trimble, a psychologist with

Western Washington University argues that preventing the stress caused by forced relocation can lessen the likelihood of government having to invest millions of dollars to help Native people recover from the effects of relocation.[9] Sidney Green, an Opposition New Democratic Party Member of the Legislature, at the time of the South Indian Lake relocation in Manitoba stated:

> I also know that historically societies have lived to rue the day that they have acted in a rough shod manner, with respect to the rights of a group of people who apparently have had little way to protect themselves. These things have a habit of coming back to haunt you.[10]

Forced relocations must also be viewed within the concept of "cumulative impact" over time such as that described by Hugh Brody.[11] In this concept, the relocation is but one of many impacts on the Tsay Keh Dene people since contact with non-Native people. Commencing with inter-tribal alliances altered through the fur trade, contact has continued with the introduction of non-Native diseases, increasing encroachment on traditional Native territory, ultimate confinement on reserve lands, new technologies and ideas which challenge traditional Native worldviews, mandatory attendance at residential schools, the physical impact of flooding, direct access to alcohol, and the challenge of being forced to adapt abruptly to a dramatically different, dominant, non understanding and generally unsympathetic culture.

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[9] Trimble, "Forced Migration," 475.

[10] Waldram, As Long as the Rivers Run, 129.

[11] Brody, Maps and Dreams, 237.

Cumulative impact partially explains why the Tsay Keh Dene Band today endures a broad array of social and economic problems similar to those experienced by the majority of the 197 Native bands throughout the province and other Native communities across Canada. These social and economic problems include higher rates of alcoholism, suicide, incarceration, welfare, family violence, infant mortality and substance abuse than experienced by the majority of Canada's population. A recent newspaper article described three fatal stabbings in the Fort Ware community of 200 Native people within one year. Isolation, high unemployment, low literacy levels, poor housing and widespread drug and alcohol abuse were cited as key factors.[12]

The striking similarity of social and economic problems across Native groups should not be taken to indicate that the relocation of the Tsay Keh Dene people made little difference to the final outcome in their circumstances today. Indeed, these problems are so similar across Canada and other nations because all Native peoples have faced similar cumulative impacts over time. For the Tsay Keh Dene people, the W.A.C. Bennett Dam represents but one of these impacts, albeit a major one. The Dam's impact was all the more damaging because this isolated Native community had not yet suffered the full dislocation of the "cultural chasm" through significant exposure to non-Native society.

We can learn from the past by acknowledging the effect of cumulative impact on Native peoples. Any change which affects a traditional or semi-traditional Native

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[12] "Plagued by Social Ills, Fort Ware Death Trap for Natives," Times-Colonist, 2 September 1992.

way of life, no matter how insignificant from the government perspective, has the potential for drastic, global consequences for the people concerned. Robin Ridington provides the example of a group of Cree and Dunne-za people from the North Peace River area losing a portion of their reserve assigned under Treaty Eight when the federal government reassigned it in 1945 as part of a war veteran's resettlement program. The government did not foresee any problems with reassigning this land and substituting new land for it because the Native people used it only a few weeks during the summer. As Ridington explains, however:

> If you pluck out the summer gathering place, which is the one spot where all the various bands, and indeed other groups, meet, then you are really mounting a fairly direct assault against the system as a whole.[13]

This case study demonstrates that cultural awareness and the ability to communicate and recognize cumulative and other impacts should be highly valued in dealing fairly with Native peoples. This is not to suggest that all federal and provincial public policy makers today fail to appreciate and respect Native issues. Without widespread respect for Native cultures, however, any heightened awareness will be meaningless. This respect must be built on the recognition that Native heritage, cultures and values though different are as valid as those of the majority culture. This notion of respect appears basic at face value and few public policy makers would dispute its importance. Actions, however, speak louder than words, and

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[13] Ridington, Little Bit Know Something, 201.

those to date in the area of hydro-electric development do not present a positive record.

As recently as April, 1990, a group of Cree and Inuit people paddled by canoe from James Bay in Quebec to New York City to protest Hydro-Quebec's plan to build three generating stations in stage two of its massive three-part James Bay power project. The proposed dams would flood vast tracts of wilderness to generate hydro power for Vermont and New York with devastating environmental impacts including the release of mercury that would contaminate the fish and seals on which these people depend for food. Sappa Fleming, an Inuit leader, claims the proposed hydro development would annihilate his people. [14]

What is alarming about plans to proceed with the second phase of the James Bay hydro project is that, as was so clearly demonstrated with the W.A.C. Bennett Dam, the full impact on the environment appears to be unclear. Of even greater concern is that fact that non-Native bureaucrats do not appear to be sensitive to the Native situation. Roger Dube, assistant to the vice-president of Indian and Inuit Affairs at Hydro-Quebec, is quoted as stating that only a few traplines will be flooded and that:

> It's a hell of an exaggeration to say that because a few people will be touched, the whole thing has disappeared. Just the fact of opening roads
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> allows people to go on the land more often and practise their activities

[14] "Plan to Dam Will Kill Cree, Innuit," Times-Colonist, April 9, 1990.

more often.[15]

Have we learned nothing from situations such as Bennett Dam and the Tsay Keh Dene people?

Positive signs that the past has taught something are increased sensitivity to Native issues and the creation of some checks and balances to protect Native interests as evidenced by a ruling made by Justice Allison Walsh of the Federal Court of Canada in May, 1991. Mr. Justice Walsh ruled that the federal cabinet was wrong to exempt the Kemano Completion Hydroelectric Project in northern British Columbia from an environmental review. The court case against the company responsible for the project, Alcan Smelters and Chemicals Ltd, was launched by the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council and other groups opposed to the expansion. The Native communities concerned feared that the reduced water flows proposed under this hydroelectric expansion would diminish the fish stocks on which they depend for food. The Federal court ruling allowed work on the project to continue, however, while a review was conducted and during the time that Alcan appealed the decision. Alcan was successful with its appeal and the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council and other groups have appealed the case to the Federal Supreme Court.

Clearly the answer does not lie in eliminating all major hydro developments which could adversely affect Native or other interests. As Julian Burger states, "Nor would indigenous peoples welcome any paternalistic intervention to protect them in

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[15] Bob Cox, "Cree Battling to Preserve James Bay Wilderness," Times-Colonist, April 28, 1991.

artificially maintained human zoos in which they survive at the behest of the dominant society and not as a right."[16] The answer must include awareness and respect of Native issues, sensitivity, and room for compromise. Native people must shape their own destiny as equal partners with the community at large, rather than continuing to have their future controlled in large measure by bureaucrats sitting behind desks with little understanding of their needs or of the "cultural chasm" identified in this thesis. "It seems axiomatic that if you fully plan someone's life, he will lose it."[17]

The current system is not working. This case study offers but one such example. As indicated, Native peoples across Canada suffer from social and economic problems at rates which vastly exceed those of the larger population. Past failures to address these issues caused by cumulative impacts over time and lack of understanding suggest that there must be a dramatic change in approach. Successive attempts by governments to solve the "Indian problem" have failed, have proved to be more expensive than the last, and

> It will, in the long term, be far less costly, as well as more generous and just, to let the Indians themselves try now, even if this means making them a special case for economic assistance for years to come...There is a long history of failure, parsimony and neglect to be made up for.[18]

The primary thesis argued throughout this case study is that, throughout this

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[16] Burger, Report From the Frontier, 282.

[17] Dickman, "Spatial Change and Relocation," 172.

[18] Wilson, "Canada's Indians," 29.

forced relocation, government representatives did not recognize the unique needs of the Native people concerned. This failure was not caused by any malicious or consciously racist motive but rather, by a major lack of cross-cultural understanding and communication on the part of the Native and Non-Native people involved. This "cultural chasm" contention, however, only partially explains what occurred. Because the non-Native community and its representatives inherently believed in the superiority of western culture and thought that Native people would benefit from closer access to non-Native communities and their services, they had no incentive to be culturally sensitive. The Native people posed no threat to resource development as they were unable to speak out on their own behalf. Essentially, the dominant culture did what it wanted to do and placed the "common good" above the rights of a voiceless minority. Fortunately, Canada can accommodate being introspective and self-critical of its past actions. This ability and willingness, combined with the dramatically increased profile afforded Native issues since the Oka incident, should help set the stage for positive accommodations and better understanding in the future. This case study of the Tsay Keh Dene people serves as an example of an event which must not be repeated.

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