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## Two-Eyed Seeing in Research and its Absence in Policy: Little Saskatchewan First Nation Elders' Experiences of the 2011 Flood and Forced Displacement

Donna E. Martin

*University of Manitoba*, donna.martin@umanitoba.ca

Shirley Thompson

*University of Manitoba*, s.thompson@umanitoba.ca

Myrle Ballard

*University of Manitoba*, myrle.ballard@umanitoba.ca

Janice Linton

*University of Manitoba*, janice.linton@umanitoba.ca

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## **Abstract**

Two-eyed seeing is a guiding framework for research that values and uses Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. In this article, we describe the merits and challenges of using two-eyed seeing to guide a collaborative research project with a First Nation community in Manitoba, Canada devastated by a human-made flood. In 2011, provincial government officials flooded 17 First Nation communities including Little Saskatchewan First Nation (LSFN), displacing thousands of people. To date, approximately 350 LSFN's on-reserve members remain displaced. Two-eyed seeing ensured that the study was community-driven and facilitated a more thorough analysis of the data. This case study illuminated the absence of two-eyed seeing in policy making and decision making. We argue for the need to incorporate two-eyed seeing in policy making and program development, and to value and foster Indigenous perspectives in decision making within communities, especially regarding activities that have a direct impact on environments within or surrounding Indigenous lands.

## **Keywords**

First Nations, Elders, flooding, forced displacement, rebuilding, two-eyed seeing

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## **Two-Eyed Seeing in Research and its Absence in Policy: Little Saskatchewan First Nation Elders' Experiences of the 2011 Flood and Forced Displacement**

Two-eyed seeing can both reframe questions asked by Indigenous health researchers and inform solutions and policies concerning Indigenous and Western knowledges (Black & McBean, 2016; Martin, 2012). In this article, we describe the merits and challenges of using two-eyed seeing to guide a collaborative research project with a First Nation community in Manitoba, Canada that has suffered from human-made flooding. In 2011, provincial government officials diverted water from the Assiniboine River through water control structures to Lake St. Martin, ostensibly to protect downstream towns and cities along the Assiniboine River. As a result, 17 First Nation communities were flooded and 4,525 First Nations people were displaced (Flood Review Task Force, 2013). To date, over 2000 First Nations people remain displaced and are unable to return to their home communities. Forced displacement (FD) has been defined as the forced or obligatory departure from homes or places of habitual residence (Cao, Hwang, & Xi, 2012). In the context of the 2011 flooding, community members were forced to flee their homes and lands following an emergency evacuation notice as a result of a human-made disaster.

In this study, the two-eyed seeing approach facilitated an exploration of two perspectives on FD: First, we addressed “one-eye,” from the Elders. Second, we addressed the “other eye” of decision-makers (who are typically non-Indigenous). By exploring FD from both perspectives, we could determine the reasons behind the lack of progress in meeting “eye to eye.” We argue that use of the two-eyed seeing approach should not be limited to conducting research with Indigenous Peoples; rather, two-eyed seeing can and must facilitate and guide exchanges on water and environmental management. Further, we argue that two-eyed seeing can potentially facilitate more inclusive and socially just programs and policies with Indigenous Peoples globally (Howitt, Havnen, & Veland, 2012). We support Black and McBean’s (2016) call for Indigenous participation in decision making and the incorporation of local knowledge in environmental policy frameworks. Although this study used two-eyed seeing to facilitate participatory research and integrated knowledge translation, limited progress has been made in terms of helping flood evacuees return to their home communities. This is because two-eyed seeing has not been incorporated into water, environmental, and resettlement policy frameworks in the Province of Manitoba.

### **Background**

In this section, we provide an overview of two-eyed seeing as the guiding framework of this study, followed by a review of relevant literature. Two-eyed seeing was integrated into each phase of this study’s research process, including the literature review.

### **Guiding Framework**

Two-eyed seeing evolved thanks in large part to the curriculum work of Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall, along with their academic colleague Cheryl Bartlett. Two-eyed seeing is:

To see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together, for the benefit of all. (Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012, p. 335)

Bartlett et al. (2012) have suggested that approaching research with Indigenous Peoples with both viewpoints allows a new way of seeing the world to emerge. Mi'kmaq Elders Albert Marshall and Murdena Marshall have described two-eyed seeing as a gift of multiple perspectives (Bartlett et al., 2012). Together, they integrated a longstanding Indigenous way of knowing into elementary and post-secondary school curricula (specifically integrative science and Indigenous health research methods) (Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2009; Vukic, Gregory, & Martin-Misener, 2012).

There have been some excellent examples of knowledge dissemination regarding the role and necessity of two-eyed seeing and related Indigenous research methodologies in addressing health inequities (Chatwood et al., 2015; Hall et al., 2015; Marsh, Cote-Meek, Toulouse, Najavits, & Young, 2015; Martin, 2012). In addition, Elders, communities, academics, and funders have offered encouragement, knowledge sharing, and foresight regarding how to adopt community-based participatory methodologies, with particular emphasis on the utility of two-eyed seeing (Black & McBean, 2016; Hall et al., 2015; Martin, 2012; Vukic et al., 2012).

Two-eyed seeing can reframe the nature of the questions that are asked in Indigenous health research (Martin, 2012), indigenize inquiry methods (Lavallée, 2009), and be used to evaluate findings and policies (Black & McBean, 2016). If a power imbalance is retained by drawing conclusions or creating the policies to attempt to address health, social, and environmental inequities exclusively through Western social science, there would be little purpose in carrying out research as it would fail to be meaningful and relevant to Indigenous Peoples.

Embedded in two-eyed seeing is the belief “that no one perspective is right or wrong; all views are seen to contribute something unique and important” (Martin, 2012, p. 34). Two-eyed seeing does not subsume one way of knowing over another. It encourages fluidity, multiple perspectives, and the use of self-reflection to pose questions and critically consider the partiality of one's perspective (Martin, 2012). Thus, two-eyed seeing facilitates the interdisciplinary, intersectoral community engagement that is required for effective policy design, implementation, and application (Black & McBean, 2016).

Enhancing the two-eyed seeing approach to research and strengthening it through all stages of the research process involves creating and maintaining what Ermine, Sinclair, and Jeffery (2004) have called “ethical space.” Ermine et al. (2004) used the term “ethical space” to describe an abstract space that frames an encounter or interaction between two individuals or groups who come together with different perspectives and intentions. Ethical space alluded to the space for meaningful dialogue between Indigenous and Western worlds. Affirming ethical space where dialogue and cross-cultural engagement exists and frank, respectful discussion regarding participants' intentions, values, and assumptions can take place has been a necessary element of our work. We argue for an ethical space within policymaking circles that prioritizes “engagement at the level of ideology,” since traditional policymaking tables are often spaces where “ideologies become so deeply entrenched that they are invisible to their beholders” (Fridkin, 2012, p. 117).

## **Impacts of Forced Displacement on Indigenous Peoples**

We located literature about flooding and FD, which was critiqued from the viewpoints of both Western science and Indigenous knowledge. Specifically, we reviewed these studies to determine their inclusion of Indigenous participants and knowledge. Researchers described the short-term and long-term health

impacts of flooding amongst the general population (Ahern, Kovats, Wilkinson, Few, & Matthies, 2005; Alderman, Turner, & Tong, 2012). However, we found few studies about the impacts of flooding and FD that were specific to Indigenous communities. Of note, Indigenous Peoples tend to see these events differently: “Indigenous groups believe that the devastation of their lands through globalization and commercial exploitation and climate change is equivalent to a physical assault” (King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009, p. 81). The destruction of Indigenous Peoples’ food sources, homes, and medicines violates their physical, spiritual, emotional, and social well-being in ways that are similar to traumatic, violent assault. The physical environment and connection to land have both been noted as critical elements of health for Indigenous populations (Reading & Wien, 2009; Richmond & Ross, 2009). Furthermore, Indigenous groups have equated the decline of their traditional territories as a process akin to either a family member dying or physical dismemberment: “As traditional custodians of the land, dispossessed Indigenous peoples have lost their primary reason for being” (King et al., 2009, p. 81).

One study we reviewed investigated the intergenerational consequences of FD in four American Indian communities in the United States and four First Nations communities in Canada by collecting survey data from 507 youth and their biological mothers (Walls & Whitbeck, 2012). This study noted that government relocation policies and FD caused harmful health effects in three generations of Indigenous people, such as intergenerational substance abuse, depressive symptoms, ineffective parenting skills, and delinquent behaviour in youth (Walls & Whitbeck, 2012). FD was directly associated with alcohol abuse, which negatively impacted supportive parenting (Walls & Whitbeck, 2012). For Indigenous Peoples, the impacts of FD and loss of land directly influence and contribute to each other, as loss of land has been cited as one of the most significant factors contributing to health disparities (King et al., 2009; Richmond & Ross, 2009).

While types of FD differ profoundly in their causes (which include but are not limited to natural disasters, human-made disasters, development projects, and conflicts), their consequences are similarly impoverishing (Cernea, 2006). However, the economic impacts of FD on Indigenous Peoples are more catastrophic (Ballard & Thompson, 2013; Ballard, Thompson, & Klatt, 2012; Howitt et al., 2012). Negative health impacts stemming from the FD of Indigenous Peoples are numerous and profound (Denis, 2012; Kingston & Marino, 2010; Lienafa & Martin, 2010; Maldonado, Shearer, Bronen, Peterson, & Lazrus, 2013; O’Sullivan & Handal, 1988; Shearer, 2012; Zander, Petheram, & Garnett, 2013). For example, Thompson, Ballard, and Martin (2014) found:

After involuntary relocation, rural [I]ndigenous communities have experienced a cultural identity crisis, resistance to innovation, and increased dependency . . . as well as increased morbidity and mortality. Even the threat of such relocations has been associated with severe levels of psychological distress and dysfunction. (p. 80)

Studies examining the impact of FD among Indigenous Peoples indicated that sociopolitical contexts shape Indigenous communities’ vulnerability. For example, Kant, Vertinsky, Zheng, and Smith (2013) collected 316 questionnaires to determine key contributors to well-being stemming from sociocultural factors and land use within two First Nations communities (one in Ontario and one in British Columbia). The percentage of household meals from traditional diets and the impact of government regulations on land use were two factors strongly associated with well-being (Kant et al., 2013). Furthermore, a lack of inclusive, comprehensive policies and procedures—such as emergency

management plans, clear breakdowns of roles and responsibilities, short- and long-term solutions to identified problems, different jurisdictional responsibilities, and inadequate funding—compounded the negative impacts of FD (Kant et al., 2013; Office of the Auditor General, 2013; Shearer, 2012). FD, coupled with inadequate governance mechanisms to support adaptation strategies, contributed to negative health impacts, a loss of community and culture, and economic decline, which further exacerbated tribal impoverishment and injustice (Shearer, 2012). Government agents lacked the power to fully assess, mitigate, and address the problem of FD (Shearer, 2012). In a case study of the forced displacement of the Kivalina, Shearer (2012) concluded that the agencies responsible for relocation planning and disaster management should be more closely linked to each other and should receive significant input from affected Indigenous communities. A number of authors recommended that policymakers attend to what local communities identify as important for the maintenance of their “new” communities (Kingston & Marino, 2010; Lienafa & Martin, 2010; Maldonado et al., 2013; Tousignant & Sioui, 2009; Zander et al., 2013). Generally, communities have identified strong extended and nuclear family ties as important aspects of their communities.

Since European settlement, Indigenous communities in Canada have for centuries experienced negative impacts resulting from FD (Black & Burns, 2006; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Waldram, 1988). After Confederation in 1867 and the Indian Act of 1876, FD of Indigenous communities became a more common occurrence. Historically, FDs have been categorized as “relocations,” which are either administrative or developmental (Waldram, 1988). Administrative relocations have been defined as moves that facilitate federal government operations or address the perceived needs of Indigenous Peoples (Black & Burns, 2006). Examples of an administrative relocation include the mass evacuation of thousands of Indigenous Peoples to southern sanatoria for tuberculosis treatment in the mid-1900s and the 1994 relocation of 1,000 members of the Mushuau Innu from Davis Inlet, Labrador (Black & Burns, 2006; Cameron, 2012). The Mushuau Innu’s nomadic way of life was drastically disrupted when they were forced to settle in Davis Inlet, a poorly serviced and overcrowded community. This change resulted in the loss of traditional livelihoods, social upheaval, and rampant substance abuse. In 1993, the Canadian media televised scenes of Mushuau Innu youth abusing solvents, which prompted a wave of public outcry regarding solvent abuse and poor living conditions in the community. In response, governments funded another relocation of the Mushuau Innu to a community chosen site on the mainland (Cameron, 2012).

Canada’s centuries-long history of colonization and FD of Indigenous communities tells a story of domination, discrimination, and assimilation (Denov & Campbell, 2002). For example, the FD of the Dene people, who were moved from Little Duck Lake to a 300 by 600 foot camp near a cemetery on the outskirts of Churchill, Manitoba, offers an example of one-eyed seeing that does not consider the insights of local, Indigenous knowledge when making decisions. A biologist took a photo of numerous caribou carcasses lying along the shore of Little Duck Lake. From the biologist’s perspective, which was steeped purely in Western science, to kill a number of animals and not use them immediately was seen as wasteful and overkill. He did not see the Dene view that the caribou were being sustainably managed in order to continue to provide food for the long, very cold winter months in the Arctic as had been done for centuries. The government took action without trying to understand or communicate with the Dene. In order to protect the caribou herd population, the government relocated the Dene away from caribou migration routes, thereby depriving them of food and clothing. For the Dene, the relatively small camp was an ostensible prison for a tribe that depended on caribou hunting for sustenance. The

result of this FD was loss of culture, land, food, and a way of life. Among those who were relocated, 117 of the 260 people died. The FD of the Dene is just one example of many FDs administered by the Canadian government, most of which have been privileged only one way of seeing, or one-eyed seeing (Malone, 2016).

Developmental relocations are often the result of agricultural expansion, land reclamation, urban development, or hydroelectric projects (Waldram, 1988). The James Bay hydroelectric project in Northern Quebec, for example, has had a large impact on the Cree peoples due to the floodwaters from the dam structures (Berry, Wintrob, Sindell, & Mawhinney, 1982; Salisbury, 1986). Noah Eagle from Waswanipi First Nation has explained how Hydro Québec disrupted his community's oral tradition of storytelling by flooded the land (Grand Council of the Crees, n. d.). Historically, Elders from Waswanipi shared their knowledge and transmitted information about the local culture through storytelling, which would typically take place on the land. The loss of land resultant to Hydro Québec's deliberate flooding meant that the oral, storytelling-based transmission of Elders' knowledge was replaced by books and writing. He explained:

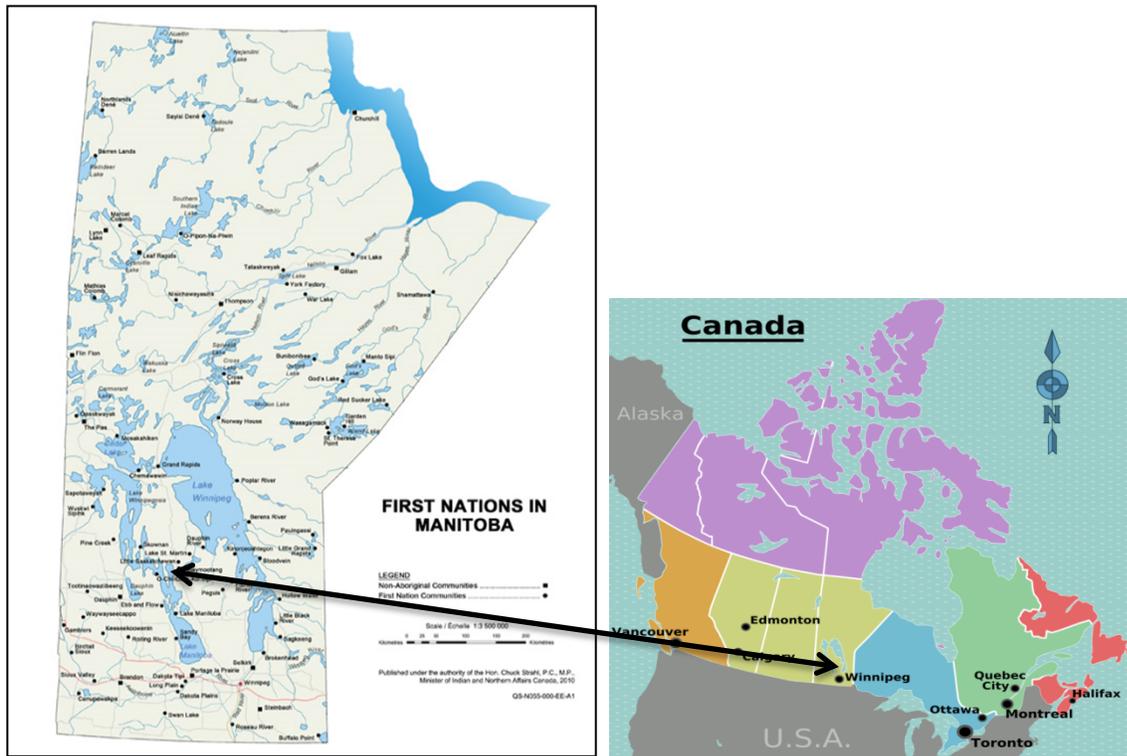
For years I have helped the Cree youth. They have asked me to teach them the traditional practices. My response to them was it will be hard for you to learn, for everything done in our traditions relies on the land and comes from the land. Today it is harder to teach these practices to the youth because the land is being destroyed by loggers and by Hydro Québec. A school teacher would probably say: how am I supposed to teach if I have nothing to teach with? (Grand Council of the Crees, n. d., Noah Eagle, Waswanipi section, para. 1)

Forced displacement must be considered alongside broader process of dispossession and displacement that are known to impact the cultural, spiritual, social, economic, and political aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives (Black & Burns, 2006). For example, the Churchill River Diversion in the 1970s, initiated by Manitoba Hydro and supported by the provincial and federal governments, resulted in FD of the South Indian Lake community (Lienafa & Martin, 2010; Thompson, 2015; Waldram, 1988). The Chemawawin Cree of Easterville were relocated when the Grand Rapids Dam (completed in 1964 on the Saskatchewan River near the community of Grand Rapids) was flooded, destroying both peoples' livelihoods and the habitat of species that provided sustenance for the people. In 2015, then-Premier of Manitoba Greg Selinger apologized for the impacts of hydroelectric development on Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba:

The effects of hydro projects include effects on transportation in summer and winter, effects on fishing, effects on water quality and, which in some cases includes significant flooding of First Nation reserve land and other lands traditionally used by Indigenous people . . . We recognize that hydro development can affect the cultural identities of Indigenous peoples because of the close relationship of Indigenous people to the land and resources. (Kirby, 2015, para. 4)

### **The Case Study: Little Saskatchewan First Nation (LSFN)**

The Lake St. Martin basin has been divided into four reserves by the Crown. Little Saskatchewan First Nation is part of Treaty 2, which was signed in 1871; the community's land base is situated on the western shores of Lake St. Martin, approximately 225 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg. Please see Figure 1 for a map of Canada with the Province of Manitoba and a map of Manitoba locating LSFN.



**Figure 1.** Location of Little Saskatchewan First Nation in Manitoba, Canada (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010).

Anishinaabe people have resided on the shores of Lake St. Martin for many generations, and Elders from this region have shared their grandparents' stories of how beautiful life was during their youth (Ballard et al., 2012; Ballard & Thompson, 2013). Elders have noted that the land was once home to bison and other wildlife, and it was fertile for agricultural activities such as growing hay and raising and ranching cattle. Fishing, agriculture, and hunting provided abundant resources to feed and clothe families. From the mid-1850s until the creation of a water control structure in 1961, fishing and agriculture provided adequate income and sustenance (Ballard et al., 2012; Ballard & Thompson, 2013). As with some First Nations communities in Canada, the Church is a focal point. Church ceremonies, gatherings, and practices are revered by most LSFN members.

In 1961, a water control structure was constructed upstream at Fairford River, an outlet from Lake Manitoba. In 1970, the creation of a second water control structure, the Portage Diversion, resulted in higher water levels in Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. Since the construction of these water control structures, LSFN and adjacent First Nations communities have experienced recurring flooding (Ballard, Martin, & Thompson, 2016; Thompson, Ballard, & Martin, 2014).

In Canada, water is governed at the provincial level (Ballard, 2017; Thompson, 2015). In 2011, to protect downstream towns and cities along the Assiniboine River from flooding, provincial government officials diverted the river's water to flow through control structures to Lake St. Martin, thereby flooding 17 First Nations communities and displacing 4,525 First Nations people (Flood Review Task Force,

2013). The impacts of the government's decision to flood this area were extensive. In particular, the flood, the emergency evacuation, and the resulting forced displacement continue profoundly impact members of Little Saskatchewan First Nation (Flood Review Task Force, 2013). While most evacuated families from other affected First Nation communities were able to eventually return to their homes, approximately 350 members (half of the on-reserve population) of Little Saskatchewan First Nation still reside in temporary housing. The majority of displaced community members reside in Winnipeg and resettlement has not yet occurred.

Provincial government officials utilized the Emergency Measures Act to issue a call for emergency evacuation without consulting First Nations communities. Some community members have noted that they were provided with 24 to 48 hour notices to evacuate their homes, and they were given instructions to take two suitcases and leave all other possessions behind—including pets. Initially, the Manitoba Association of Native Firefighters was tasked with managing the evacuation and the evacuees. This organization typically assists with smaller scale and short-term evacuations caused by forest fires. By 2015, the Canadian Red Cross was designated as the “new” agency that would provide assistance to flood evacuees.

Reports of blatant racism, family breakups, increased family violence, drug use, substance abuse, and recruitment of youth by gangs in Winnipeg have emerged regarding the 2011 flood evacuees (Ballard et al., 2012). LSFN community members continue to be dispersed throughout Winnipeg and the Interlake region just north of Winnipeg, which disrupts their existing social support systems and social networks (Ballard et al., 2012). Some flood evacuees have reported experiencing covert and overt racism on a frequent basis in their hotels and throughout Winnipeg. Furthermore, evacuees have reported the physical and verbal assault of Elders, and being called “freeloaders.” These negative experiences were compounded by the media's portrayal of evacuees as “living high off the public purse” (Ballard et al., 2012).

It is worth noting that some LSFN community members chose not to evacuate (because their houses were located on higher ground), and some evacuees whose houses were not totally damaged have returned to their home community. Approximately 240 community members now reside in LSFN, though the buildings there are overcrowded and mould infested due to flood damage. The community members who have returned must reckon with both the loss of recreational and sacred land and major disruptions to their hunting, fishing, and farming industries (Ballard et al., 2016). In 2011, the average annual income in LSFN among individuals over 15 years was \$8,848 CAD. Among the 10% of community members who earned wages, the average was slightly less than \$25,000 CAD per year (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2017). This average annual income is approximately one-quarter the average income of Manitobans (\$32,090 CAD) and Canadians (\$32,790 CAD) in 2014 (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Currently, approximately 350 LSFN community members continue to reside in temporary housing. Their LSFN homes are uninhabitable, condemned and full of black mold due to flood damage. These community members remain geographically and socially “removed” from their home community (Flood Review Task Force, 2013).

Some evacuees have identified that the health outcomes of their FD include premature deaths, increased rates of youth suicides, miscarriages, mental health issues, and worsening of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (Ballard et al., 2016). These impacts are expected to be profoundly negative and long-lasting because LSFN community members maintain a deep attachment to the land and were active in subsistence and resource livelihoods such as fishing and hunting, which were disrupted or permanently destroyed by the 2011 flood. From our understanding of both the LSFN FD and existing literature on FDs in Canada, we argue that a detailed understanding of LSFN Elders' experiences of FD after the 2011 flood, with specific focus on health impacts, is necessary. We argue that it is necessary because it begins to fill a major gap in the literature (which is written from a Western perspective) and record and disseminate the Elders' knowledge (from an Indigenous perspective). Elders' knowledge about strategies to heal can provide a foundation from which to inform programming and policies relevant to survivors of FD and their descendants.

### **Method Guided by Two-Eyed Seeing**

Guided by the insights of two-eyed seeing, we incorporated a participatory framework and integrated knowledge translation (IKT) into our study. By partnering with the Chief and Council of LSFN, we aimed to sustain a mutually respectful relationship based on shared responsibilities and benefits with relevant outcomes. Community advisory board (CAB) members were recruited based on their positions as well as their knowledge and wisdom about LSFN, Indigenous ontology, and Indigenous epistemology. A CAB was established with two LSFN Elders and the LSFN band councillor for health. The CAB guided the multidisciplinary research team during every phase of the study. By incorporating an IKT approach, the research process was culturally appropriate, respectful, equitable, and reciprocal.

Similar to the design used by Varcoe, Brown, Calam, Harvey, and Tallio (2013), this study used a critical ethnography approach (i.e., a Western perspective) within a participatory framework (i.e., an Indigenous perspective). Ethnographic research provided us with data sources and activities that ensured a rich, "emic" or "insider" description of LSFN Elders' way of life after FD. The design ensured that the perspectives of LSFN Elders were at the centre of this study's analysis. Importantly, this design orients the research to work *with* the community rather than *on* it (Tobias, Richmond, & Luginaah, 2013).

Critical ethnography provided a critical, sociopolitical lens with the intent to promote change (O'Mahony, Donnelly, Este, & Bouchal, 2012). We adopted a critical stance, which facilitated our abilities to problematize current, dominant, and taken-for-granted understandings about LSFN Elders' experiences of FD (Barron, 2013; Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Hylton, 2012). Critical ethnography provides procedures and tools to address how historical, social, political, and economic dimensions have shaped the experiences and health impacts of FD among LSFN Elders.

### **Sampling and Recruitment Strategies**

Following approval from both the Education/Nursing Ethical Review Board at the University of Manitoba and the LSFN Chief and Council, we began recruiting participants for this study using a purposive sampling technique. Data sources were LSFN Elders along with other key informants such as health care providers, family caregivers, and community leaders. Currently displaced and "resettled" LSFN Elders were invited to participate in a one-hour interview session. The CAB and research team

purposefully recruited key informants to extend our understanding of the health impacts of FD on LSFN Elders, available and needed services and resources, and the historical or sociopolitical factors impacting the lives of displaced and resettled LSFN Elders.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Guided by two-eyed seeing, we believe that the most appropriate method of data collection was video-recorded, face-to-face interviews, because they honour the oral tradition of Indigenous Peoples. Each interview session was conducted by Ballard, who is fluent in Anishinaabemowin—the traditional language spoken in LSFN, and recorded by a graduate research assistant. All video recordings were translated into English and transcribed verbatim into word documents for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Guided by two-eyed seeing, we began with low-level coding to describe the Elders' perceptions of their actions, behaviours, and events. The CAB and the research team explored the subjective and normative realm of FD within the context of the Elders' hotel accommodations, multiple moves, temporary housing, and dreams of permanent homes in LSFN. We compared and contrasted the subjective realm of currently displaced Elders with the on-reserve Elders' experiences. Analysing the Elders' interviews, the CAB and research team focused on the nature of power in order to determine how intergroup relations and multi-level government policies and procedures shaped LSFN Elders' FD experiences and health outcomes. From our perspective, two-eyed seeing provided a panoramic lens through which to analyse the data, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive description of Elders' experiences, health outcomes, and future plans for LSFN.

### **Integrated Knowledge Translation**

The Chief and Council of LSFN requested two deliverables:

- a. A written report, and
- b. A video that documented both Elders' experiences and health outcomes stemming from the 2011 flood and FD, and their viewpoints about ways to heal and move forward.

During the study, the research team, the LSFN Chief and Council, and CAB met every three months to discuss issues relating to the research protocol and the study's preliminary findings. These meetings served to guide the filming for the video and research focus. At the conclusion of the one-year project, the research team shared a written report with the LSFN Chief and Council, and two community-based video premieres of the study's video, *Wounded Spirit: Forced Evacuation of Little Saskatchewan First Nation Elders* (Ballard, Martin, & Thompson, 2016), were held and followed by traditional feasts and discussion. One premiere was held in LSFN and the other was held in Winnipeg to ensure that the knowledge therein was shared with both on-reserve and displaced community members. Following the premieres, community members were invited to provide their input about the video. Following the premieres, and with permission from the CAB and LSFN Chief and Council, the video was uploaded onto YouTube.com for free public access. The CAB, LSFN Chief and Council, and community

members identified that future research focused on youth was needed to understand their experiences of FD.

## **Findings**

Using a Western and Indigenous perspective throughout the data analysis phase of this study, we identified two major themes: “Still Adrift” and “Rebuilding Community.” These themes described the Elders’ experiences, health outcomes of FD, and their perspectives on how to heal and move forward. The themes reflect the cultural and spiritual significance of water and land along with the need to build relationships. When providing direct quotes to illustrate this study’s findings, we use participating Elders’ first names after having been granted permission.

### **Description of the Sample**

Eight Elders and seven key informants volunteered to participate in one-hour, video-recorded interviews. Please refer to Table 1 for a general description of participants. Three Elders were male and five were female. Among the Elders we interviewed, 2 of the 8 chose to remain in LSFN in order to continue their employment and protect their and others’ properties; the remaining six Elders were evacuated from the community. To date, 4 of the 8 Elders remain displaced and one Elder has died. Since the 2011 evacuation, one Elder shared that she was required to move 12 times. All Elders spoke Anishinaabemowin during their interviews.

Participating Elders noted that their community life was unstable and lost after the flood; they described this instability and lostness using the phrase “still adrift.” “Still adrift” encapsulated the interrelated subthemes of the Elders’ interviews. These subthemes were:

- a. Multiple losses,
- b. Never-ending stress,
- c. Profound loneliness, and
- d. Experiencing toxic environments.

### **Still Adrift**

Elders’ losses resulting from the 2011 flood and FD included premature mortality of other members of LSFN (through either the worsening of chronic illnesses or the early onset of an acute illness). Elders expressed grief and frustration over the loss of homes, possessions, the church, and their roles in LSFN. Moreover, they shared that they have visited their former homes, even though the houses have mould damage following the flood.

I go back home once and awhile, to go see the house. Sometimes we sleep over, I’m lonesome; we want to go home. I still want to go back home, sometimes I go see my house for the weekend. (Elder Johnny, p. 2, line 23)

**Table 1. Description of Participants**

	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Evacuee</b>	<b>Chose Not to Evacuate</b>
1	Albert	Band Councillor		✓
2	Barry	Physician	n/a	
3	Betty	Elder	✓	
4	Charlene	Family Caregiver	✓	
5	Clifford	Elder		✓
6	Darrell	Band Councillor		✓
7	Isabella	Elder		✓
8	Jerry	Education Director		✓
9	Jonny	Elder	✓	
10	Mary	Elder	✓	
11	Maryjane	Elder	✓	
12	Ray	Band Councillor	✓	
13	Thomas	Security Personnel		✓
14	Wesley	Elder	✓	
15	Wilma	Elder	✓	

I was a bus driver when I was living in my community. I was a bus driver for 38 years . . . It was very hard especially losing my job that I loved doing. (Elder Maryjane, p. 1, line 12)

Participants shared that the emergency evacuation and FD created endless stress amongst all community members—both for evacuees and for those who were able to remain or return to LSFN. Limited information and resources compounded the stress associated with FD.

Since 2011 a lot of things have changed around LSFN. I was so depressed after [the flood] . . . I got very depressed. (Band Councillor Albert, p. 3, line 10)

Profound loneliness was a common among Elders who were evacuees and Elders residing in LSFN. Prolonged displacement disrupted Elders' social connectedness and abilities to transmit cultural values, beliefs, and activities to youth.

A lot of people that lived here and when they left, it's been lonely and I miss them; a lot of them live in the city now. I miss them, there is no one to visit here. (Elder Jerry, p. 2, line 4)

I have band members calling me, stressing their concerns of wanting to come home so how do you answer them? I myself I'm not a therapist myself, I can't say oh I know what you're going through, you're sick or your missing your spouse, that you lost your loved one. (Band Councillor Darrell, p. 8, line 3)

In addition, Elders described toxic environments resulting from substandard and overcrowded housing, a destroyed ecosystem, a poverty-stricken urban setting, and problematic intergroup relations. Substandard and overcrowded housing was typical for evacuees and residents of LSFN. Participants in LSFN described living in houses infested with black mould and snakes. Please see Figure 2 for a photo of a security personnel worker wearing a HAZMAT suit outside of a condemned home in LSFN 4 years after the human-made flood.

I went and stayed in Winnipeg because I started getting sick. It was always flooded in our basement [in LSFN]. The mould started coming around and I started getting sick from that. I started getting headaches and nose bleeds and then I got cancer . . . It affected us badly, our house was condemned, I had to move out of there . . . Last year, snakes starting coming into the house and then I had to deal with them. (Band Councillor Ray, p. 1, lines 2-4)



**Figure 2. Security personnel entering a contaminated house at LSFN in 2015 (Photo source: Myrle Ballard, 2015).**

Elders also described feeling devastated by the human-made destruction of their traditional land and lakes. For example, Elder Isabella lamented, “Maybe one day the birds will return.” We have people that are gone now that passed on [due in part to exacerbated stress and toxic environments caused by the human-made flood in 2011]. We lost a lot of loved ones in the community. (Band Councillor Darrell, p. 2, line 4)

I was healthy before we got evacuated . . . When we stayed in Gimli, I was so sick, I think I almost died, slept all day and all night. I couldn’t eat. (Elder Wesley, p. 1, line 8, line 20)

Relocated Elders shared health and social outcomes resulting from living in poverty in hotels and temporary housing in an urban setting. They associated the toxic urban environment with the loss of traditional foods, food insecurity, racism and bullying in schools, youth involvement in gangs, substance abuse, and marital breakups.

There's gangs, there's drugs, there's alcohol, there's starvation. People are hungry, people want to come home and eat and you know, come home and live with their family and loved ones. (Band Councillor Darrell, p. 3, line 6)

[Evacuees] get a supplement of \$4 a day . . . I don't know who can eat on \$4 a day, especially in an urban setting where everywhere you turn today, you gotta pay for everything living in the city, at \$4 a day . . . You know how to eat healthy in the communities and that has been taken away from us, the healthy eating lifestyle. (Elder Clifford, p. 3, line 6)

Participants shared their feelings of devastation regarding the destruction of the land and lake. They expressed that, historically, their land provided them with pastures for cattle, gardening, and recreational activities such as baseball. Some participants shared that their families were required to sell cattle after the flood because there were no pasture lands available. Likewise, gardening was limited due to the poor soil quality, and recreational activities like baseball, walking along the lakeshore, and swimming were no longer feasible. Participants noted that the lake is now polluted with high levels of mercury from decaying trees and their well water has become discoloured and foul smelling.

Even his trees died from the flood. Even the shacks he built, they're all mouldy now. Our Anishinaabe lost a lot of things. (Band Councillor Ray, p. 1, line 4)

Experiencing toxic environments also characterized the participants' descriptions of problematic intergroup relations, lack of information, and limited opportunities to participate in decision making. Participants described being excluded from discussions and negotiations with provincial and federal government officials about the provision of daily living allowances to evacuees, the limited mental health resources available to evacuees, water management, disaster relief measures, housing, and infrastructure. One key informant reported that LSFN received mental health services from one mental health counsellor 8 hours per month, noting that 8 hours per week was more appropriate for the LSFN's needs.

The government is only promising 60 houses and the rest are going to have to be dealt with in a comprehensive settlement agreement. I don't find that fair at all because we saved the taxpayer . . . about two million because we have about 250 people still on the reserve that lived in condemned homes. (Band Councillor Albert, p. 5, line 20)

There is a felt sense of injustice and systemic racism relating not only to the housing crisis but also about the human-made flood, insofar as the water was diverted away from Winnipeg to Lake St. Martin— affecting First Nations peoples on-reserve rather than non-Indigenous settlers in the city.

The White people flooded us. They got me mad, because they didn't care. They flooded us out, even with our cattle. The White man doesn't want us to hurt them but they don't care about us. (Elder Isabella, p. 8, line 17)

## **Rebuilding Community**

Participating Elders shared strategies regarding how to heal and move forward, and they noted their desires and abilities to facilitate self-determination in their rebuilt community. Most participants acknowledged the need for LSFN community members to nurture themselves through prayer and

reconnect with their cultural identity, values, traditional healing, and other people (inside and outside LSFN) in order to rebuild a vibrant community. Elders and key informants explained that reconnecting to cultural identity and learning about cultural values, beliefs, and activities, along with prayer, would nurture one physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. FD took the “connection” to cultural identity away from the people of LSFN. One Elder identified the need for a safe house in the community, which would be accessible to any member of the community, and would provide shelter and a resource person when necessary.

If there is something bothering you in your life, make a fire and look at it, pray and talk to God. He'll hear you wherever you are, inside or outside, he's always there he's close to you. Especially if you are troubled in your life, that's where it'll help, the fire. It soothes your soul . . . That's what helped me and satisfied my soul. (Elder Isabella, Transcript 2, p. 1, line 1)

We're getting some houses later on but first they're going to build a road. The government is really hard, they don't want to help. They are giving us a hard time, very difficult. They said they are going to give us 60 [houses] for now, the ones that live in Winnipeg will have first place. I guess to the reason why I feel better is because I pray before I go to bed and I go to church. I feel good when I get prayed for, prayer is strong. (Band Councillors Raymond, p. 7, line 20)

While most Elders reflected upon the value of praying for their healing processes, one Elder shared his reliance on traditional medicine, Western health care, and prayer to heal a chronic illness that worsened during FD.

[A medicine woman] is making me medicine. I drink a jug a week, two times a day. It washes away the cancer. What I know today, my late grandfather taught me, how to make medicine, I would make medicine for the sick kids that have teething problems. A lot of kids on the reserve are doing good because I looked after them. Because I made medicine for them . . . Someday when I die, I told my wife that she would take over and look after the little kids. All kinds of Anishinaabe go and see [the medicine woman]. It helps a lot of people. (Band Councillor Ray, p. 6-7, line 26)

Some Elders noted that they made a conscious decision not to abide by the Province of Manitoba's order to evacuate, instead staying behind to care for properties and pets and to continue employment. Others decided to leave LSFN to access health services and/or to alleviate the negative health impacts of living adjacent to mould.

The reason why I didn't evacuate was because I felt I didn't need to right away because they built a dyke here . . . The other reason why is because we didn't know how long we would be evacuated and my children didn't want to evacuate . . . when we told them we had to move into hotel rooms for the time, for a short time, they didn't want to move. So I decided to stay home. The other reason why I didn't evacuate also was because we were told if we evacuate we have to go on unemployment insurance and I didn't want to go on unemployment insurance. I have a job to do. (Band Councillor Albert, p. 1, line 4)

Most Elders and key informants identified the need for all members of the community to come together and reconnect. Self-determination was highly valued, and Elders consistently emphasized the need to be proactive and collaborative when planning a new community.

If you're gonna build a community—build it right is what I said. This is something that our grandchildren, our grandchildren's children are going to live in this community forever and ever. I don't want any mistakes or any errors made while I'm under their watch I said. So build us a proper road, with a walking path or you know, I've been fighting strong and hard with the government. (Band Councillor Darrell, p. 3, line 5)

The government wants us to justify who is going to live in those new homes, which evacuees are gonna come home. They wanna conduct an interview with the evacuees who are going to be living in those homes and sign out on those homes. This is the province trying to dictate as to what they're gonna do. But I said, where is it in the government that the province has any jurisdiction on the federally owned reserves. Our reserves in Canada are all governed by the federal government. So it's just playing, it's just another stall tactic that the government is trying to do with our people here and I said no, you're not going to do that to us. So I've been arguing and fighting hard for our people. (Band Councillor Darrell, p. 4, line 5)

In summary, eight Elders and seven key informants shared their perspectives about FD and its negative impacts on individual, family, and community health. Elders were “still adrift” years after a human-made flood and FD. They experienced multiple losses: homes, possessions, livelihoods, health, place of worship, and premature deaths of family and community members. Their grief was compounded by feelings of profound loneliness and witnessing the destruction of their traditional land and lake. High levels of stress and substantial negative health outcomes were exacerbated by poor living conditions regardless of whether they chose to stay in LSFN (overcrowding, mold) or were relocated to an urban setting infested with negative social problems (gangs, drugs, alcohol, and food insecurity).

Despite being “still adrift,” participants shared strategies to heal, move forward, and rebuild a new community. “Rebuilding community” represented Elders’ and key informants’ advice to attend to holistic health by integrating prayer and traditional medicines with Western health services. Elders acknowledged the significance of self-determination, rebuilding the community, reconnecting evacuees with non-evacuees, and the need to have a voice at the policymaking table. By focusing on children and youth, Elders expressed hope to rebuild LSFN for future generations.

## **Discussion**

Participants were “still adrift” following the 2011 human-made flood. Water represents life. One of the Indigenous practices is to say prayers and give thanks when someone is near water (Anderson, 2008). Many traditions are also passed in or around water. To a Western “eye,” water and land are seen as commodities, assets to be bought and sold for profit (Ballard, 2017). From an Indigenous perspective, relationships with land and water is much deeper, as land and water are interconnected, and every aspect of LSFN life revolves around water and land. The health of the land and water is central to LSFN’s culture. Land is their mother. It is steeped in their culture, but also gives them the responsibility to care for it (LaDuke, 2002).

First Nation Elders forced to reside in a city experienced challenges. “Still adrift” encapsulated these inter-related subthemes: (a) multiple losses, (b) never-ending stress, (c) profound loneliness, and (d) experiencing toxic environments. These Elders experienced multiple losses as a direct result of the 2011 flood and FD. Multiple losses included premature mortality of other members of LSFN through worsening of chronic illnesses or early onset of an acute illness. Elders also described feeling devastated by the human-made destruction of their traditional land and lakes.

This study’s findings contributed to the existing evidence that flooding and FD has a catastrophic impact on First Nations communities (Ballard, 2017; Ballard et al., 2012; Maldonado et al., 2013; O’Sullivan & Handal, 1988; Thompson et al., 2014; Waldram, 1988). It has been noted that a key determinant of Indigenous Peoples’ health is environmental stewardship (Reading & Wien, 2009); traditional ties to the natural environment have been recognized as contributors to superior health, which was enjoyed by Indigenous Peoples before colonization (Reading & Wien, 2009). The flood of 2011 destroyed the fabric of a community, insofar as it prompted a rapid state of transition from having a healthy relationship with the natural world to one of dispossession and disempowerment (Reading & Wien, 2009). This First Nation community was given 24 to 48 hours notice to evacuate with no say or no knowledge where evacuees were going and the timeframe for the displacement.

This case study provides further evidence that Anishinabek people continue to be disempowered and marginalized (Ballard, 2017). Furthermore, this study’s findings support the stance of Black and McBean (2016) that two-eyed seeing approaches must be adopted in all levels of policymaking and programming. Access to resources and supports are controlled by formal and informal institutions that were created to support settler society and take away land and resources from Indigenous Peoples (Ballard, 2017). The Anishinabek are particularly vulnerable as a result of these structures and processes. First Nations communities exist on the margins of neoliberal settler society, which offers them no chance to participate, denies them human rights, and allows them no access to justice (Ballard, 2017). The limited to no input from First Nations communities on water management policies, evacuation procedures, disaster management policies, and health services, coupled with jurisdictional conflicts, has prolonged and compounded the negative health outcomes of FD (Ballard, 2017; Cameron, 2012; Shearer, 2012; Thompson, 2015). As Thompson (2015) has noted, “displacement in Manitoba compromises cultural identity for [First Nations] communities, which has a high morbidity and mortality toll” (p. 248). What this study has added is Elders’ advice about how to approach healing, move forward, and rebuild the community. Given that the Church is highly significant to LSFN community members, Elders identified how prayer could be incorporated into learning more about one’s cultural identity, values, beliefs, and activities.

The rigour of the study was strengthened by collecting data from multiple sources: (a) Elders who evacuated, (b) Elders who remained or returned to LSFN, and (c) individuals deemed knowledgeable about Elders’ experiences and health impacts of FD. Analysing the data from multiple perspectives (two-eyed seeing) including nursing, environmental sciences, critical social theory and Indigenous ways of knowing also enhanced its rigour.

Incorporating two-eyed seeing into this study’s methods and design enables us to honour and respect participants’ identities, ways of life, use of their mother tongues, and cultural practices. The research team, CAB, and LSFN Chief and Council engaged in several discussions about Western science and

Indigenous ways of knowing in order to decipher what was meaningful and relevant to LSFN members. Two-eyed-seeing guided the researchers to view the data through both a strengths-based lens and an Indigenous lens, which illuminated participating Elders' strategies to heal—namely, the significance of reconnecting the entire community (evacuees and non-evacuees) and their rights and self-determining actions. Elders' spiritual connections to the sacred land and water were described.

Incorporating two-eyed seeing into research was not without challenges, however. Several members of the research team identified some difficulties placing equal value on Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. Additionally, it was challenging to analyse data using both perspectives at the same time. Some members of the research team were required to code a transcript several times. Although this process was time consuming, it provided a more comprehensive analysis of the data and a more relevant written report and video (Ballard et al., 2016). The LSFN Chief and Council and CAB encouraged us to question the merits of two-eyed seeing in research because two-eyed seeing was not incorporated in policymaking and programming. In particular, we considered the benefits of incorporating two-eyed seeing in research when it is not valued or utilized by decision makers in policy or program development.

Participants voiced their desire for a functional community that provided the standard services available to municipalities across Canada (e.g., safe drinking water, paved roads, standard housing). Elders' primary concern was securing a bright future for their youth by providing them with access to education and health care. Participating Elders recognized a need for new "resources for this community to function like a community," since provincial government officials destroyed their community's infrastructure, recreational spaces, and ancestral land and water.

### **Policy Recommendations**

We strongly support Black and McBean's stance (2016) that two-eyed seeing be applied to policy and program development in order to enable a more egalitarian partnership between First Nations and non-Indigenous governments. In particular, it is incumbent upon researchers—as well as federal and provincial governments—to incorporate two-eyed seeing into water management, disaster management, and health care service policies and programs. Environmental and social justice, along with health equity, may be attainable when all parties value and incorporate Indigenous perspectives along with those pertaining to Western science. We question why federal and provincial governments have promptly provided disaster relief to non-Indigenous communities plagued by natural and human-made disasters, yet disaster relief in affected First Nations communities is lagging: Many members of LSFN are still waiting to return home.

### **Conclusion**

Guided by two-eyed seeing, we used participatory video interviews to explore Little Saskatchewan First Nation Elders' experiences of FD, their related health outcomes, and their strategies to heal and move forward. In total, eight Elders from LSFN and seven key informants volunteered to participate in the interviews. Two-eyed seeing facilitated the establishment of a CAB, integrated knowledge translation, data collection that honoured oral tradition and Anishinaabemowin, and a rigorous, comprehensive analysis of the data. Two major themes emerged from the data, which we have termed "still adrift" and "rebuilding community." This case study illuminates both the merits of using two-eyed seeing in research and the necessity of partnerships between key stakeholders in policy-making processes and

program planning. For example, the perspectives and knowledge of First Nations communities is crucial when it comes to programs and policies pertaining to water resource management, environmental studies, and health care services. In this way, we follow Black and McBean's (2016) argument that two-eyed seeing is an approach that should not be limited to research. To respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and knowledges, two-eyed seeing must be incorporated in policy and programs.

This case study illuminated the need to incorporate two-eyed seeing in policymaking and program development, and to value and foster Indigenous perspectives in decision making within communities, especially regarding activities that have a direct impact on environments within or surrounding Indigenous lands. "The incorporation of traditional, local knowledge into environmental decision-making is an essential tool for working towards the improvement of Indigenous health" (Black & McBean, 2016, p. 16).

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