

***"SEE WHAT THE LAND GAVE US":***  
**WAYWAYSEECAPPO FIRST NATION**  
**TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY**  
**For the Birtle Transmission Line**

**First Draft**  
**December 2017**

Prepared for:



Waywayseecappo  
First Nation



Prepared by:





# Acknowledgements

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The study team is appreciative of the warm welcome and hospitality that was demonstrated throughout. Miigwetch.



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# 1 Introduction

Waywayseecappo

A photograph of a gravel road leading to a green sign that reads "Waywayseecappo". The sign is set in a field of tall grass and wildflowers. In the background, there are utility poles, a small building, and a line of trees under a clear blue sky.



## Purpose

This Waywayseecappo Traditional Knowledge Study was carried out in the fall of 2017. The project focused on documenting stories from elders about the community's history, land use, and values with respect to its traditional lands. This report is intended for Waywayseecappo members who are interested in their history, as told by community elders. It is also meant to inform planning and construction of Manitoba Hydro's Birtle Transmission Project.

This traditional knowledge project has been funded through a contribution agreement with Manitoba Hydro, as part of its environmental assessment of the Birtle Transmission Project, which would construct a new transmission line from a site near Birtle, Manitoba, to the Saskatchewan Border. The preferred route for the transmission line would pass through Waywayseecappo's traditional lands.

Early in 2017, Manitoba Hydro hosted a workshop in Waywayseecappo First Nation (WFN) to review the project's proposed route, construction goals and timeline, and to document sites of cultural, spiritual, historical, and environmental concern to WFN members. This traditional knowledge study builds on the earlier workshop, to provide a better understanding of the values within WFN's traditional lands. These include historical and contemporary land uses, sacred sites, and environmentally sensitive sites.

WFN leaders also envisioned the study as supporting other goals beyond the transmission project:

- Sharing the stories of community elders – in their language and local dialect;
- Acknowledging the changes that have taken place on the land and in the community; and
- Documenting community values and creating resources that may support future land selection and land management processes

The stories presented in this report incorporate quotes from 7 elders interviewed through the traditional knowledge study, along with personal and archival photos, excerpts from community interviews conducted in 1982, and maps illustrating the places discussed during the traditional knowledge studies.

We hope that it proves a valuable resource for future WFN members, and for any outside interests working in WFN's traditional lands.



Figure 1: Location of the Proposed Transmission Line



# Approach

## ***Approaching the Project***

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In September 2017, the WFN Council met with project manager David Meeches and researchers from HTFC Planning & Design to discuss the First Nation's goals for the traditional knowledge study. This initial meeting helped to define the research problem, to organize a timeline, and brainstorm the study's approach. The Waywayseecappo representatives offered several key points of direction:

- The study should aim to support WFN's involvement in the transmission project, as well as on-going land management and land-claims work;
- Interviews should be carried out in the Indigenous language wherever possible;
- Interviews should be video recorded to document elders speaking in their local dialect;
- Experienced local researchers should lead interviews to ensure that knowledge-holders are comfortable, and can speak in their own language; and
- A final report would be developed and shared with Manitoba Hydro, but all research materials would remain the property of Waywayseecappo First Nation.

The Council identified two potential researchers for the project, both of whom brought considerable knowledge of community history, language, and could identify the appropriate knowledge holders to involve in the study.

Working with Council, HTFC Planning & Design then developed a job description (see appendices) for the Community Researchers and a corresponding communications reporting structure. Once the researchers were hired, a meeting was arranged with them to review their roles and to invite their input into the study process (e.g. input on base maps, interview questions, and approach to identifying and inviting elder participation).

Positive outcomes:

- Council-led project
- Engaged Community Researchers
- Made-in-Waywayseecappo approach to elder recruitment and participation

## ***Hearing the stories***

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To create a comfortable place for people to share their stories, the Community and HTFC Researchers set up a space within Waywayseecappo's community complex. This became the casual headquarters and backdrop for participation, where community elders dropped in to share their stories.

In total, 7 interviews were held with community knowledge holders. These were semi-structured interviews, where broad questions were asked, and elders were encouraged to share whatever stories and experiences they felt were most relevant to the study. With their permission, the interviews with elders were video and audio recorded.



To start the interview process, the Community Researchers first interviewed one another. This helped to introduce them to the study process, to build confidence in their roles, and to also share their stories. These interviews provided a baseline of knowledge about the area and the community's history, which made further interviews easier to contextualize. It was also a training opportunity that helped the Community Researchers to build their skills in interviewing, notetaking, and mapping for future traditional knowledge mapping after the Waywayseecappo Traditional Knowledge Study.

When the interviews began, the Community Researchers assumed the roles of interviewer and mapper, with the HTFC staff member as the official note-keeper. Jim Cote, the Community Researcher responsible for facilitating the interview questions, provided elders with an opportunity to speak in their Indigenous language. As a respected elder, Cote's participation allowed for candid and honest dialogue. Roger Mentuck, the Community



Figure 2: The Interview Team

Researcher responsible for mapping, supported elders in locating places of interest while translating their feedback (e.g. stories, comments, routes) for the HTFC staff member, Jason Syvixay, to record digitally. See appendices for information related to mapping techniques used.

Several of the interviewees were also kind enough to share photographs with the research team. These were photographed and saved to be included in this report.

#### Positive Outcomes:

- Engaging community elders
- Documented video and audio interviews
- Interviews in the Indigenous language
- Community capacity building

## ***Telling the Story***

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Information gathered from the interviews was entered into a GIS database as a digital shapefile for safe keeping and future use by Waywayseecappo. Interview notes and stories were typed to allow for organization and analysis. See the appendices for information related to GIS database techniques used.

The traditional knowledge study report was developed by organizing quotes and stories from the elders around themes that were common to the interviews. Photographs from study participants were also included as they related to the elders' stories. To build the context for the elders' stories, HTFC Planning



and Design carried out a high-level search for historical photographs and information relevant to the changing land uses in Waywayseecappo territory over time. The team came across transcripts from a series of interviews with Waywayseecappo elders from 1982, and was able to add the words of those who spoke over 30 years ago to the newly documented stories.

To develop report maps, researchers reviewed all of the mapping data, and cross referenced with interview content to display the most pertinent points into maps for the report.

Positive Outcomes:

- Cultural history recorded on maps
- Information digitally stored for future use
- Interview outcomes combined with historical photos, research, and transcripts
- Final report detailing cultural history and feedback for both Waywayseecappo First Nation Band members and Manitoba Hydro



## 2 The Storytellers





## **Jim Cote**

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Born on October 10, 1941, Jim grew up during the horse and wagon days in Waywayseecappo, and has lived on reserve ever since. He remembers, lovingly, the cultural significance of the land in providing sustenance and shelter – whether it was hunted wildlife, wood for housing, or even medicines.

He is the son of James Cote and Margaret Bird and his stepfather, Hugh MacKay. Jim grew up understanding and valuing the community's connection to the land. He attended the Birtle and Brandon Residential Schools from 1947-1957. He would later marry Lena McKay in 1967. Jim provided for his family as a farm labourer. Cote was a former Band Councillor for 16 years and currently serves as an advisor on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Manitoba Council of Elders.

**Why the Traditional Knowledge Study is important to Jim:** "To protect our land and to have it put to use for our young people." As a Community Researcher for the Waywayseecappo Traditional Knowledge Study, Jim played a key role in liaising with elders in the community, in the interview process, and in upholding his own motto, "Laughter is the best medicine" or "bapick".



## **Roger Mentuck**

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Roger Mentuck is the son of Ethel Brandon Mentuck and Darcy Mentuck. He was born in Kamsack, Saskatchewan on September 9, 1954 and raised in Waywayseecappo. Roger recalled how he and his siblings – Gary, Pat, and Rita Mentuck – learned about hunting and gathering through his grandparents, George Ross and Henrietta Mentuck.

For as long as he can remember, Roger had a lively and vibrant upbringing. His grandfather, George, was a regular master of ceremonies at sundances throughout the reserve and in places like Fort Ellice – which enriched Roger’s understanding of his culture and traditions. Roger worked for Canadian National Railway for 15 years – working throughout Manitoba into Ontario and Saskatchewan.

**Why the Traditional Knowledge Study is important to Roger:** “It is an honour to be asked to be one of the participants in this traditional knowledge study.” Roger noted how the study could help preserve the lessons he learned from his parents and grandparents, so that they can be passed on to future generations. As a Community Researcher for the Waywayseecappo Traditional Knowledge Study, Roger supported interviews with mapping and translation.



## **Jim Seaton**

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At 69 years old, Jim's recollection of the way things were in Waywayseecappo remains largely intact. In his younger years, Jim travelled everywhere with his parents, to hunt and gather all sorts of animals, from beavers to trapping lynx for their fur to trade to nearby towns – the memories are vivid.

He is the son of Jean and Bert Seaton. He has a twin brother, Raymond Seaton. Other siblings include Grace Eaton Harper and Kathy Hocken.

Jim left home to work for farmers in Rossburn and Silverton – pitching bales, making pastures, composting. "It was hard work," he remembers. He would travel to these places mostly by wagon and by horse.

**Why the Traditional Knowledge Study is important to Jim:** "As far as I'm concerned, if the hydro goes through the reserve, it's going to kill all of the medicines we use. You can't pick medicines from underneath the hydro line."



## **Alfred Cooke**

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The son of Joe and Dorna Cooke, Alfred has lived in Waywayseecappo all of his life.

In the 1940s, Alfred played all types of sports like baseball, and remembers camping in places like St. Lazare and Fort Ellice - both very close to Manitoba Hydro's proposed Birtle Transmission Line. At age 9 and 10 during the 1950s, Alfred helped with cultivating the gardens at home. In his early adulthood, he would go on to work in Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

**Why the Traditional Knowledge Study is important to Alfred:** For Alfred, the study will help preserve memories of Waywayseecappo people for future generations: "It's about memories."



## Gary Ironstand

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Gary is the son of Lucy Lynxleg Ironstand and Henry John Ironstand.

Gary's grandfather is Alex Piiwaupikokagaubow and his grandmother, D. Gambler. He grew up with siblings, Brenna, Deanna, Gary Jr., and Daniel John Ironstand. His late wife was Mary Jane Clearsky, cousin to Chief Murray Clearsky. Ironstand, in Ojibwe, is "Piiwaupikokagaubow."

Gary currently lives in Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation, located in the Valley River area. This area has historical significance, as Gary's great grandfather travelled through Gambler and Waywayseecappo, to Valley River, through what was called the "Ironstand Trail." His grandfather was given permission to pass through Waywayseecappo from Chief Waywayseecappo.

**Why the Traditional Knowledge Study is important to Gary:** "Our culture, Anishnabe people living off the land and water. We can see what the land gave us." This culture and way of life, as Gary noted, has been lost overtime. He sees the report as a way to preserve the knowledge.



## **Lillian Clearsky**

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Born in 1940, Lillian Clearsky grew up in Waywayseecappo with a very large family including her parents, Victoria Cloud and Alex Clearsky, grandfather Sandy Cloud and grandmother Justine Pelletier, sisters, Edna Brandon, Alice Rose, Margaret Clearsky, Noreen Clearsky, Lena Clearsky, Grace Mentuck, and brother Raymond Clearsky.

Lillian recalls a time, during the horse and wagon era, when Waywayseecappo was fully able to grow and hunt their own food. The 1950s, she says, was the start of a more difficult time to grow food.

Lillian continues to participate in pow wow dances.

**Why the Traditional Knowledge Study is important to Lilian:** "It is a way to create hope in the community, especially for young people – and to provide them with knowledge about the ways in which things used to be done."