NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) not included in the original manuscript and are unavailable from the author or university. The manuscript was scanned as received.

121

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI®

THE IMPACT OF CULTURE AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY ON RISK COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE ROSEAU RIVER ANISHINABE FIRST NATION, SOUTHERN MANITOBA

Melanie Goodchild

A thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology, Lakehead University,

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Masters of Arts Degree

September 2003

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-612-92240-5
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-612-92240-5

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the sociocultural factors that influenced risk perception and risk communication among the residents of Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation in Southern Manitoba during the flood of 1997. I discuss the limitations of the technical assessment of risk and the need to understand the cultural contexts in which risks are framed and debated. I discuss how risk communication occurs within specific cultural contexts and how the people of Roseau River chose risks other than flooding as their focus for concern.

This research is based on both primary and secondary data collection. Primary data sources include: 1) a household survey of flood risk communication in the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation Community; 2) personal interviews with several residents and key informants in the community of Roseau River; and, 3) ethnographic field notes from three visits to the community. Secondary data sources include social science literature on the social construction of risk and risk communication studies, and scholarly and popular descriptions and analysis of the flood and its consequences.

Similar to other studies, this research confirms that risk is socially constructed and furthers our understanding of how persistent disagreements about risk have their origin in different belief and value systems. The residents of Roseau River had a different dialogue of risk than other communities. This dialogue involved a rhetoric of rectitude and a call for justice. I argue that risk is best understood when the social context of framing is considered, rather than simply focusing on the physical or technological agents. For the people of Roseau River the flood of 1997 was more about injustice and government policy than it was about floodwaters and property damage. My data supports

the argument that culture plays an important role in framing of risk. I discuss that for the people of Roseau River, floodplain management is ultimately the product of a public policy, the Indian Act, whose main thrust has always been, and continues to be, the assimilation of Aboriginal people. I argue that it is not risk from flooding but risk of dependence that distresses the people of Roseau River.

Based on statements made by community members and the results of the household survey, I argue that the members of Roseau River must be consulted in the development of future floodplain management policy. For these people, risk communication is not about disaster warnings; it is about having a seat at the table during policy formation. Policymakers must open effective two-way communication between themselves and the people of Roseau River. Effective communication must incorporate the Roseau River language of risk and not be biased towards a more technical language of risk. This community must be supported in its efforts to rebuild and to heal. Rediscovery of culture and renegotiation of self-determination efforts must be encouraged from within the community and from Canada.

Further research needs to be undertaken regarding the social construction of risk in First Nation communities. Whether it is natural hazards like flooding in Roseau River or technological hazards like pollution or resource depletion, Aboriginal people continually struggle for protection from the imminent dangers they face. There is a need to examine the various contexts in which Aboriginal people negotiate risk. This may provide us with solutions for minimizing risk and improving risk communication for Aboriginal peoples.

LIST OF APPENDICES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express appreciation to those individuals who contributed to making the preparation of this thesis possible. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the people of Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation. I would particularly like to thank Gary Roberts and his family for their assistance, support and friendship during my field trips to Roseau River. I would also like to thank Chief Felix Antoine for allowing me to conduct my research in Roseau River. I am indebted to those individuals who opened their doors to me and agreed to complete the household surveys on those cold winter days. I would particularly like to extend my appreciation to the elders and community members who spent extra time with me and shared their stories. Meegwetch.

I extend special thanks to my advisors, Dr. Thomas Dunk, Department of Sociology, Dr. Harun Rasid, Department of Geography, and Dr. Pam Wakewich, Department of Sociology for their collective guidance and constructive feedback. I would also like to thank Dr. Rasid for his support of my fieldwork (through his CURA research project on sustainable floodplain management in the Red River Basin) and for sharing with me the household survey he developed. My committee provided not only scholarly advice and but also moral support. Meegwetch.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

Flooding of the Red River is a significant recurring natural hazard in southern Manitoba, Canada. About 70 percent of Manitoba's 1.1 million citizens live in the Red River Valley. As a consequence the province is particularly vulnerable to social and economic disruption during widespread flooding. During the 'flood of the century' in 1997, costs for flood fighting and recovery were estimated at $500 million with 28,000 people evacuated from high flood-risk areas (Manitoba Industry, Trade & Mines, 2001). (See Appendix A for map of areas flooded by the Red River in 1997).

Human settlement patterns have contributed substantially to the flood potential in Southern Manitoba. A main transportation route for pioneer settlers, homes and businesses were built along the Red River banks. This practice continues into modern times. Serious flooding occurs in a variety of social settings within the Red River basin - rural farmlands, small towns, suburban Winnipeg, and Aboriginal communities, more precisely, the *Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation.* The Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation (referred to as simply Roseau River) is located 76 kilometers south of the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The people of Roseau River are members of the Ojibway Nation of First Peoples, also referred to as "Anishinabe."

Studies have shown that different groups in a population choose different risks from flooding as their focus for concern (Green et al., 1991). Most research on the perception and communication of *risk,* however, has focused on possible harms, largely ignoring the cultural contexts in which hazards are framed and debated, and in which risk taking and risk perception occur. Belief systems or world views provide powerful

cultural lenses, magnifying one danger, obscuring another threat, selecting others for minimal attention or even disregard. Given this fact, Dake (1992:33) concludes that: "We can firmly reject the 18th century notion that risks are self-evident to anyone with common sense and good vision".

1.2 FOCUS OF THE THESIS

The purpose of this study is to discover the ways in which the Anishinabe culture in Roseau River provides socially constructed symbols and meanings that ultimately influence the perception of *risk and its impacts on risk communication*, using a case study design. Rich cultural description of Anishinabe belief systems, traditions, history and past flood experiences will give insight and will further the argument that any attempt to understand risk solely on the basis of *scientific* knowledge amounts to a fallacy of reductionism. A more complete understanding is possible only by regarding risk as socially constructed.

Lichtenberg & Maclean (1991) have determined that a layer of empirical complexity often hinders effective risk communication: namely, risk communication aims to reach not a single audience but a variety of audiences with different interests, values and levels of intelligence, education and understanding. Furthermore, these audiences will frame the information presented to them differently. Debates about risk and the often disruptive nature of ensuing conflicts about risk have led regulators and policy officials to call increasingly for a more participatory and democratic approach to risk management. However, merely including a broader population in the decision-making process is unlikely to lessen conflict between competing interests. For instance, some public hearings designed to increase participation in the policy process in some

cases may actually exacerbate conflict and increase polarization among factions. Individuals differ in how risk problems are initially conceptualized and framed. The issue of framing is a significant component of ongoing debates about risk in society (Vaughan & Seifert, 1992:121).

This case study is part of a Flood Research Partnership (FRP), consisting of researchers from four universities and research partners from several community organizations, conducting research on sustainable floodplain management practices in the Red River Basin. The current floodplain management practices in the Red River Basin and the experience of the 1997 flood indicate that although the institutional and organizational set-up in the basin is well established and strong, effective and optimum decision making cannot be reached. The dominant floodplain decision-making model is constrained because it is based upon the *technical assessment of risk*[1]. The purpose of this research partnership is to address this type of shortcoming. The ultimate goal of the research is to ensure stakeholders' participation in strategic flood plain management policies in the Red River Basin (Sinclair, 2001). For Roseau River this will be accomplished by making recommendations for more effective risk communication.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF "RISK"

The social sciences have deeply altered our understanding of what 'risk' means - from something concrete and physical if hard to measure, and accessible only to experts, to something constructed out of history and experience by experts and lay people alike. "Trying to assess risk is therefore necessarily a social and political exercise..." (Jasanoff, 1999:150). The FRP is hence interdisciplinary in nature. There is much to gain in

[1] The *technical assessment of risk* focuses narrowly on the *probability* of events and the *magnitude* of specific consequences.

applying the sociological imagination to the extra-disciplinary study of contemporary environmental issues. Unfortunately, sociologists far too often end up as 'underlabourers' in this endeavour, "being viewed as supporting actors in a cast dominated by natural scientists and environmental policy-makers" (Hannigan, 1995:13).

Fortunately, the past several decades have seen an increase in the role of sociology within the disaster research discourse. Researchers have approached risk, disaster and risk communication from a variety of theoretical and empirical perspectives. Insight provided by Erikson's sociological analysis of the destruction of the community fabric in the Buffalo Creek dam disaster suggests that applied sociological research is invaluable (Lifton & Olson, 1976). Quarantelli & Dynes (1977) surveyed the history of extant research and theory about mass and group response to disasters and concluded that sociology has specific and distinct contributions to make to disaster studies.

What is referred to as the *technical assessment of risk* typically models the impacts of an event, such as a flood, in terms of direct harms, including death, injuries, disease, and environmental damages. It is quantitative. This technical concept of risk thus focuses narrowly on the 'probability' of events and the 'magnitude' of specific consequences (Kasperson et al., 1988). It adopts a positivist (or realist) theory of knowledge and a bureaucratic-rationalistic policy orientation. Risk, for critics of this school, is a tangible by-product of actually occurring natural and social processes (Jasanoff, 1999). This formulation has been heavily criticized for neglecting equity issues in relation to time (future generations), space (the so-called LULU or NIMBY issue), or social groups (the highly vulnerable). In short, the technical concept of risk is

too narrow and ambiguous to serve as the crucial yardstick for policy-making (Kasperson et al., 1988).

Dynes (1993) suggested that we must have adequate assumptions about the nature of social behaviour in developing policies oriented toward reducing disasters. Palm & Hodgson's (1992) study of earthquake insurance provided immense insight into the perception of risk among California homeowners. They found that in order to induce hazard mitigation, it is important to personalize the understanding of vulnerability. For some groups in the lay population, unlike risk analysts and policy officials, managing environmental risks "has become a question of fairness, moral responsibility, and distributional equity" (Vaughan & Seifert, 1992:124). During the 1970s for instance, African Americans as a group rarely participated in any environmental movements. The first organized protest by African-Americans against the siting of a hazardous waste facility took place in 1982, only after a significant shift had occurred within this community in the framing of environmental risk issues. Based on case studies and surveys of five African-American communities where involvement in environmental risk policy was widespread, researchers concluded that active opposition to toxic waste disposal was linked to the reframing of environmental issues as policy questions involving distributional equity, "environmental discrimination," and civil rights (Vaughan & Seifert, 1992:125). Lay people though, are often "portrayed as responding 'unscientifically' to risk, using inferior and unsophisticated sources of knowledge such as 'intuition'" (Lupton, 1999:19).

Perceived threats to the environment and to human health have become one of the most important social issues of our time. Hallman & Wandersman (1992), of the

Department of Human Ecology Rutgers University, found that environmental threats are a source of stress in communities. In some cases, that stress has been great enough to cause measurable psychological problems. One of the primary focuses of their study was to identify the individual and collective coping strategies of people facing environmental threats and to assess the efficacy of these strategies. The researchers concluded that people naturally turn to others to help them cope. This collective coping may occur informally or in a more organized fashion through community organizing. Those social movements that have specialized in technological and environmental risks are often referred to as "risk movements" (Halfmann, 1999:179). These "risk movements" consider technological and ecological hazards that are thrust upon society in the name of common welfare as threats to life chances. These movements for environmental justice may represent the best chance vulnerable members of societies have for seeking protection from environmental harm. The movements spring out of the waged battles that have policy makers on one side and the general public on the other. In this study a social constructionist perspective is used to analyze *how* the movement for environmental justice is an ideal model for understanding the flood experience of the Roseau River people.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RISK

There is now a substantial body of work on what is termed the *social construction of risk* (Dake, 1992; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Hannigan, 1995; Jasanoff, 1999; Lupton, 1999; Margolis, 1996; Vaughan & Seifert, 1992) This study of the Roseau River Anishinabe community takes as its point of departure the notion that conflicts over

risk are best understood in terms of "plural social constructions of meaning" (Dake, 1992:33).

Ethnicity is correlated with certain life situations relevant to risk evaluation, such as access to social resources that could mediate the effects of a hazard (Perry and Greene, 1982; Turner and Kiecolt, 1984, as cited in Buckland & Rahman, 1999). Ethnicity can also have an important direct relationship with disaster management, through cultural values and worldview (Perry et al, 1982; Perry and Mushkatel, 1986, as cited in Buckland & Rahman, 1999). From the standpoint of First Nations and other Aboriginal groups, environmental resources and issues are at the core of the culture that Aboriginal peoples are determined to maintain and protect (Smart & Coyle, 1997). By setting risk and environmental policies, without exploring and recognizing the legitimacy of others' positions, experts fail to understand the influence of values and prior beliefs on the framing of these issues. The result is an inconsistency between what the experts and what communities accept as an acceptable resolution to conflict.

The physical environment is often viewed differently by non-indigenous and indigenous cultures. From the ethnocentric perspective of many people of European heritage, the natural environment is seen as a resource pool for the benefit of humankind. Traditionally, the built environment has tended to be a more important part of the landscape in western-based, non-indigenous cultures relative to indigenous cultures. By contrast, "most indigenous people 'believe they are conjugated inseparably with nature'" (Hinch & Butler, 1996:14). In the context of flooding in Zambia for example, the indigenous people found that the terminology of the overseas consulting engineers, who have advised on flood control works, is quite alien to local cultural traditions. These

local traditions demonstrate a much greater degree of adaptation, instead of opposition, to flooding and less threatening perception of flooding (Green et al., 1991). In another example, in his study of the ethno-ecology of the Waswanipi Cree, Feit (1971) describes how the causality that animates the Waswanipi ethno-ecosystem model is very different from a scientific account. The relationships between hunters and nature is culturally constructed, it is spiritual. Despite the difference in paradigm, Feit concludes that "the Waswanipi are recognizably concerned about what non-Aboriginal people would call ecological relationships, and their views incorporate recognizable ecological principles" (Feit, 1971:117-118). This spiritual connection with the land is not a separate religion or spirituality per se, the rituals practiced by Cree hunters during a kill for instance, simply form an integral and seamless part of their very being. Applying a Western lens to such practices is useful in so much as we can interpret their way of life, their "ecological practices," to aid our understanding of cultural constructions of risk. Rather than a scientific accounting of an event, these hunters would offer a spiritual accounting.

The mere expansion of the base of participants in the process of floodplain management in the Red River basin is not in and of itself sufficient to secure democratic risk management and effective communication. Understanding the underlying reasons for disputes is required because this "is a prerequisite for the effective implementation of a more participatory and democratic approach to risk management" (Vaughan & Seifert, 1992:131). Constructivist analysis "suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the connections between risk and culture, and it asks for increased negotiation and stakeholder engagement so that different perspectives on risk can be uncovered and accommodated" (Jasanoff, 1999:137). There exists what Doderlein (1983) terms

epistemological confusion in the area of risk management. This confusion combines with psychological aspects of risk perception to produce confused risk debate, a societal management of risks often based on diffuse or contradictory objectives, and consequently mismanagement of resource allocation to risk reduction.

A constructionist analysis provides us with an understanding of how people assign meaning to their world. As an analytical tool we can use constructionism to study what Hannigan (1995) refers to as the claims themselves, the claims-makers, and the claims-making process. *Claims* are complaints about social conditions that members of a group perceive to be offensive or undesirable. In the case of the movement for environmental justice the social condition that is the primary foci of concern is the disproportionate incidence of environmental and health disorders in low-income and working-class communities. In the case of environmental health, the fundamental debate surrounding the claim is "risk." The passion with which ordinary citizens have expressed their fears and outrage has led some risk professionals to conclude that the public is too uninformed and emotional to play a role in acceptable risk decisions. The dichotomy of opinion between policy makers and the general public argues Dake (1992), illustrates how risks are always socially constructed. He points out that: "The argument that the genesis and development of information about risk occurs in 'thought collectives' does not negate the fact that there are real threats to human health and to the environment" (Dake, 1992: 33). The point is that world views provide powerful cultural lenses that magnify one danger and obscure another; select others for minimal attention or even disregard. The key notion, again, is that risks are not "self evident to anyone with common sense and good vision" (Dake, 1992: 33).

CONTEXT OF THE FLOOD OF THE CENTURY IN A FIRST NATION COMMUNITY

While flooding occurs throughout southern Manitoba, two features of the affected area known as Roseau River, a federal Indian Reservation, make it an important one for study. First, Roseau River is an impoverished area. Roseau River is subject to many of the challenges faced by other First Nations peoples across Canada, including poverty and cultural marginalization, evidenced by high unemployment rates of 60 to 95 percent. The processes of economic, social and cultural marginalization are manifested in severe social problems (Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation Government, 1997, as cited in Buckland & Rahman, 1999). Second, Roseau River is a site of recurrent flooding, with widespread flooding occurring in the area on a frequent basis[2]. Buckland & Rahman (1999) found that Roseau River respondents in their study recalled the following floods: 1948, 1950, 1966, 1979, and 1996. Until the 'flood of the century', the 1950 flood was generally recognized as the most serious. The entire area of Roseau River outside of its ring dike was flooded in 1997. Overall, Roseau River is a unique sample for study because this area would seem poorly equipped to cope with natural disasters.

To date, there has been very little applied research in the area of community disaster in Roseau River, despite the fact that this community is highly vulnerable to the social, economic, political and physical impacts of flooding. Only two studies include this community as part of the sample population. In an article entitled, "Community-based Disaster Management during the 1997 Red River Flood in Canada," Jerry

---

[2]Phifer & Norris (1989), in their study of flooding in southeastern Kentucky, used a similar rationale for site selection.

Buckland & Matiur Rahman (1999) investigate the extent to which the level and pattern of development affects a community's disaster preparedness and response, by studying three rural communities involved in the 1997 Red River flood in Manitoba. Roseau River was selected as a research site due to its dominant ethnicity being Anishinabe. The researchers conclude that Roseau River had:

> ... the most unique experience of the three communities. The particular historical and contemporary processes that have tended to marginalize First Nation people in Canada have underdeveloped the community, leading to a relatively low level and thin pattern of development. (Buckland & Rahman, 1999:188).

A second study, which includes Roseau River as one of its population samples, is an unpublished research project by Professor Karen Grant of the University of Manitoba, on the impact of the' flood of the century' on women's health. A small focus group was held with women in Roseau River. The researcher describes these women as, socioeconomically speaking much poorer than their counterparts elsewhere in the municipality under study. My case study of Roseau River is the first study to focus exclusively on this community and the first study to be conducted by an Indigenous researcher.

In terms of disaster studies in First Nations communities, in general, there are two particularly significant ethnographic studies, which inform my work. Anastasia M. Shkilnyk's (1985) book, A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community, is an in-depth study of how a disaster impacted the small Northern Ontario Ojibwa community of Grassy Narrows. Kai Erikson, in the foreword to the book, describes the work firstly as a portrait of a community in desperate trouble. Grassy Narrows came to the nation's attention after it was discovered that thousands of pounds

of methyl mercury had been dumped into the network of lakes and rivers surrounding the reserve, polluting the whole area. The contamination of the waterways created "wrenching problems of an economic and spiritual sort as well" (Shkilnyk, 1985: Foreword, xiii). The second theme of the book, writes Erikson, is stated more implicitly than explicitly and concerns the lessons we might learn about life in general from the example Grassy Narrows provides us. The book, writes author Shkilnyk, is about the origins of suffering in the life of these Indian people:

> In sociological terms, it is a case study in the causes and symptoms of social disintegration; in the idiom of psychologists, it is a study in social pathology, an attempt to trace the sources for the symptoms of collective trauma. It crosses into anthropology when it describes the intrusions on the way of life of an indigenous people and their response to the experience of forced acculturation (Shkilnyk, 1999:3).

Shkilnyk spent two years in the community and presents an in depth and insightful study of this Anishinabe community. She concludes that the mercury poisoning had a direct relationship to the symptoms of individual trauma and social collapse that began to appear in the early 1970s in Grassy Narrows.

Another significant study informing my research is Naomi Adelson's (2000) book, Being Alive Well: Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being, a study of the holistic philosophy of health of the Whapmagoostui Cree of Quebec. This study is significant because Adelson (2000) rejects an implicit biomedical interpretation of health. This is a radical approach to research because the Cree people themselves were invited to and celebrated for defining health in their own terms. Adelson took their voices and presented it to the world "refracted through the lens of critical-interpretive medical anthropology" (Adelson, 2000:114). There is no Cree word for health. For these people

health is about 'being alive well', about quality of life. "Indeed, from a Cree perspective, health is as much to do with social relations, land, and cultural identity as it does with individual physiology" (Adelson, 2000: 3). This framework positions health as a component in larger strategies of identity and dissent, which I would argue is key to understanding how Aboriginal people perceive and frame risk.

Similar to the argument put forward by Dynes (1993), the underlying theme in my study is that risk is not only socially constructed, but that efforts by policy makers to improve disaster response must also include an understanding of the social units involved, rather than simply focusing on the physical or technological agents. The persistent disagreements about risk, according to Vaughn & Seifert (1992) have their origin in different belief and value systems. This conclusion is particularly relevant to the issue of framing during the flood of the century. Both sides of any debate on risk frame an issue based on their 'thought collective' which has resulted in disagreements about what actions should be taken and also has shown each side is unable to see the legitimacy of the other's position. In the case of policy makers, they have tended to frame environmental issues in what Hannigan (1995) refers to as the "rhetoric of rationality" (47). They tend to frame risks as scientific or economical questions, and have adopted this frame when searching for a resolution to conflict.

1.3 METHODS

During the research design phase of this project, I considered the rationale for identifying and using a particular setting as a data collection site. The local community, Roseau River, was taken as the primary focus of attention, because it was the common unit that is affected by disaster and, more importantly, that responded to the event.

Roseau River was a setting where I could access those community members who experienced the flood of the century. My particular social location as an Anishinabe person means I have a familiarity with their routines and rituals, which can facilitate entry as well as rapport once entry has been gained. By choosing to conduct my research in the field, the essence of my work is based within the tradition of *ethnography*. Although debate rages over what "ethnography" is for sociologists, the important point about the concept of ethnography is "the practice places researchers in the midst of whatever it is they study" (Berg, 2001:134). From this vantage says Berg (2001), researchers can examine various phenomena as perceived by participants and represent these observations as accounts.

The major objective of my study is to analyze how culture, rooted in the community's dominant ethnicity, affects community members' experience, framing and construction of risk, via the collective experiences of the 'flood of the century.' My overarching concern is to assess the everyday community life from the perspective of the participants, an ethnographic pursuit. One problem shared by all field investigators is the problem of *getting in.* This particular problem begins at the design stage. I began by contacting the Chief and Council by telephone. I was then directed to call the Flood Control Officer, a gentleman name Gary Roberts. I contacted him and asked to visit Roseau River. He said that would be fine. A preliminary field visit took place in October of 2001. The purpose of this visit was to meet with Gary Roberts, the community's flood control officer, and to meet with Chief Felix Antoine, in order to gain entry to the community as a site for research.

Mr. Roberts and Chief Antoine confirmed that a survey combined with interviews was an appropriate method of research for this community. Although other researchers had visited this particular community, I was the first Aboriginal researcher to do so and Mr. Roberts was especially interested in helping. During that initial visit Mr. Roberts took me on a tour atop the ring dike that surrounds the main part of the community. There are approximately 150 houses in Roseau River with nine homes located North of the dike. These homes, therefore, lack the protection provided the other 141 homes within the ring dike. The total on-reserve population is approximately 900. Gary suggested I speak with elders and he informed me that, in his opinion, a household survey would be acceptable to most residents. This initial visit to the community was two days in duration. Two more consecutive field trips of four days each followed in November of 2001 and January of 2002. During these two visits a household survey was completed and interviews with key informants were conducted, concurrently.

METHODS: DATA GATHERING

Ethnography is the science of *cultural description.* It is a form of research focusing on the sociology of meaning through close field observation of sociocultural phenomenon. Typically, the ethnographer focuses on a community, selecting informants who are known to have an overview of the activities of the community. During the past 35 years ethnographic methods have undergone considerable advancement, refinement and change, explains Berg (2001). The result is a *new ethnography.* What is key about this development is that it involves a variety of research techniques in the field. Ethnography has become the method "that involves extensive fieldwork of various types including participant observation, formal and informal interviewing, document collecting,

filming, recording and so on" (Van Maanen as quoted in Berg, 2001:135). My study includes a variety of ethnographic techniques, including interviews, surveys and participant observation. The advantage of ethnographic interviews is that they are far more in-depth than survey research.

Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) calls upon all researchers, particularly those from an Indigenous background, to challenge the positivist assumptions that were so inherent in researching Indigenous peoples for centuries. Social science inquiry is dependent on the way society is viewed, and the body of knowledge that legitimates that viewpoint. At the broad level of analysis that concerns the sociology of knowledge, "there exists an ongoing debate over the validity of scientific methods within the positivist paradigm, and whether this is in fact an appropriate paradigm for understanding human society" (Smith, 1999:164). Positivism denotes what has been referred to as the "received view that has dominated the formal discourse in the physical and social sciences for some 400 years" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:202.) Despite positivism's enduring presence, as a researcher I am one of the proponents who join critical theorists, postmodernists, feminists, post colonialists, and constructivists with their critiques of positivist assumptions. Thus my quantitative methods are harmonized with personal interviews, open-ended questions, and participant observation. I made certain that interviews with key informants included elders. I gave ample time for each participant to speak his or her mind.

One of my research methods was an extensive household survey. As I conducted each household survey I asked some open-ended questions designed to elicit elaboration from participants[2]. Themes of the survey questions were as follows:

1. Flood water inside home
2. Types of flood damage
3. Flood-proofing features
4. Flood alleviation measures
5. Flood evacuation
6. Flood fighting
7. Sources of flood information
8. Adequacy of flood information
9. Concerns during the flood
10. Flood compensation
11. Post-flood social problems
12. World view
13. Employment sector
14. Demographic
15. Education level

The survey also included two open-ended questions designed to encourage the participant to elaborate on their experience of the flood:

[2] A questionnaire entitled, *The 1997 Flood of the Century in the Red River Basin: A Survey of flood risk communication in the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation Community, Southern Manitoba*, was developed primarily by one of my thesis supervisors, Dr. Harun Rashid, Department of Geography specifically for my research project. Dr. Tom Dunk and Dr. Pamela Wakewich, Department of Sociology, and myself also provided input. Although the survey focused on various aspects of risk communication it also contained relevant questions about demographics, flood experience, and worldviews.

1. How would you describe family and social relations in the community before the flood? Did the flood change these in any way? If so, how? How would you describe family and social relations in the community now?
2. What was the most negative impact of the flood for you and your community? Did the flood have any positive impact on your community in any way?

Elders in general found it difficult to respond to survey questions using a scale. Quantification of emotion, feelings or concern, based upon a numeric scale is an odd concept to them. For the elders, I listened to their comments on each of the survey questions involving scales then I selected a ranking on their behalf. It was a judgement call. Elders represent eight of the 67 households surveyed.

A map of the community was not readily available. Therefore, I prepared a sketch map of the houses located in Roseau River during my second visit. Each house was numbered and in order to obtain a systematic sample, I visited only every second house in the community. The use of a systematic sample provides a convenient way to draw a sample from a large identified population when a printed list of that population is available. In this case the printed list was my own hand drawn map of the houses. The logic of using a sample of subjects is to make inferences about some larger population from a smaller one – sampling. As each survey was completed the house was marked on the map. A total of 67 household surveys were completed and a total of 35 interviews were conducted, including in depth interviews with Gary Roberts, flood control officer,

Chief Felix Antoine, the head nurse, the Ginew School principal, and a variety of community members. Of the 35 interviews conducted, at least six were with tribal elders.

Interviews with community members were conducted in their homes after the completion of the survey. Often, specific questions on the survey triggered memories or feelings about a particular aspect of the flood and participants elaborated. Notes were taken whenever this occurred, with permission from the respondents. In depth interviews were recorded on audiotapes while brief interviews were recorded in a field notebook. The interviews provided data that would have been difficult if not impossible to obtain through a survey, thus complementing the other primary data source.

In addition to the primary data sources, i.e. research conducted in the field between October 2001 and January 2002, I utilized secondary data sources as well. Field work was thus complemented by the use of secondary sources including research conducted by other social scientists in the area of risk perception (Dake, 1992; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Hannigan, 1995; Jasanoff, 1999; Lupton, 1999; Margolis, 1996; Vaughan & Seifert, 1992; Kasperson et al., 1988); historical accounts of the flood of 1950 and 1997 (Winnipeg Free Press, 1997; Red River Valley Echo, 1997) and, First Nation community case studies by other scholars (Adelson, 2000; Buckland & Rahman, 1999; Shkilnyk, 1985).

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

In an effort to explain my framework for analysis it is vital that I state my *social location* as a researcher. Social location influences every aspect of our research experience. One of the most important aspects of research, contrary to the positivist tradition or the "received view" in social and natural sciences, is how mainstream

research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 263). This fact is evident in Smith's (1999) book Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, in which she explains that the term research is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the "dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (Smith, 1999:1).

Research as imperialistic is evident in the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized. This is a Western discourse about the Other which is supported by "institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (Edward Said as quoted in Smith, 1999:2). Research is a "significant site of the struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other" (Smith, 1999:2).

I believe that social location determines one's paradigmatic assumptions, which in turn has practical implications for method. Western researchers studying Indigenous peoples often violated cultural protocols, negated values, failed small tests and ignored key people. What makes this particularly dangerous is not the issue of fieldwork per se, but the fact that this research was often used as the rationale for the creation of policies shaping the lives of indigenous peoples. These policies were legitimated by research, informed more often by ideology than by good research practice. Thus the power of research was not in the intrusive nature of Western research, but the unquestioning acceptance of the research findings (Smith, 1999:3). This is where social location

becomes so important. As an indigenous person doing research I operate from within a critical paradigm because I believe that research is a first step toward forms of political action that can "redress the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 264).

Like many indigenous academics, I too wish to "address social issues within the wider framework of self-determination, decolonization and social justice" (Smith, 1999:4). We are "not happy simply increasing knowledge" (Smith, 1999: 264). Like Smith, I identify myself as an indigenous scholar although my training has been primarily within the Western academy and distinctive disciplinary methodologies, specifically sociology. Despite the extensive literature about life and customs of indigenous peoples, there are few critical texts on research methodologies, which mention the word indigenous, or its localized synonyms. Critiques by feminist scholars, by critical theorists, by black and African American scholars have provided us with ways of talking about knowledge and its social constructions, and about methodologies and the politics of research (Smith 1999: 6).

Kim Anderson (2000) in her book A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood provides us with an example of qualitative research written from within a framework that privileges the indigenous presence. In so doing she exemplifies the way in which social location is such a profound aspect of research. Anderson begins her book by talking about herself because she wishes to practice an Aboriginal method of contextualizing knowledge. Although feminists and other critical theorists have "challenged the objectification of knowledge, this kind of thinking is still prevalent in mainstream circles" (Anderson, 2000: 21). Anderson's contention is the same as that of

Smith (1999) who argues that Native people have suffered a particular brand of this objectification. Ever the objects of study, we have been the bed and foundation "upon which many consultants and academic 'authorities' have built careers" (Smith, 1999: 22). Many people have begun to rightly question the authority of these 'experts' she says. Here she does not only refer to Western scholars but also to Native scholars themselves. This is a point on which social location really becomes a powerful concept.

Anderson argues that Native scholars must contextualize their knowledge because they do not speak for all Native people. Just because I am Native does not mean I can speak about everything pertaining to Native people. To do so would result in reducing the complexity of our experiences as individuals and as peoples. For too long 'authority' was equated with 'objectivity'. Objectivity is naive. It is social location in my opinion that lends authority now. The 'authority' of Anderson's work on Aboriginal womanhood is therefore very closely tied to her personal experience as an Aboriginal woman. She points out "another woman could have interviewed the same forty women and produced a very different book" (Anderson, 2000: 22). It is important to note however, that her observations would not be completely arbitrary. Writing about qualitative data cannot be separated from the analytic process, which is in turn based on an understanding of cultural domains. My social location as an Anishinabe woman informs my data analysis. In fact, it is central to that process because, in the choice of particular words to summarize and reflect the complexity of the data, "the researcher is engaging in the interpretive act, lending shape and form – meaning – to massive amounts of raw data" (Rossman & Rallis, 1998:182).

My own personal interests, biases, and abilities will affect the kinds of research questions that will interest me in the future. Some of my past research papers have focused on Aboriginal control of addiction treatment centres, discipline in residential schools, grief and bereavement, environmental social movements, and environmental health. These choices of topics were very different from other students in each respective class. My choice of M.A. thesis topic is also very unique and reflects my social location. I was comfortable conducting my fieldwork amongst Anishinabe people because I too am Anishinabe. This is what Rossman & Rallis (1998) call social group identity. Doing qualitative research takes you into participants' world. Social group identity "includes the whole raft of nuanced beliefs, expectations, and stereotypes of both the researchers and the participants" (Rossman & Rallis, 1998:126). Awareness of social group identity is crucial to gathering in-depth information

All of my research is based in indigenous methodology. I am aware of "the reach of imperialism into our heads" and this motivates me to use my social location to decolonize my research, which means contextualizing my knowledge (Smith, 1999: 23).

ETHICS: PROTOCOLS & PRINCIPLES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN AN INDIGENOUS CONTEXT

Since most ethnographic research involves human subjects, "researchers must give incredible thought to ways they can protect the subjects from harm and injury" (Berg, 2001: 137). This study was conducted in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. Each survey participant received a cover letter (see Appendix B) and a verbal explanation regarding the purpose of the study. Those participants who were audio taped signed a consent form

(see Appendix C). In addition to these guidelines, this study also attempted to adhere to the *Protocols & Principles For Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context* as developed by the University of Victoria, Faculty of Human and Social Development. These protocols acknowledge that researchers are knowledge brokers, people who have the power to construct legitimating arguments for or against ideas, theories or practices. They are collectors of information and producers of meaning, which can be used for, or against Indigenous interests. This study adhered to the protocols in an effort to ensure that appropriate respect was given to the culture, language, knowledge and values of the Indigenous peoples of Roseau River. The protocol reaffirms Indigenous peoples' right to participate in and enjoy society's benefits including those that might result from research and Indigenous involvement in research activities.

Results of this study have been made available to the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation and to other members of the Flood Research Partnership, upon request.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY: RISK COMMUNICATION

Conclusions and recommendations of this study will focus on the implications of the research for *risk communication.* Government agencies are increasingly concerned about how to communicate with the public more effectively about environmental issues. Chess et al. (1995) explored the question: What risk communication research would be most important to improve agencies' risk communication practices? This question had not been examined in any great detail. They interviewed a variety of key stakeholders and found that communicating with different social and cultural groups was a high priority topic. Research was needed in the areas of "defining needs of minority communities for participation in environmental problem solving" and "the effect of

culture on individual's perception of risk" (Chess et al, 1995:130). They also concluded that more research was needed on overcoming organizational barriers to risk communication. With regards to communication with minority groups they found that practitioners and researchers "defined the problem as a failure of agencies to consider these communities' concerns, not merely an inability to craft messages that are more useful or understandable to such communities" (Chess et al, 1995:133). My study will add to research related to how agencies might interact more effectively with communities that are culturally different than white, middle-class ones.

Quarantelli (1997) found that in the prescriptive and research literature on disaster management, it is often said that there are communication problems in disasters. This formulation, he argues, tends to put an emphasis on communications technology, the means used rather than the content of what is communicated. Yet research shows that problems stem from *what is communicated* rather than *how communication occurs*. In most cases, information flow problems do not arise from equipment scarcity, damaged facilities, or other forms of destruction that renders community technologies inoperable. They stem more from problems in the processes of communication itself, the information flow per se, of which there is often a massive increase.

A stranger in a foreign land would hardly expect to communicate effectively with the locals without knowing something about their language and culture. Yet risk assessors and risk managers, like the Emergency Management Organization of Manitoba for instance, have often tried to communicate with the public, including First Nation peoples, under the assumption that they and the public share common conceptual and cultural heritage or understandings in the domain of risk. That assumption is false and

has led to failures of communication and sometimes even rancorous conflicts. Evidence against the *commonality assumption* comes from sociological, psychological, and anthropological studies directed at understanding the determinants of people's risk perceptions and behaviours (Slovic, 1986). What is required is further research in these areas.

This study of Roseau River will add to the body of knowledge pertaining to risk communication with different social and ethnic groups. The current body of literature on risk perception in Canada has not generally appreciated the different hazard perception and response capabilities among different ethnic groups (Buckland & Rahman, 1999). The specific aims of my study are to address this shortcoming by providing a historical record of how Roseau River community members experienced the 'flood of the century'; by documenting community member's experiences, with a particular emphasis on (a) risk communication in disparate political cultures, (b) the human meaning of a 'total loss disaster' by making specific recommendations to ensure stakeholders' (First Nation) participation in strategic floodplain management policies in the Red River Basin, and by contributing to the understanding of First Nations' experience of disasters.

1.1 PLAN OF THESIS

Chapter Two includes a review of the literature on the 'flood of the century'. Secondary sources utilized in this chapter mainly focus on two books, A Red Sea Rising, published by the Winnipeg Free Press, and A Flood of Images; A Pictorial Journey through the Flood-Ravaged Red River Valley, 1997, published by the Red River Valley Echo. The first book makes no mention of Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation except in reference to other events; however, it provides a detailed account of the physical

events surrounding the flood. The second book provides mainly photographs but includes a useful chronology of events. These secondary sources are complemented by primary source interviews with Roseau River community members. Chapter two gives an overall account of the flooding of the Red River Valley in 1997 followed by my analysis of the data obtained from *The 1997 Flood of the Century in the Red River Basin: A Survey of flood risk communication in the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation Community, Southern Manitoba.* I will discuss how the flood impacted 67 households in Roseau River. This is prefaced with a discussion of the limitations of the quantitative research, particularly within the context of indigenous research. This is followed by a presentation of the results from key informant interviews. Next, I present and discuss the themes that emerged from these interviews. The analysis of the qualitative data was thematic. The audiotapes and field notes were reviewed and themes of meaning in the participants' lives were sought and general categories for participants were created. Notes were made to identify salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief. Lastly, I present findings from ethnographic field notes taken during three community visits to Roseau River.

In Chapter Three I discuss the contextual factors influencing the framing of risk in Roseau River. I examine how the data from my study supports and adds to the secondary source material on risk perception and risk communication. Based on the findings from my research, I offer recommendations, which might be helpful in future community disaster management strategies and risk communication. This is followed by a brief discussion of the contributions of my research and suggestions for future research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO: DISASTER IN DISPARATE POLITICAL CULTURES

In this chapter I present an overall account of the 'flood of the century' and I present and discuss the data that emerged from *The 1997 Flood of the century in the Red River Basin: a survey of flood risk communication in the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation Community, Southern Manitoba*, as well as the interviews conducted with key informants and community members. The survey data will be presented first. This will be followed by a discussion of the primary themes that emerged from the interviews with community members. Lastly, findings from ethnographic field notes will be presented.

2.1 THE "FLOOD OF THE CENTURY"

"Flood is like the geese, comes in every spring," says Roseau River Anishinabe elder Steve Sennie (personal interview October 2001). "It's just life you know," he calmly explains. Although the community of Roseau River was not flooded in 1997, homes were not submerged, the ring dike held, it was still a crippling and traumatic event forcing residents from their homes and leaving behind a wake of destruction.

The heavy clay soil in the Red River Valley makes this area highly prone to floods. Clay doesn't soak up much water, so 20 to 50 per cent of precipitation runs off land into the river system. Compare that with western Manitoba, where runoff on sandier soils is 10 to 25 per cent. The Red is also flood prone because of its relatively shallow channel and the very slight gradient from its beginning in Breckenridge, North Dakota to its terminus at Lake Winnipeg, a stretch of 555 miles, a quarter of which winds through Manitoba. The Red is, in fact, flowing along the flat bottom of an ancient lake. Lake Agassiz formed when the glaciers melted 11,500 years ago, and covered most of what is now Manitoba. Agassiz, named after a Swiss scientist who studied snowcaps, was larger

than all of the Great Lakes combined. The slight gradient - the Red descends only 25 feet from Emerson to Winnipeg - means the river runs slowly. When spring runoff occurs, the river often isn't deep or swift enough to carry the water away. And when the Red's banks do flood, the water travels for miles and miles because the land is so flat - the highest elevation in the Red River Valley rarely exceeds 12 feet.

The strategy for fighting a Red River flood is not to keep the river within its banks – that is beyond present resources. Instead, there are ring dikes around the nine towns in the floodplain, including Roseau River, and around the farmhouses and their outbuildings that dot the valley. In addition, Winnipeg has a floodway, a 30-mile-long diversion channel to split the river in two and take half of it harmlessly around the city. A system of permanent dikes supplements the floodway and directs water into it. As well, there are two control structures on the Red's principal tributary, the Assiniboine River. Firstly, a dam at Shellmouth, near the Saskatchewan boundary, moderates the spring runoff, holding back much of the snowmelt from western Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan and releasing it through the summer.

Secondly, a substantial amount of spring runoff is diverted from the Assiniboine River into Lake Manitoba via the 18-mile long Portage Diversion. Manitoba dikes were built to the level of the 1979 flood - a flood that was nearly as high as the legendary 1950 flood, but did less damage because of the diking and ditching that had been done in the intervening years (Winnipeg Free Press, 1997).

On Sunday, April 6, 1997, people were snowed in by a blizzard in the Red River Valley. All along the 555 miles of twisting river, from its source in North Dakota to its delta at Lake Winnipeg, people were facing the 'chill of a prairie blizzard' (Winnipeg

Free Press, 1997: pps. 1-5). Flood forecasters began predicting serious flooding in February of that year. The April 4th to 7th blizzard dumped 50 centimetres of snow in the flat-as-a-table Red River Valley (Red River Valley Echo, 1997). That much snow on the ground at spring thaw could only mean flooding (Winnipeg Free Press, 1997: pps. 1-5). Based upon past experience residents of Roseau River knew a flood was coming. Chief Felix Antoine (personal interview October 2001) explains:

> **Chief Antoine:** I already knew before that we were gonna have a flood by the amount of snow in the bush. We had about two feet of snow in the bush. And I already knew in January that we were going to have a serious flood because of the amount of snow. But then all of a sudden we had a blizzard; I forgot how many inches fell. That's when everybody started to panic, saying we're gonna have a huge flood, they started getting ready. So it started to melt, and melt, water kept coming up and the department [Department of Indian and Northern Affairs] said we need to build up your dike at least another two feet. So they built it up two feet. I think that took about almost three weeks to build up. That was just before the crest got here. I think we only had about two or three days to spare.

The flood forecast was calling for crest levels two to three feet higher than that of 1979 and three to four feet higher than that of 1996 levels. On April 9th, President Bill Clinton declared the Red River basin in Minnesota and North Dakota to be a disaster area. The day before the flood had claimed its first victims. Pam Wagner and her three year-old daughter Tori, had perished trying to escape from a flooding creek. They froze to death in a field (Winnipeg Free Press, 1997). On April 10th the province formally requested the assistance of the Armed Forces to aid in sandbagging efforts in flood prone areas.

On April 20th water forecasts were raised again based on observed conditions at Grand Forks, North Dakota (Red River Valley Echo, 1997). It was hydro-meteorologist Alf Warkentin's job to predict river levels all over Manitoba. He was virtually a one-man operation working out of the Water Resources Branch offices in northwest Winnipeg. In his 27 years on the job, Warkentin had devised a system for predicting water levels with uncanny accuracy. There are 14 tributaries flowing into the Red River in southern Manitoba, including the Assiniboine River, and about 25 in North Dakota and Minnesota. One of Warkentin's biggest tasks is to estimate the daily discharges from those tributaries into the Red River. Warkentin uses river gauges, precipitation gauges, soil moisture maps, topographical maps, coefficient formulas and historic records to predict watershed runoff volumes and create daily flow charts for tributary discharges into the Red. From the daily discharges he projects river levels and crests up and down the river. He must also factor in overland flooding and future snowfall, melt rates and rain. He then multiplies his figures against a multiple regression coefficient - a formula for determining how much weight to give each factor (Winnipeg Free Press, 1997).

On April 20th, crest elevations were expected to be four to five feet higher at most locations than that of 1996 levels. Ring diked communities began raising the dikes with assistance from the Department of Natural Resources, now Manitoba Conservation. That same day the town of Emerson declared a State of Emergency and began a voluntary evacuation. On April 21st, Dominion City, East of Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation, began a voluntary evacuation. Additional States of Emergency were declared in the Regional Municipality of Montcalm and the communities of Dominion City and Ste. Anne. On April 22nd, the Province of Manitoba declared a State of Emergency for the

area of the province south of the 51st parallel. On April 23rd the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization (MEMO) recommended a mandatory evacuation scheduled over three days affecting communities in the flood zone from Emerson to the Regional Municipality of Ritchot. Rapid increases in the water levels meant that these communities would be isolated sooner than expected (Red River Valley Echo, 1997).

It was on Wednesday, April 23rd, that Manitoba's greatest evacuation since the flood of 1950 was under way. MEMO had ordered the virtual clearing of the Red River Valley from Emerson to Winnipeg. The sirens sounded at 5 a.m. Wednesday. In the next 39 hours, by 8 p.m. Thursday, 17,000 Manitobans left their homes. Already, 3,200 people in southern Manitoba had been ordered out. In Emerson, Letellier, Dominion City, St. Jean Baptiste, Morris, Ste. Agathe, Brunkild and St. Adolphe, only flood fighters stayed behind to maintain the dikes (Winnipeg Free Press, 1997).

Roseau River residents were evacuated en masse. Chief Antoine (personal interview October 2001) explains:

> **Chief Antoine:** You know there's a whole group of people here that moved, that had to be evacuated, that went to a little town called Ste. Anne. Southeast of Winnipeg on the number one is a little town called Ste. Anne. That's where we had to evacuate. I think we were there for eight or six weeks... The Roseau River flows past our reserve, and also the Red River. You can see that over here, [pointing to a large topographical map on his office wall] here's the Roseau River, and the Red River, and here's where we are. And here's the dike. The Reserve was protected by the ring dike, and all of this [pointing to areas surrounding the reserve] was under water. All around here up to about a mile over here. All under water. So you can see this is reserve land here, all over here, so all of that was under water there.

The Flood Control Officer for Roseau River during the 1997 flood was band member Gary Roberts:

> **Gary:** In terms of making the evacuation happen, I kept daily contact with chief and council at the time. When it came down to the last couple of days it was more or less on an hourly basis... First of all I think two days prior to the evacuation, I may be mistaken, we had what is called a voluntary evacuation, basically telling people if they feel uneasy with what is happening, move to safer areas. That was called the voluntary evacuation. Two days later we went to a situation where we felt it was safer to evacuate the whole community, so the decision was made. At that time of the actual evacuation the Premier of Manitoba had also indicated there was full-scale emergency, so he advised that people had to evacuate. So on that basis, basically that's where our decision arose... Once the evacuation was made, only the essential personnel stayed behind - people that did security, watching water levels, signs of breaching of dikes, also watching homes left behind. They had to shore up dikes.

Many Roseau River residents were transported by school buses to Ste. Anne where a curling rink was used as a shelter. The principal of Roseau's Ginew School, Marion Thomas, recalls the evacuation:

> **Marion:** This community is on two rivers, it's the place where the Roseau River meets the Red River and it was in a critical situation. The dike was raised but there were problems, there were community members left behind to maintain the community. I'm sure their families went through a lot of fear, wondering how they were doing. The roads were washed out, the road between here and Dominion City and here and Lettelier was washed out. We were the longest removed of any of the communities in the area. We were the first to get moved out and the last to come back.

On April 24th, the Canadian Armed Forces deployed over 800 personnel in flood fighting efforts. On April 25th, floodwaters surpassed 1979 levels. MEMO advised that

anyone remaining in the mandatory evacuation zones must leave. Working with local and provincial authorities, the RCMP and the military went door-to-door to ensure the orderly evacuation of remaining residents.

On April 26th, the province requested an additional 5,000 to 6,000 military troops and additional military equipment to assist in flood fighting efforts. On April 27th, the water levels at Emerson were stable, but strong southerly winds were expected to cause strong wave action and possibly push levels up by a foot.

By May 2nd the Red River flows showed that the 1997 flood was equal to that of 1852 and greater than the floods of 1861, 1950 and 1979 (The Red River Valley Echo, 1997). The 1979 flood had turned southern Manitoba into a lake 56 miles long from north to south and 12.5 miles across at its widest point. The destruction had been terrible (Winnipeg Free Press, 1997). The only greater floods known occurred in 1776 and 1826. By May 15th, approximately 12,000 Manitobans remained evacuated from their homes. Communities still evacuated included Morris, St. Jean Baptiste, Rosenort, St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe and the Roseau River Reserve (The Red River Valley Echo, 1997).

2.2 RESULTS FROM THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The following summarizes the quantitative data which resulted after an examination of selected questions from *The 1997 Flood of the century in the Red River Basin: a survey of flood risk communication in the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation Community, Southern Manitoba*. In all, 67 household surveys were conducted in Roseau River. There are a total of 150 households in the community. The completed surveys thus offer a representative sample of the community and provide a context from which to understand the unique flood experiences of those who live within the Roseau River

Anishinabe First Nation. For my own focus on culture and risk communication, eight categories of relevant questions were selected for analysis from the household survey. Of interest to me were those questions that asked about flood evacuation experiences, communication sources, perceptions of community issues, worldview, the views of different generations and the two open-ended questions regarding social relations and negative impacts of the flood. Data from the survey were analyzed using SPSS version 11. The main descriptive statistics reported here are frequency and some cross tabulations.

Employment

Work for Band	Public Sector	Private Sector	Retired
16 (24%)	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	7 (10%)

Unemployed	Unpaid Work	Paid and Unpaid	Other
30 (40%)	8 (12%)	1 (2%)	6

A total of 30 (40%) of respondents report being unemployed. Roseau River, however, reports 95% of community members receive social assistance, according to the social assistance worker[3]. The band employs several respondents who work, which is common in many First Nation communities. The respondents who reported "Other" types of work included an artist, a bus driver who owned a bus company, a casual worker, a homemaker on contract, a student, and one who worked for the Trustee.

Age

< 21 Years Old	21-44 Years Old	45-65 Years Old	> 65 Years Old
2 (5%)	35 (52%)	21 (31%)	8 (12%)

[3] Variation in the reported unemployment rate versus the social assistance rate may be explained by how respondents chose to identify themselves. For instance, those who work seasonal or contract work may not report themselves as unemployed yet may receive social assistance.

Respondents who were 65 years of age or more would be considered elders.

Household Composition

>5 persons living in household	2-4 persons living in household	Single person dwellings	Households with children <18 years of age
25	31	11	37

Education

Less than high school	High school diploma	College diploma	University diploma
36 (54%)	26 (39%)	2 (3%)	3 (5%)

A high number of respondents (54%) have less than a high school education while only a small number of respondents (8%) have some form of higher education.

Language

Speak Anishinabe	Speak English	Speak French	Other language
33 (49%)	67 (100%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)

All respondents spoke English. Nearly one half of the respondents (49%) also spoke Anishinabe. I ran a cross tabulation of age with language. All of the elders spoke their language. In contrast only 17 people in the age category 45-65 spoke their language while only six in the age category 21-44 and two in the age category of less than 21 years old spoke their language. We can conclude that Roseau River, like the majority of other First Nation communities in Canada, appears to have experienced a severe decline in language retention through the younger generations.

Hours of Notice to Evacuate

With regards to flood evacuation, question #31 asked: *How many hours of notice were given to you for vacating your home?*

No notice	24 hours notice	48 hours notice	One week
5	22	9	10

What was clear from the variety of responses was that the notice given to each household in the community was inconsistent.

Hours of Notice Preferred

No preference	At least 48 hours	At least one week
5	22	9

Question #32 asked: *How many hours of notice would you have preferred?* Once again, responses were inconsistent with some households having no preference, some requiring short notice and a smaller number requiring lengthy notice.

Shelter During Evacuation

Rink	Hotel/Motel	Friends/Relatives	Other shelter
16 (24%)	20 (30%)	26 (39%)	5 (8%)

Many of the evacuees from Roseau River were brought en masse to a curling rink in Ste. Anne's. With regards to question #33: *Where did you take shelter during the emergency evacuation?* About one quarter (24%) stayed in the rink while a small number (8%) stayed in other shelters. Some, for instance, stayed in a Church. A local Church was made available for elders and for pregnant women. One family rented an apartment in Winnipeg, while another rented a house nearby. One family stayed in their van and in

a tent while another stayed at the residences of the University of Manitoba. Finally, one family rented a trailer house on Highway 201.

Sources of Information During Flood

Friends/Relatives	Roseau River Flood Operation Centre	Local Television Coverage	Winnipeg Sun
50 (75%)	47 (70%)	42 (63)	37 (55%)

Manitoba Emergency Management Organization	Local Radio Station	Winnipeg Free Press	Directly from Chief and Council
35 (52%)	34 (51%)	32 (48%)	25 (37%)

National Television	American Television	American Radio	Other Canadian Newspapers
21 (31%)	19 (28%)	8 (12%)	10 (15%)

Emergency Preparedness Canada	Steinbach Bulletin	Internet
10 (15%)	4 (6%)	1 (2%)

With regards to sources of flood information, the preceding table indicates that various sources of flood information were utilized during the flood of 1997. Respondents were more likely to receive their flood information from friends and relatives than any other source (75%) while the least likely source of information reported by households was the Internet with only (2%) who indicated that they received information online. In short, respondents reported that the most likely sources of information during the flood of 1997 were directly inside the community, friends and relatives and the Roseau River Flood Operation Centre, followed by local media sources.

Adequacy of Flood Information

With regards to adequacy of flood information, respondents were asked to rate the adequacy of the information they received from three different sources: local TV and radio coverage, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and the Roseau River Flood Operation Centre. Respondents were shown a card with the following Likert scale: (1) not at all adequate, (2) slightly adequate, (3) moderately adequate, (4) very adequate, and (5) extremely adequate.

Local TV and radio coverage was assigned a score by 63 households whereas four chose not to answer. Respondents were divided in their assessment on this source of information: 24 (38%) judged this source as very adequate while 17 (27%) judged this source as not adequate at all. Only a small minority (18%) judged this source as extremely adequate. The *Winnipeg Free Press* was assigned a score by 58 households; nine chose not to answer usually because they did not read this newspaper during the flood. Respondents were again divided in their opinion on the adequacy of this source: 21 (36%) judged the newspaper as not adequate at all, 14 (24%) judged it as very adequate while 9 (16%) judged it as extremely adequate. The Roseau River Flood Operation Centre was assigned a score by 57 households while 10 choose not to answer, usually because they did not receive information from this source during the flood. The respondents judged this source of information more consistently, with 22 (39%) scoring it as extremely adequate and 15 (26%) rating it as very adequate. A total of eight (14%) rated it as not at all adequate.

Congestion in the flood shelter

Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
14 (22%)	8 (12%)	3 (5%)	18 (27%)	20 (30%)

With regards to concerns during the flood, respondents were shown another rating card and asked to rate how concerned they were about seven different problems during the flood of 1997. The Likert scale rating was (1) not at all concerned, (2) slightly concerned, (3) moderately concerned, (4) very concerned, and (5) extremely concerned. The majority of respondents reported concern about congestion in the shelter, as did this elder:

> **Elder:** At Ste. Anne, some people just had blankets hanging around them for privacy. No privacy for sure. Lots of children in there. Before everyone had their own room. We never went to the arena but we heard it was terrible. They got food, clothes, they fed them, but the way they were living, kids running around at night, for a month. If it was only for a couple of days, an emergency, it would be OK. People got drunk, partying. There were no arrangements for showers. They had things to do like make crafts, bingo nights too. But the elders needed quiet and rest. Some were put in hotels, but not all of them. The North end got to go to hotels for a couple of months; their whole houses were flooded.

Lack of safety of the children

Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
15 (22%)	5 (8%)	7 (10%)	22 (33%)	18 (27%)

For *lack of safety of the children* 67 households responded. The majority of respondents expressed concern for this problem.

Lack of information on flood damage of my home

Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
8 (12%)	6 (9%)	8 (12%)	19 (28%)	26 (39%)

For *lack of information on flood damage of my home* 67 households responded. The majority of respondents expressed concern for this problem.

Lack of information on ring dikes

Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
12 (18%)	14 (21%)	7 (10%)	11 (17%)	22 (33%)

For *lack of information on ring dikes* 66 households responded.

Mandatory evacuation

Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
10 (15%)	4 (6%)	10 (15%)	15 (22%)	28 (42%)

All households responded to the question of concern about the *mandatory evacuation*. Almost half (42%) reported they were extremely concerned.

Lack of post-evacuation information

Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
6 (9%)	16 (24%)	9 (13%)	13 (19%)	23 (34%)

For *lack of post-evacuation information* 67 households responded. The majority of respondents reported some level of concern for this problem.

Lack of information on flood compensation

Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
1 Not at all concerned	8 (12%)	11 (16%)	19 (28%)	17 (25%)

For *lack of information on flood compensation* 67 households responded. The majority of households reported concern for this problem.

Post flood social problems

With regards to perceptions of post-flood social problems respondents were asked if they noticed post-flood increases in any of three social problems in the community and whether or not they had experienced any of these personally. For the question #66, *Increase in alcohol abuse?* 67 households responded.

Yes	No
25 (37%)	42 (63%)

The response was negative. Of those who responded negatively some qualified this response by stating that nothing has changed, alcohol abuse was and continues to be a problem. There has been no increase that they perceive. "It's still the same, drinking and violence are still issues," says a community member.

For the question #67, *Increase in family violence?* 67 households responded.

Yes	No
15 (22%)	52 (78%)

This response was also negative. This is contrary to what a nurse told me during a key informant interview, however. Her perception was that a definite increase

occurred. Given her position in treating injuries her perception may be more accurate than those of laypersons.

For the question #68, *Increase in disease, such as asthma?* 66 households responded.

Yes	No
43 (64%)	23 (34%)

The response was positive. A total of 43 (64%) responded yes while only 23 (34%) responded no. The elders were particularly sensitive to the increase in asthma.

> **Elder:** People have asthma because of the mould. Kids have puffers. Never used to see that. Indians never had that before, and sugar of course. Everybody's catching it.

For question #69, *Have you personally experienced any of the above problems in your own family?* 67 households responded.

Yes	No
19 (28%)	48 (72%)

The response was negative. A total of 48 (72%) answered no while 19 (28%) responded yes.

World View

With regards to their worldviews, respondents were asked if they agreed with each of the statements given.

All households responded to this statement: "The Red River is a natural enemy."

Agree	Disagree
26 (39%)	41 (61%)

A total of 26 (39%) agree with this statement while 41 (61%) do not agree with this statement. "The Red is not an enemy. It's been there long before I came along," told one community member. Another community member explained, "The Red is not a natural enemy, where water pulled the highway apart, you have to expect it. The elders talk about when the Mennonites came to Altona and Rosenort, our people laughed at them. Here the land was rich. They picked a spot where every year they'll be flooded out."

I ran a cross tabulation of age and responses to this statement. The majority of Elders disagreed with this statement. The Elders who agreed with the statement qualified their response by explaining that the Red was now an enemy but it never used to be. It was now an enemy because of the pollution and environmental damage caused by dumping things into the Red.

> **Elder:** The Red River has always been there. It's the ones digging and blocking it who are the problem. Long ago it was better more or less.
> **Elder:** They put elders in a hotel [during the flood]. I got sick. Same old menu we had to eat. Years ago the Red River wasn't the enemy, but now, no berries or anything at all anymore.

All households again responded to this statement: "The Red River is the cleanser."

Agree	Disagree
39 (58%)	28 (42%)

Slightly more than one half agreed (58%) with this statement. I ran a cross tabulation of age with this statement. The older age groups, 45-65 and Elders agreed with this statement. The younger age group, 24-44, were evenly split. More of this age

group were prepared to disregard the healing properties of the Red. Elders remembered when the Red was a source of life.

> **Elder:** When the kids were growing up, that's where they used to go and swim. Now I think you're more dirty when you come out of there (laughing). Water's dirty. We used to drink it. Used to collect rainwater too.
> **Elder:** The Red River used to be a cleanser. Now we see dead fish floating down it. The smell around the reserve, after the flood, was bad. Dead fish, bass, beavers, was bad, even worse now. We had to shoot dogs and then dump them out in the open. Don't bury them at all, it smells bad.

All households responded to this statement: "The flood is not a hazard."

Agree	Disagree
21 (31%)	46 (69%)

Approximately one third (31%) agreed with this statement. The majority of respondents (69%) disagree with this statement and believe that the flood is a hazard.

All households except one responded to this statement: "Evacuation was worse than the flood."

Agree	Disagree
37 (55%)	29 (43%)

Although many found the evacuation to be stressful, some were not really bothered by the experience, as one community member explained, "The evacuation is like a habit. When Grand Forks is flooding, we know we have to get out." This issue was elaborated on during the second open-ended question at the end of the survey, which asked: *What was the most negative impact of the flood for you and your community? Did the flood have any positive impact on your community in any way?* Key themes

emerging from these responses were: 1) stress of the evacuation; 2) negative experience in the rink; 3) lack of information; and 4) second-class treatment.

Many respondents spoke of the ***stress*** of having to leave their homes and the damage to homes in the community. "People uprooted from their homes," told one respondent, was the worst part of the flood. Many respondents echoed this statement. Having to pack what little belongings were permitted, being transferred en masse to the rink in Ste. Anne and coming home to their damaged community was stressful. "The evacuation," was the worst part said many respondents. It was terrible "having to leave home." Said one respondent, "Moving back was most negative because of the conditions of our homes." Another respondent agreed, "Most negative was the homes being damaged, that really hurt." For those who did not go to the rink and took shelter elsewhere it was also stressful, as this respondent explained; "Worst part was moving. There were 13 of us in a one-bedroom house. My brother's whole floor was full of people. Couldn't even go to the washroom at night. Holy Shit was I ever glad to come back!"

Many spoke of the destruction that awaited them at home, their belongings ruined or missing. "Losing personal items," was the worst part told one respondent. Another spoke of the condition of the reserve, "Most negative part was when it was over we had a lot of garbage on the reserve, lots to clean up."

Others spoke of the emotional damage. "Missing home was the worst part of the flood," told one respondent. Another agreed, "Being evacuated, leaving home. There was long term emotional damage."

Some respondents spoke of the ***negative experience in the rink***:

Being evacuated en masse to the rink in Ste. Anne's was a stressful experience because people were forced to leave their homes and took shelter in, by all accounts, an uncomfortable and crowded curling rink in a small town far away. Respondents spoke about the living conditions in the rink, "In the arena when one kid got sick then they all got sick." Sleeping conditions were not ideal told one respondent, "Staying in the curling rink, sleeping on a concrete floor. Was a long time we spent on the floor before we got cots." A couple of respondents spoke of the discomfort caused by having to move into the arena in the small town, "The worst part of the flood was when everyone lived in the arena, having to invade a little white town!" Many thought the arena afforded no privacy, "Being housed in that arena, no thought to individual accommodation, like we were one big family of 300 people was stressful."

Some respondents spoke about the ***lack of information***:

During the open-ended question some respondents spoke of the lack of information as being the worst part of the flood. For them it was stressful not to hear about their community in the media. "For sure, not getting information on the reserve was negative," told one respondent. Leaving home was bad enough but being completely ignored in media coverage was terrible told one respondent, "They only mentioned us once in the newspaper and it was about the starving dogs!"

A few respondents spoke of unique, ***specific negative experiences***:

During the flood one of the workers maintaining the dike suffered a heart attack. One respondent spoke of this experience, "When they brought in the helicopter to save somebody. That was bad. Also not getting enough money for food was bad." Some spoke of the negative political experience of the flood, "The most negative is the

government not taking its financial responsibility, they argue with us." One of the elders spoke of the flood of 1967 being worse because of the evacuation, "1967 flood was the worst, having to travel to MacDonald's, so far away."

Some respondents spoke of ***second-class treatment*** being the worst part of the flood. The evacuation and treatment of Native peoples was an issue for several, as reflected in this response, "The treatment of Native people. Where they put us." Another respondent agreed, "We were put in a curling rink. Nobody else was put there."

Only a few respondents reported anything ***positive*** about the flood. Some spoke of the social bonding that happened at the rink and after the return to the community, "Everyone visited each other." Another respondent agreed, "People socialized while at the rink, it was a wonderful experience. Wish we could transplant that here." One elder spoke with a sense of humour, "Good thing was we could plant a garden that year."

Some respondents even spoke of having fun during the flood, "We had fun in Winnipeg." Those who stayed in Winnipeg were treated to discounts, free movies and a drop-in centre. "The positive thing is knowing that Mother Nature has a lot of surprises. You respect and appreciate her more," reflected one respondent.

All but three households responded to this statement: "Social problems (unemployment, alcoholism, etc) are worse than floods."

Agree	Disagree
45 (67%)	19 (28%)

Two-thirds (N=45 or 67%) agreed that social problems were worse than floods. Roseau River experiences high rates of alcoholism and social pathology. This question prompted one community member to explain, "[at the time of the flood] I was worried

about my grandchildren. They were apprehended because my daughter was drinking. I've been drinking the past two months, after my old man died." Another community member explained, "What I liked about the whole thing was we went away for a month, it felt good coming into the reserve, felt clean, like starting over again. But then the first weekend back they went back to partying, same again. Wish this community could be that clean all the time." Another community member spoke about the situation saying, "I saw teenagers drink more, young kids, set buildings on fire. Under twelve years old are even drinking." Further insight into community life was provided through answers to the second open-ended question of the survey dealing with social relations. The question asked *How would you describe family and social relations in the community before the flood? Did the flood change these in any way? If so, how? How would you describe family and social relations in the community now?* Responses varied from those who reported little or no change to those who reported relations had changed since the flood. Comments are reported here as both negative impacts on community relations and positive impacts on community relations. The following are comments reporting a more ***negative sense of relations***:

Many respondents spoke of coming together during the flood but having strained or distant social relations after the flood. One respondent said, "Before the flood people got along but after people kept to their own business." Another respondent agreed, "People get along but stick to themselves. Nothing has changed." It seems the flood brought some people close together but in the years that have passed, people are distant again, "People were concerned about each other during the flood but now it's getting back to the same." Another respondent agreed, "People came closer together during the

crisis. But when the threat was not there anymore we went back to the old ways, people kept to themselves." A couple of respondents told about very negative relations, "The social relations are 'rotten.' People just want to fight, argue, steal, they're breaking into places." Another respondent concurred, "Before the flood it was different, after the flood, people were cruel to each other. Now there's more fighting, physical fighting."

The following comments reflect a more ***positive sense of relations***:

In the opinion of other respondents the flood had a positive impact on social relations. "People helped each other out before and after," told one respondent. One benefit was new experiences said one respondent, "During the flood people got exposed to the outside world and to each other." Several respondents did not perceive any changes and thought people generally always had good social relations, "People always got along all right." One respondent spoke of the flood brining people closer together, "It was strange but the flood brought the community closer together. People are more aware that it could happen. Before people just went about their own business." Once again an elder spoke about the flood with a sense of humour, "During the flood there was more babies being born. I became a grandmother three times that year! (laughs)" Some respondents spoke specifically to the impacts the flood had on ***wellbeing in the community***. Several respondents spoke about physical health problems like asthma and particularly the mould in the homes. After the flood, residents of Roseau River were evacuated once again to clean up the mould in the homes. To this day many homes continue to see a build up of mould. "After the flood our homes got mould build up. Today we're still dealing with the mould that develops each year. It's always there. It's

stressful, affects our health," told one respondent. Some spoke of alcoholism, "The people started drinking more."

The Elders had a different perspective on this question. They discussed how relations were many years ago, long before the flood. The key word in the question was "change" and this is what they addressed in the following comments:

> **Elder:** They don't do much visiting around here. You see people at the bingo hall, not like years ago when people visited.
> **Elder:** Long ago it was better more or less.

SUMMARY OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FINDINGS

A total of 67 household surveys were conducted. A total of 40% of respondents reported being unemployed while the band reports a rate of 95% of community members receiving social assistance. The majority of respondents were in the 21-65 age range with eight respondents falling under the elder category. A total of 54% of respondents had less than a high school education. All respondents spoke English while Elders spoke English and Anishinabe. A total of 24% of respondents took shelter in the rink while 30% stayed in a hotel/motel and 39% stayed with friends/relatives. Respondents were more likely to receive flood information from friends and relatives than any other source. Respondents expressed high concern for congestion in the flood shelter and the mandatory evacuation. Respondents did not notice an increase in the abuse of alcohol or in family violence but they did notice an increase in disease, specifically asthma. Respondents did not agree with the statement that the Red River is an enemy. They did agree with the statement that the Red River is a cleanser. Respondents disagreed with the statement that the flood is not a hazard and they agreed that the evacuation was worse than the flood.

The main findings of this study, pertaining to sources of information, support previous research by Sorensen and Mileti (1991) who conclude that information needs to be targeted toward differing subgroups of the population. For an overall communications system, it is well documented that a mix of information activities and channels is needed to inform different subgroups of the population, including transient groups, individuals who only speak a foreign language, ethnic groups, or institutional populations. Different sources of information serve to enhance credibility because any single source is not universally credible. "One of the most important factors to consider is cultural difference. Targeting can be achieved through a mix of information sources, channels and contents" (Sorensen & Mileti, 1991:387). The residents of Roseau River received their emergency communication from friends and relatives, the Roseau River Flood Operation Centre and from local television and newspapers. Community outreach was critical in 1997.

Sorensen and Mileti (1991) found that community outreach has several advantages, such as the ability to personalize and target information. Community outreach also allows two-way communications, which is important in establishing the credibility of the communication process. Survey findings indicate that community outreach was the preferred method of communication in Roseau River. Respondents were divided with regards to the adequacy of information provided by local television and by the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Judgement of the Roseau River flood operation centre, however, was assessed more consistently with 39% rating it as extremely adequate, and only 14% rating it as not at all adequate.

Although only 24% of respondents took shelter in the rink, 57% were either extremely or very concerned about congestion in the shelter. Over half of the respondents were concerned about the 300 people who spent a month in the rink at Ste Anne. A total of 60% were extremely or very concerned about the lack of safety of the children and 67% of respondents were very or extremely concerned about the lack of information on flood damage to their home. This response is corroborated in statements made during interviews and the open-ended questions. A total of 50% of respondents were extremely or very concerned about lack of information on the ring dikes. Nearly two-thirds of respondents were very or extremely concerned about the mandatory evacuation. Insight into this experience was provided in answers to the open-ended questions. Slightly more than one-half reported that they were very or extremely concerned about the lack of post-evacuation information. A total of 53% of respondents reported that they were very or extremely concerned about the lack of information about flood compensation.

With regards to post-flood social problems more than half of the respondents did not witness an increase in alcohol abuse or family violence; yet, the community health nurse reported an increase in incidents of violence directly after the flood. The nurse was not reporting on statistics based upon a review of clinic records, but rather a perception based upon her experiences. These questions posed a problem for some respondents as they pointed out that there was no increase because the situation remained the same, high levels of alcoholism, before and after the flood. In contrast, two-thirds (64%) of respondents did notice an increase in asthma. Overall, nearly three-quarters (72%) did not experience any of these problems personally.

Results pertaining to worldview demonstrated the cultural values held by the Elders of the community. They lived in harmony with the Red River for many years. They lamented the decline of the Red. During the survey these questions were in fact very useful for prompting conversation. These comments are reported in the key informant interviews. More than half of respondents did not view the Red as an enemy. Surrounding communities and the media often referred to the flood in terms of waging a battle against the enemy. This was not the case in Roseau River. Many who did agree with this statement explained that it was an enemy now, only as a result of the pollution dumped into the water by settlers. More than half of respondents agreed that the Red River was a cleanser. The Red then was part of Mother Earth, part of the ecological system that kept us in balance. More than half of the respondents believed that the flood posed a hazard. More than half of the respondents felt that evacuation was worse than the flood itself. The community was not flooded. Homes were not submerged during the flood of 1997. Homes got damaged and mould persisted, however, residents still felt the evacuation was worse overall. Two-thirds (67%) of the respondents believed that social problems like alcoholism and unemployment were worse than floods. Although the flood of '97 was a traumatic and significant life event in this community, the ongoing social issues were more worrisome.

2.3 DISCUSSION OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

As previously discussed, to complement the formal survey and allow for a more detailed examination of Roseau community member's experiences of the flood of '97, interviews were conducted during and after completion of the household survey. Survey participants volunteered themselves to elaborate on issues relating to the flood and

participated in brief informal interviews. The interviews are presented in detail because, "there is no evidence more powerful than that drawn directly from what people say in their own words about their life experience" (Shkilnyk, 1985:58).

The recorded information from the interviews was transcribed verbatim. Analysis of the transcripts consisted of looking for key themes about the information that stemmed from what respondents revealed during their interviews. After analysis of the data, the following themes emerged as significant to participants' experiences:

INTERVIEW THEMES

1) Racism and being treated like second class citizens

2) An overwhelming sense of loss and an "emotional disaster"

3) "The dogs were more important." Discrimination and a blatant lack of media coverage

4) Frustration with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

5) It was different long ago

6) Isolation

1. RACISM AND BEING TREATED LIKE 'SECOND CLASS CITIZENS'

Participants often recalled the evacuation as one particular aspect of the 'flood of the century' with bitterness. Many Roseau community members were evacuated en masse to a curling rink in the small town of Ste. Anne. Families were organized into busloads that made the journey north. Various aspects of this en masse evacuation left people feeling resentful. They felt as if they were being treated unfairly in comparison to surrounding non-Aboriginal communities who had more options regarding shelter. All communities were forced to evacuate but Roseau River was the only one evacuated en

masse with the majority taking shelter in the curling rink in Ste. Anne. One respondent explained:

> **Community Member:** It was substandard for the Native people while white people from these white communities were in hotels. They could have put them in a rink and saw how they managed. The treatment of Native people was most negative, where they put them. Should have seen that place, just had room dividers, single guys slept right in the open. There were guys snoring all night. Some wanted to go to a hotel but were turned down.

The conditions inside the curling rink were unacceptable according to several respondents, who had to sleep on the floor the first night. Having to endure such conditions led many to feel like they were being treated as "second class citizens."

> **Community Member:** The rink was very bad, could just feel the tension. The first night everybody had to sleep on the floor. There was no privacy. People who didn't want to leave Roseau were told they were going to be escorted off.

> **Chief Antoine:** We're closer to the Red River than others, two rivers affect us, we had to move, the Roseau and the Red River run through our land. In 1966 people had to stay at McDonald base. In 1979 we were evacuated to the old army base in Rivers, MB. In 1997 we were evacuated to Ste. Anne. Been evacuated three or four times in the last 30 years. When the people came back from Ste. Anne's they said they were gonna stay next time.

The elders often spoke of "the Indians" indicating that term is used as a political designation. They referred to their people as "the Indians" when speaking about racism and other negative experiences. This is how one elder spoke of the rink.

> **Elder:** We played cards. There was nothing else to do. We were at Ste. Anne's where the rest of the Indians were. Lived in the arena, wide open. Slept on the floor. They put older ones in the hotels. They brought us to Ste. Anne's for

> dinner. They don't tell us anything at all because we're Indians. Think we don't care.

The experience in the rink was frustrating and stressful for many. Although the close quarters resulted in a strong sense of community for some, the lack of privacy was a demeaning experience for many.

> **Community Member:** I felt for the people. They were traumatized. I don't know what was going through their minds. It hurt a lot of people here. At the arena, people were socializing. Kind of like it was a healing, getting together in a bunch, almost like people were getting closer together. Wasn't divisions, people were coming together as Anishinabe people, it was moving, touching sometimes. There were even people from another community there, we had a powwow, had a lot of fun. Then again too, it hurt too. When I saw the people together, when I saw these people in trauma, I felt the hurt they were hurting. I just wanted to cry but I couldn't do anything.
>
> **Community Member:** I would rather have slept in the van than that rink, which we did.

The frustrations of feeling like second-class citizens were not restricted to the rink experience only. Respondents also talked about attempts to access services during the flood.

> **Community Member:** Food banks gave Native people a hard time. They made Native people show papers. At the food bank a worker, his face just dropped when he saw Native people come in. A yellow paper that they were giving evacuees, but they did not harass white people like that. Some were really... well; I had a word with that gentleman. It's never been good when people get evacuated. I worked on a volunteer basis in Winnipeg. Set up a drop in centre for those from Roseau, those who were left out and didn't get any money from the band. They didn't want to go to the arena. The Red Cross told them to go to the Band. My family and me set up a drop in centre. We organized donations; the white people took it over when it was organized. The Salvation Army gave us one

> meal a day. There was a great difference in what was provided for white people and Native people. I know it. They even tried to take us out of the hotel rooms we had. We have to move out for white people.
>
> **Community Member:** The organizers could have done a lot more. We were all in the arena, not a good situation. Could have taken people elsewhere, better than a curling rink. We were treated like second-class citizens. We appreciated Ste. Anne's open doors, but more could have been done at the time.

The elders also experienced discrimination.

> **Elder:** I have a sweat lodge outside here. Sobered up through traditional ceremonies. My family moved to a smaller house because of the mould, but it was on reserve so we felt better than going to the rink. We come up against discrimination from white people on account of we're Anishinabe.
>
> **Elder:** Certain houses up North have it bad. I don't want to think of my reserve as being awful. I've lived here 88 years now. Don't want to complain. We had to buy cheap things to replace what we lost. The Red Cross sent us away in Ste. Agathe. We went for food and they sent us away. I don't know why.

One respondent spoke of the symbolism of a t-shirt that was produced to commemorate the 'flood of the century.' The t-shirt had a map of the flooded communities and was sold in local stores. The t-shirt is symbolic of how Roseau community members felt they were treated during the flood.

> **Community Member:** A t-shirt was made with a map of the flood of '97, Roseau was not even mentioned, like we didn't exist. The dogs got more attention than the people that time. There was no mention of a reserve at all. During the flood a member of the Royal family came to Manitoba, wanted to know about us but they switched the topic. The Royal family was concerned about us, the Indian people, but they were never given information.

Some respondents discussed how, even years after the flood, the poor treatment of Roseau community member's remains evident. They point out that their non-Native neighbours, along the Red, have received the help Roseau continues to seek.

> **Community Member:** There's been no landscaping done to the houses. That's why the front steps hang off the front of the houses. The basement windows allow seepage. They're just finishing upgrading the ring dike now, four years later. There are nine houses outside of the ring dike; nothing is being done to protect them. But along the River, a lot of houses have ring dikes already.
>
> **Community Member:** We were not treated the same as people who lived along the Red River. Now all their homes were upgraded. We were faced with threats from INAC. They helped you if you live within the ring dike. But if you didn't you had to move into the reserve.
>
> **Community Member:** It upset me that this community was not involved in the process of this flood. Even now we're not involved in the planning. Indians are forgotten about while other communities are involved though.

2. An Overwhelming sense of loss and an "emotional disaster"

Respondents spoke of loss on different levels. Some spoke of material losses, some spoke of financial losses, others spoke of emotional losses. Once the floodwaters subsided, community members were left to deal with the aftermath. The devastation occurred on several levels. Some spoke of financial hardships while others spoke about the sentimental or spiritual value of things lost, things that can never be replaced:

> **Community Member:** The EMO rep came to my home to assess losses. Didn't seem to think powwow outfits were a loss.
>
> **Community Member:** To this day, from a flood 18 years ago, my basement still gets mouldy. The sump pump doesn't help. I lost powwow outfits and those can't be replaced.

Others spoke of material possessions that were lost:

> **Community Member:** I had a house. I was told to move out because of mould, got sick from the mould. It was supposed to be boarded up but someone, kids probably, broke the door down and ransacked it. I lost tools, lots of stuff. They were supposed to raise my house, it's sitting on railroad ties, they never did. The second time I came home they had busted the windows, stove, and fridge. They totally destroyed the house the second time.
>
> **Elder:** We got $1300 but look at the things they took. It took years and years to get it all, they broke machines like VCRs, took all those things away.

This sense of loss is also reflected in comments about the emotional damage caused by the flood. Many respondents spoke of the trauma caused by the crisis and the difficulty in coping with the ongoing stresses of a disaster. Roseau was evacuated not once but twice. The second evacuation was ordered because of the mould in community houses. Having to leave home twice created anxiety and stress for many. Some spoke of the physical effects of the mould. According to records at the on-reserve pharmacy, prescriptions for puffers due to asthma had increased 200% since the flood of '97. One respondent referred to the flood crisis as "an emotional disaster." Chief Antoine spoke of the need for counselling and support:

> **Chief Antoine:** Other communities had trauma counsellors. We were never given that service, never given the opportunity to talk about what we went through. But that's OK you know, we're still here today, we're still as strong as ever, we survived. People don't really talk about flooding, nobody has asked me about it. In my opinion I hope we don't have another one. It just disrupts life, everything. Your everyday routine is disrupted, everything.
>
> **Community Member:** Especially for Indian people there should have been victim counselling but there was not here

on the reserve. Should have had some sort of service to address that issue, emotional loss. We had the powwow here in June, it helped out, people just kind of forgot about us.

Community Member: I think I really needed some counselling at that time to deal with my kids. I just wanted to go home. I was crying. All this stress, it was just incredible, I just couldn't take it no more. My husband supported me, only one I could really turn to. I had to be strong for my kids too. Who do you go to? I do worry about floods. You see how much snow we get in the winter. It's always there, never forgotten. So I worry about it. I hope it doesn't snow too much 'cause we're gonna be flooded out. Worried because of stress, but not really scared, it just bothered me. Just worried about my kids.

The key concept was trauma for many respondents:

Community Member: Over the summer they started rebuilding the basements but unfortunately the basements hadn't been dried out properly enough and there was mould, which is extremely noxious and can cause a lot of health problems. So people then were moved a second time. So within a year people were out of their homes for months when it all worked out. So first there was the flood but then there was the mould. Most people aren't aware of that, that the aftermath with the mould was even worse than the first evacuation. People were doubly traumatized by it.

Community Member: It's hard to relive all that stuff. There were lots of tears shed during that time. Lots of depression, emotions stressed to the limits. We were gathered like cattle and shipped off to a strange town. There was physical strain. Indian people put up with a lot in the past. It's not the physical aspect that was a disaster; it was the emotional disaster that occurred. In the physical sense you can rebuild, build a new house. People's inner selves are a long time healing. Was really hard on everybody. You see it in their faces. The older ones understood the impact of what's going on. They feel isolated, not being informed, kicked out of your home; it's very scary.

Community Member: There were dead dogs, dead cows floating. People are scared to go fishing now.

3. "The dogs were more important." Discrimination and a blatant lack of media coverage

Many community members expressed frustration with the lack of information about Roseau during the media's coverage of the flood of '97. Respondents were not only frustrated but also hurt by the lack of media coverage Roseau received during the flood. These comments relate back to the theme of discrimination and treatment as 'second class citizens.' Residents felt that the lack of media attention was yet another indicator of the lack of importance placed on the safety of Roseau community members by non-Native people.

Symbolic of this discriminatory attitude towards Roseau residents, was the fact that the dogs left behind during the evacuation got more press coverage than any other aspect of the community. Some spoke about this in humourous terms but the message remained the same: the "dogs were more important than the Indians." The dogs were left behind, as animals were not included during the evacuation:

> **Community Member:** They only covered the starving dogs, not anybody's health or people. We were not kept informed about the health or well being of us.

> **Community Member:** The newspapers etc. did not have information on the reserve, no coverage. There was brief information on the news, never said anything about the Reserve though, just the dogs and when the army was sent in.

Respondents were frustrated with the lack of media coverage:

Community Member: When I was looking at the news, watching it on TV, never did they mention Roseau River. That's my home. How do we know what's going on. And we're right in the middle of it all. That kind of pissed me off. I want to know how my home is doing. My uncle hired a plane to come take pictures of our houses to see what was going on. We were concerned because we hadn't heard nothin'.

Community Member: We were treated differently than other towns. They don't paint everybody with the same brush when it comes to those things. There was no publicity. Nobody knew Roseau River existed - Emerson, Morris, St. Jean - everybody was getting frustrated, they talked about every other town but Roseau. Somebody started to call the press and make a big stink, why is Roseau not being informed like the other towns?

Community Member: My husband stayed behind. He had bought cell phones that day so we could stay in touch. The news coverage was good for everybody around but not Roseau. The only way I found out about my house was my husband who stayed behind. He called me after he checked it personally. Otherwise I would never have known. When watching TV I never heard about Roseau's dike. The only time we saw it on TV was when the road washed out.

Community Member: The radio, TV and newspaper were not at all adequate. It was frustrating not to hear about Roseau River on the news. Heard rumours about the dike and we were worried about it.

Community Member: We watched local TV but they never showed Roseau. The Winnipeg Free Press didn't mention Roseau either. People here are like a close-knit family. Media made me feel like we weren't important, like we didn't matter. It's like something really bad has to happen here to get coverage, like any reserve I guess.

The accusation that Canada's mainstream media is racist is widely invoked. Mainstream media "continue to be accused of racial discrimination against minority women and men by way of images that deny, demean and exclude" (Fleras & Kunz,

2001: 30). Racism does exist in mainstream media. One must be cautious however in use of the term. It is true that mainstream media provide a site in which racist individuals and racialized agendas continue to exert some degree of sway. In the case of media coverage of Roseau River, it would be more accurate to describe the systemic bias in media minority representations as a case of media racism. "Inasmuch as the structures, values, and institutions of the mainstream may inadvertently advantage some while minority experiences are dismissed as irrelevant or inferior, racism informs the representational products of the mainstream media" (Fleras & Kunz, 2001:43).

Nowhere is the power of the news media more evident than in their capacity to articulate and disseminate messages about minorities. Researchers in Canada, based on four case studies, have found that people of colour were frequently rendered invisible by news media bias, often deliberately but also systematically. "People of colour were frequently rendered invisible by the racist discourse of mainstream news media, either by ignoring stories about minority women and men or by silencing minority voices" (Fleras & Kunz, 2001:44). Previous research then supports the perceptions of many Roseau River residents regarding the mainstream media. Adding to this perception is the collective experience of the shameful history of minority-media relations in Canada. "There is little doubt that media-minority relations were historically tainted by the stain of blatant prejudice, open discrimination and racialized discourses" (Fleras & Kunz, 2001:46). Although such practices are currently ill advised, it is clear that covert or polite displays continues to exist, often in the form of omission.

> **Community Member:** It upset me that people outside heard about the Red flooding, on the media, but when the River crested Roseau was forgotten about, we were just left out there by ourselves.

4. Frustration with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Several respondents were frustrated with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, referred to simply as DIA, DIAND, INAC, the Department or Indian Affairs by respondents. During key informant interviews with the flood control officer, Gary Roberts, with Chief Antoine, and with community members, a discussion about the flood invariably led to a discussion about the current financial crisis faced by the Band. Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation finds itself under third party management. Respondents explained this is a direct result of the flood of '97. Gary Roberts explained to me how this situation arose.

INAC advanced Roseau River funds to deal with the crisis in '97. The Manitoba Emergency Services Organization (MEMO also referred to simply as the EMO) requires communities or municipalities to spend money first, make a claim and then get reimbursed. However, this First Nation, like many others, has very limited funds and could not realistically advance this much money. Thus, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provides the funding up front, called an 'accountable advance'. When a disaster has occurred the First Nation makes a claim, they take it to MEMO and present the claim to that body. MEMO determines what costs are eligible and that is what they will pay for. If there is a question about an aspect of the claim it goes back to the Department. The Department has to deal with it. "That's where I have a problem," says Gary Roberts. In this case the Department does not want to pick up $2 million of the costs, and "that's ridiculous," he says. When MEMO disallows a cost, Roseau has to reimburse the Department for the balance of the accountable advance. That's how it

works. Chief Felix Antoine explains, "Evacuation notice comes from the province, we have to abide by their decision. All communities have to go by EMO too. The federal people had more of a say of what was going on here. We are a federal responsibility. But we also got some help from the province."

> **Gary Roberts:** In terms of this whole financial situation we find ourselves in it reflects back to the '97 flood. By that I mean, the money the department put out when the First Nation made its claim. Basically what the department decided was well, the First Nation could not. They had a lot of questions with the claim. This shouldn't be claimed, that shouldn't. The Band ended up owing two million dollars. It compounded the situation we're already in. We ended up under third party management. The department never took responsibility for that and they should be held accountable. When it comes to First Nations 100% of costs will be covered, that's what it states in that disaster financial agreement. I know that there are probably some costs that are not eligible but not to the tune of over 2 million dollars. That's just ridiculous. The most is half a million, maybe some question there in terms of that. Not 2.4 million, that's ridiculous. So that's something that also happened here. So that disaster not only happened. It's not over yet. It still affects the community and it will for some time.
>
> **Community Member:** INAC was always trying to restrict us. It was always about money. Get the Indians into as cheap a place as possible. They told everybody along the Red what was available. Some houses here were totally damaged, but were renovated instead of being replaced. You go down the highway and see lots of new houses. But they do not deal with individuals on reserve. Was the worst thing when you are treated as a group with minimum needs, it was discriminatory, two sets of guidelines. The people stuck in the rink should have been compensated for staying in a rink.

The Chief had a unique perspective on the situation:

> **Chief Antoine:** DIAND was very cooperative in some ways. They built the dike up that spring, up another two

> feet, and the upgrade was good. The accounting system though is complicated. There's a two million dollar debt. We're into a real deficit. That's why we're under third party management. A big machine slipped into the water and Roseau River was held responsible for it. Was worth over $100,000. DIAND failed to insure their machine. MEMO disallowed certain costs. So DIAND is holding the Band accountable.

One respondent summed up the situation as follows:

> **Community Member:** Floods are a major concern here and throughout Southern Manitoba, it's a major concern. More or less we are still dealing with it. As First Nations we have to deal with the fact it has impacted Roseau a lot. Not just health, housing and education, it sets the community back one-step, in terms of financial, third party management. The flood impacted us. It's still being dealt with on our political people's agenda. The Band has suffered a lot.

Gary Roberts spoke of the aggravation created when Roseau is shuffled between two levels of government:

> **Gary Roberts:** People were away from the community for one month. Then we had the army during the course of that. The biggest frustration for me in terms of trying to coordinate the whole thing was the lack of ability to do things because there was no money there to do things. You have to have money to get pumps, sandbags, whatever else. So that was the biggest frustration. Even prior to the actual flooding event, at least three months prior to that, in the new year we started talking to DIAND, trying to impress upon them that we're gonna need a lot of help, financial help, to do things. We also went through it in 1996, high water levels, so we had an idea of what might be coming. We just couldn't get anywhere with them. Basically their position was we will wait and see what happens, when it happens, we'll respond. I think that's a very poor way of dealing with disaster situations. A last minute sort of approach to it is very frustrating. My experience with DIAND was atrocious. That's the attitude they had. Anything we went to the province for, like pumps, they told us we had to go through DIAND. In terms of natural

> disasters that occur in First Nations, again the first nations get shuffled between two bodies of government, between provincial and federal.

Some community members were also frustrated with MEMO, the claims process and with the "corruption" they witnessed during the crisis:

> **Community Member:** We got the short end of the stick. People weren't treated fair. There was no information about how to get help. Chief and Council, the nurse, never got help. No phone calls. EMO issued checks for what was lost but there was fraud. Some throw water on furniture to fake a claim, claim for appliances and then sell them. Even people from the city made claims. Some were using different names so they could claim twice. It bothered me when the stuff they said wasn't true, that everyone was well taken care of. It was lying. Corruption. What pissed me off was the people who got pillows, and blankets and sheets and stuff, they had yard sales. Didn't realize there were people around who really needed it. Pick up trucks, loads of food and they come home and sell them. They can get away with it so easily. We got $1300 from EMO and bought second hand beds. People who stayed back during the flood stole from the houses. They talked about it at parties. Clocks, lights, small TVs and VCRs missing, which they said went to the garbage but I don't believe them.

> **Community Member:** I know the reserve got money for the houses but where did that money go? Did it go to my house? I don't know that. I never saw anything. We had to file something to EMO, gave us a list. Half the things I did miss, got stolen, or damaged, how can you think of all that stuff? Lots of people got more money back than I did but weren't even affected by it like us who lived outside the dikes. I heard some got so much but not as affected as us. Maybe their houses were damaged but why did they get back so much. I was honest with my thing when I filled it out, maybe I could have BS'd on it too but I didn't. We basically had to file on our own.

Some spoke about the hardships poverty imposes. Again, according to Roseau River social services, 95% of the community members of Roseau currently receive social assistance:

> **Community Member:** People are frustrated about the welfare checks. We have to wait until 3pm, under third party management. We have to rush to the bank. They should give them out early in the morning. Been like that since third party came on.
>
> **Community Member:** I've wondered how, since the flood, the mould keeps coming back. We go to the Band to get cleaning stuff to get the mould out. I'm on social assistance and can't afford cleaning supplies.
>
> **Community Member:** There are a lot of good things here in this community. Our annual powwow, they come from Arizona and New Mexico just to dance here. The employment situation is hard here though. The band office employees are the only ones who have money coming into their pockets. They have the qualifications I guess.

5. It was different long ago

Early in the 1800s some Ojibway people moved away from Red River, north of Winnipeg, Manitoba. They moved to Joe Creek near Emerson. When more Selkirk settlers came to this area the Ojibway decided to move again. Whenever people cleared the land for farms the game animals left. Then the Ojibway people had to move in order to hunt. The Ojibway people finally moved to the land around the *Raosaeu River* (River of the Willows)[4]. This was a good place for the people to live for two reasons. First, it was poor for farming so there would not likely be a problem with settlers moving in. Second, there was plenty of game. In the woods there were a lot of rabbits, moose, elk, prairie chickens and even grizzly bears. This was important because there were few

[4] Raosaeu River (original spelling). See http://www.ginewschool.com/chistory.html

buffalo left for the Ojibway to hunt. Until the 1880s the Roseau area was also a stopping place for flights of passenger pigeons. It is said that they came in such great flocks that they darkened the sky and that an arrow shot into the flock was sure to bring down a bird. Since the coming of the white people and their guns, there are no more passenger pigeons. They are extinct (Ginew School, 2001).

Elders remember when times were different. Elders are the keepers of traditional knowledge. They hold the memories of how things once were. Elders in Aboriginal communities have great influence on the decision-making process. The views and advice of a respected elder carries great weight on any given issue for which community input and support are required (Smart & Coyle, 1997:105). In Roseau there is the Elders Council. The Elders Council is comprised of five community Elders (Roseau River First Nations, 2000). During my interviews I was privileged to meet with several elders. Enjoying a cup of tea I sat down with them, in their homes, and listened while they told stories about their beloved community, their beloved people and their beloved land. Each comment was brief but provided great insight into the history of this community:

> **Elder:** People used to visit a long time ago. We quit drinking. We see people at the bingo hall. Now that we're here on the reserve so close, nobody visits anymore. People, don't visit anymore, and don't go any place. Some used to farm years ago and live far apart from one another. Town sites, it's harder to live closer together. Someone pulled up my flowers, my rhubarb. They broke the fence, it's hard. It's at night they come around, must be kids. I don't even know the kids anymore; don't know who they are. Have to ask, whose kid is that? (Laughs)

A.M. Shkilnyk (1985) found similar patterns of disruption due to a change in settlement patterns at Grassy Narrows. "Indian people all across Canada were

profoundly affected by the federal government's policy of establishing schools on reserves and, where necessary, of relocating entire bands to year-round sedentary communities" (Shkilnyk, 1975: 135). In the summer of 1963, the Department of Indian Affairs began to relocate the people of Grassy Narrows to a "new reserve" about five miles south of the old settlement. The move was justified on the grounds that the new site, accessible by road from the town of Kenora, would make it easier to provide the Indians with the amenities of modern life. The uprooting, however, "proved devastating to the Ojibway way of life" (Shkilnyk, 1975: 2). What is key in the relocation of Native peoples to reserves is that "certain aspects of the Ojibway way of knowing about the reality of time and space ceased to be useful in structuring individual and social experience" (Shkilnyk, 1975:64). The people, no longer living off the land and following trap lines, found themselves lost in no man's land, an abyss between two cultures, and they had begun to self-destruct. Relocation was one of the factors that led to the symptoms of individual trauma and social collapse that began to appear in the early 1970s in Grassy Narrows.

The exodus from the old reserve was a turning point in the history of the Grassy Narrows band. "Men and women gave up traditional roles and occupations when they ceased to trap as a family, and the special relationship of the people to the land, which had cushioned all previous crises, was severely undermined by the imposed economic, political, and spatial order of the new reserve" (Shkilnyk, 1975:53). The elders of Roseau River say they live in crisis because they were uprooted. Life has changed so dramatically:

> **Elder:** People always managed. Used to go and work. Long ago you could cut wood and sell it. You can't sell it now. Even in wintertime they had jobs. But when welfare come, that all went away. Welfare started in the 50s and I remember lots went to the city because the welfare was better over there. They're coming back now. They used to give rations in the winter. Government used to give rations to people in the winter. Oh that bacon was good. Big slab of bacon, now you can't get that. Little bacon, you know how much you would pay? They had everything, baking powder, lard, for the winter. Only once. But they used to cut wood and sell wood. I was in residential school so I don't really know.
>
> **Elder:** It's so different now. They predict floods but it never turns out because the air is different. It's not long ago you could pretty near tell. A woman was saying we're gonna have a good mild winter. That's what she heard. There are lots of experts. Reading it in a book. The older people are pretty accurate.

What is heard in the voices of the Roseau River elders quoted above is a yearning for well being. Well being existed before settlement in the village, as it did for the people of Grassy Narrows.

> "The way of life at Grassy Narrows before the relocation is now a kaleidoscope of images in the minds of those people who lived on the old reserve. These highly subjective recollections contain not only memory of what was but also desire for what ought to be and nostalgia for what is no more" (Shkilnyk, 1975:58).

Well being also existed for the Whapmagoostui Cree of Quebec, prior to contact with the Europeans. Village life, versus a traditional way of life, is problematic for most First Nation peoples:

> Village life is associated with such things as structured schooling for the children, and with all the harm and disruption arising from alcohol consumption, and is viewed as negative and upsetting, and as offering none of the social peace that is associated with bush living (Adelson, 2000: 109).

The elders of Grassy Narrows, of Whapmagoostui and of Roseau River all seem to view the changes that have come with village life as damaging.

6. Isolation

The cumulative effect of the evacuation, the lack of media coverage, and poor communication resulted in a feeling of isolation. The isolation was experienced at both individual and community-wide levels. Some felt isolated because of the lack of information given. They felt left out:

> **Community Member:** We were on our own. That's how I felt. We're out there; nobody contacted us about what was available for us. We were stuck. But I know Red Cross did a lot for us out there. I wish I was more aware of certain things. They should have come to us. Felt all on our own. Gary Roberts has been a big help but he has to speak to someone higher up there. There's only so much help he can give us.
>
> **Community Member:** Other towns got three or four days notice for evacuation. We were told the same day. Roseau River was shut out.
>
> **Elder:** During the flood we never learned about our own reserve. We had to find out if anybody came back at all, there were rumours about the dikes breaking, not sure if that was accurate so we had to find someone who came back.

Others felt isolated physically:

> **Community Member:** There was road damage on the east and west side of Roseau, had to wait a month to go home.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW THEMES

As noted above there were a number of themes that came out of the interviews related to the unique flood experiences of the Roseau River community. With regard to experiences as Anishinabe people, many community

members expressed frustration with the treatment they received during the emergency as well as frustration with ongoing treatment after the emergency. In particular, issues were raised relating to the evacuation and shelter in a curling rink. Why were other communities evacuated as individuals to hotels while Roseau River was evacuated en masse to an uncomfortable curling rink? This was a question asked by several interviewees. It is racism, say many community members. The curling rink afforded no privacy. It was a demeaning experience for many. The second-class citizenship theme was also discussed in relation to obtaining services during the emergency. Furthermore, this feeling of racism and receiving unequal treatment in comparison to surrounding white communities, was extended to the discussion of the media. The dogs were more important than us, they said. The blatant lack of media coverage was seen as a deliberate attack against their self-esteem and self worth. "The Indians don't matter" was the message. A commemorative t-shirt of the "flood of the century" made no mention of a Native community located in the heart of the floodplain.

Respondents spoke of the lasting impact of the flood, of the trauma. The impact continues to be felt on many levels. Financially, many people lost personal items. They lost powwow outfits, which are sacred and irreplaceable. They returned to damaged homes. At the community level the Band continues to struggle through a severe deficit, about two million dollars, incurred during the flood of '97. Emotionally, many people were left with feelings of frustration and sorrow. With regards to health several people spoke of the mould and the fact their homes continue to have mould, years after the flood. The increase in asthma

is distressing to many. A 200% increase in the use of puffers should get attention as a health concern but it has not. Some spoke about the alcoholism and how some cope with the stress by turning to the bottle.

Respondents spoke of their colonial history and ongoing adversarial relationship with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC). Like other First Nations' communities across Canada, Roseau River has experienced a move from self-sufficiency to dependence on INAC. This relationship has had a devastating impact on the spirit of the community. High unemployment and welfare rates are exacerbated by the debt incurred as a result of the flood of '97. Not uncommon to many First Nations communities, there has been an eclipse of self-government and INAC is viewed with suspicion. How INAC dealt with the flood is the physical event that captured, symbolized and manifested government colonial policy in action.

Respondents, particularly the elders, spoke of life many years ago. The elders spoke with love and fondness for their community. They were hesitant to speak ill of their home community. They talked about the close-knit community relations that existed many years ago. They spoke of socializing that no longer occurs. They spoke of environmental degradation and the destructive impact of settlement by white peoples. The modern town-site development physically brought their people together but in social terms drove them apart. Nobody visits anymore. When the elders spoke it was always with a great deal of emotion, because they felt that they had lost so much.

Respondents also spoke of isolation, both physical and social. This feeling of isolation resulted from the lack of information pertaining to the situation at Roseau during the emergency. Roseau was forgotten. Community members scanned local media for any information about their homes, their community, to no avail. Feelings of isolation and frustration added to the already stressful situation. Insult was added to injury.

2.4 NARRATIVE ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT

I have chosen the *ethnographic narrative account* method for analyzing my ethnographic research. A central component of ethnographic research is the ethnographic account. Providing such narrative accounts of what goes on in the lives of study subjects derives from having maintained complete, accurate, and detailed field notes (Berg, 2001). My field notes reflect a very personal account of visits to this community. My intent here is to contextualize the quantitative and qualitative data reported in the previous sections.

I had visited Roseau River First Nation once many years ago. My family had traveled to Roseau for their annual powwow. I remember the powwow grounds were flat and grassy, like the plains powwows. My recollection was mostly of the powwow itself and not much about the community. So, my journey into the field began in September 2001 with a search on the Internet. I found a home page for Roseau River and discovered that it was somewhat out of date. This is not unusual for web sites. I could not find the name of a key contact person as I had hoped. Instead I took down the name of the Chief and the Band Office. I felt some trepidation as I called because my entire research project was

on the line. Gaining entrance to the field is a multi-stage process and this was step one. I called the Band Office and was told a man named Gary Roberts was the Flood Control Officer for the community. I explained that I was a First Nation student when I called his office and he was friendly. I explained to him that I was planning a trip to visit his community to do research on the flood. He said he would help me in any way that he could.

Several weeks passed as I planned my first field visit. I called the Band Office again to find out the nearest hotel. They suggested the brand new Super 8 Motel in Morris. This would become my home for each field visit to Roseau. I traveled the long route to Roseau on my first trip, right after Thanksgiving weekend of 2001. The weather was fair; there was no snow on the ground yet. I drove through Kenora into Winnipeg then down to Morris. Roseau is located several kilometers southeast of this small Manitoba town. On subsequent trips I would take the much shorter Southern route through Minnesota into Manitoba. Prior to leaving Thunder Bay on this first trip I faxed a memo to Gary Roberts' office to notify him of my arrival. I also faxed a letter explaining my research project to Chief Felix Antoine. Receiving no response from either of them I attempted to contact Gary Roberts by telephone several times. I was a little bit worried. I called one more time with no luck. I decided to go ahead with the community visit. My attitude at this point was that I was bound to find someone who could help out.

I drove East across Highway 201. I tried to picture the land covered in water, like I had seen in the books. I approached a steel bridge and saw the sign,

"Red River." The river was dwarfed in comparison to the rivers I've seen. It was more like a creek. It was hard to believe this was the mighty "red sea rising" of '97 fame. I stopped and took several photographs of the river. I saw a mound of earth, like a giant snake, on one side of the river. This, I would later learn, is a ring dike. I had never seen a ring dike and was surprised to see that it was a fairly simple concept. You build a large ring of earth around your community to keep the water out.

I arrived in the community before lunch on a warm fall day, Wednesday, October 10, 2001. Immediately after you cross the bridge over the Red on Highway 201 you are in Roseau River First Nation. I went directly to the Band Office because, as in many First Nation communities, it is easy to locate and they are a good central source of information. I asked the receptionist about Gary Roberts' office. She indicated that it was the Public Works building, a brown building two doors down. I entered the building to find a man sitting at his desk. It wasn't Gary Roberts. He informed me that Gary Roberts no longer worked there. I asked where he lived and he gave me directions.

As I drove through Roseau I immediately noticed it was muddy. The streets are dirt and seem to soak up moisture. I have been to many reserves and the houses were no different. They could best be described as grimy. Only the odd one had a kept lawn. Most had muddy driveways. I noticed that several had front steps that did not reach the ground, but were suspended in mid air forcing one to jump onto the stairs to enter a house. I later learned that this was because the houses were not finished. They were raised after the flood but the stairs were

never fixed to match the rise. I felt comfortable as I drove through the muddy streets because it was just like my home community. As I drove through the streets I passed a middle-aged woman standing on the road. She was in her stocking feet and appeared to be quite intoxicated.

The infrastructure here was less developed than some reserves I had been to. The muddy roads were not unique. There were no road signs. You could see the big mound of earth that surrounded the reserve. The school and healing centre were big, new buildings. The healing centre appeared to be getting a renovation. I passed the Ginew volunteer fire department. I saw Gary Roberts' black truck and red mini van, as the man had told me. I drove into the front drive and knocked on the door. Gary Roberts answered the door. I explained who I was and we sat down in his kitchen for a cup of coffee. He was a friendly man who wore dark sunglasses. He offered to give me a tour of the community later that afternoon. During this first meeting he explained to me his role in the community:

> **Gary Roberts:** The way it happened in 1997, first of all, the preparedness for flood, why they hired me - so I as the Flood control officer was responsible for the preparedness aspect of it. Then there's sort of a grey area when it came to evacuation, decision-making and things like that. Prior to the event of course we had meetings with emergency personnel, Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters, they're the mandated organization in Manitoba to deal with natural disasters in First Nations. So when this particular group approached us we started to prepare an emergency preparedness plan. So we did that. In that plan it sets out the decision making process. Under that particular plan, at least the way I understand it, there is more responsibility placed on the flood officer during the crisis. When it comes to local authority, the Chief and the Council, sometimes, at least what I found out, at this particular instance, people were reluctant to let

go of their authority. That's what I noticed. I found that a little frustrating at times.

Mr. Robert's main source of information during the flood was the Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters (MANFF) as well as MEMO. Referring to MANFF Gary said, "The guy over there is a good guy to talk to. He's white but he's all right!" (Both laugh). At this point Gary told me about a study conducted in Roseau by a professor at the University of Manitoba. Roseau and two other communities were selected for this study. I learned later that this was "Community-based Disaster Management during the 1997 Red River Flood in Canada," by Jerry Buckland & Matiur Rahman (1999). I would return for my tour in the afternoon.

I decided to stop by the clinic. I sat down and had a brief conversation with Jeannie Marion, the head nurse. She was a non-Native woman who worked in the community during the flood of '97. She told me that the media was terrible. They showed up at the rink in Ste. Anne at 7 a.m. and filmed everyone while they were sleeping. "It was annoying," she said. There was a communications bulletin board at the rink. This is how people received information. The Chief also would go to the arena. There was a P.A. system and the nurses would also make announcements. There was a lack of information, though, and people did not know what they were coming home to. "We would watch that river get higher, and there was this sick feeling, stress, anxiety and tension." Highway 201 disappeared under water. An operator died of a massive heart attack, fighting the flood in Roseau. She reported high incidences of

drinking and violence upon return to the community. The pharmacy reported a 200% increase in the use of puffers due to asthma in the community since the flood.

I returned to the Band Office. I asked if they had a map of the community with houses listed. There was one but they could not locate it. Chief Antoine was very cooperative and interested in my research. He explained that he had received my fax and attempted to call my number but did not reach me. We sat down and he gave me a rundown of what he remembered of the flood. He showed me a map of Roseau River's traditional territory on his office wall. Treaties were signed in 1871 but in 1903 his community lost 12 sections of land to settlement. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs relinquished it. They are proceeding with a land claim through the Indian Claims Commission (ICC). I told him I used to be a communications officer with the ICC in Ottawa. He told me of the distrust his community had for outside interference during the flood:

> **Chief Antoine:** I didn't trust the army. I figured they would tear up the dike and let the river flow through. You know to ease up on the pressure over here, to ease up on the pressure going east. So for that reason we stayed. We patrolled for I don't know how long. I went up on the dike on a Sunday afternoon, on the southwest corner of the reserve. When I got over there I lost my footing and I broke my ankle, so I was in bed for two days, icing down my ankle. Took me an hour to walk here. So they had to get me out of here. We had to use a boat. Had to go a mile East. Took myself to the hospital.

During the flood community members would call his office or home for information. Chief Antoine also spoke of the media. I asked him specifically to

speak about his experience of the media coverage. He began by saying the media coverage was "piss poor." He continued:

> **Chief Antoine:** For some reason we don't exist when they talk about flooding. The media only talked about the dogs. I only did an interview with CBC news. We were completely off the news. They were, I guess colour blind isn't the word, biased. The media treated us as if we weren't around here as if we didn't exist. All of the surrounding communities were given a lot of attention on the air. You know Emerson, Lettelier, Dominion City, Morris, except for one community was never mentioned, that was the First Nations community. I think I was only able to get on the air once that was with CBC, I had a chance to talk about what was happening over here... I think the crest got here around the 29th of April. If it went over the top of our dike, I think another twelve inches and the water would have came over the dike there. And in the mean time people were phoning me. How come you guys are not on the news? I said I don't have any control over the news, the media. I don't have any control of that. Well, did the reserve disappear? I said, no we're still here. Talk to the media. So that's the kind of experience we had with the media... I think the only time we get any news here is when something tragic happens. Negative news is what they're after anyway.

His explanation of media behaviour was consistent with what many First Nations have experienced during times of crisis. After my meeting with Chief Antoine I decided to wander around the reserve. I drove to the North. Several houses were located North of the community ring dike. I found the clinic, daycare and Ginew School. I decided to visit the school. The Principal was a non-Native woman named Marion Thomas. She sat down with me and shared her memories of the flood. I asked her about the media coverage. She explained to me in great detail how Roseau was neglected in the media:

> **Marion Thomas:** Once the water started getting closer to the community, the news media, television, radio newspapers were giving reports of the communities such as Emerson, Ste Jean-Baptiste, Altona, Morris, but it was as if this community never

> even existed. You'd see helicopters flying over but it was like where was Roseau, it was like Roseau disappeared off the face of the earth. And that was a pretty unnerving experience for everybody. It was a real rough time. I was at the curling rink in Ste. Anne and there was pretty good communication happening there. The Chief had broken his leg, I think, so he was out of contact but it was good information. But with the mass media it was like the community wasn't important enough or significant enough. People were watching TV and newspaper looking, straining to hear anything on the community. You know 'we're gonna be covering the Red flood today' so people are glued to the TV set and you're waiting and you're waiting to hear something about your community and there's nothing, nothing. CBC, CKY, there was one in town that did a better report but I can't remember. MTM out of Portage, we watched everything. CBC is supposed to be for the country. Why aren't they reporting on Roseau? It almost seems like CBC sometimes, and I'm a fan, but it seems like there's nothing South of Winnipeg. Or North, or East or West (laughing).

I grabbed a snack at the pharmacy of the community health centre and returned to Gary Roberts' home. He fired up his big old black pick up truck and we hit the road. We drove South of the community down a dirt road and onto the ring dike. He told me the water came within a few feet of the top of the dike in '97. "We had to raise the dike a couple of feet," he said. They've since raised it another 2 feet above the '97 flood level. They also addressed the drainage problem at the same time, no more basements flooding. There was concern about the culverts where there were seepage problems. There was concern they might give. "That is why Hydro was shut off in the community at that time. Only the Operation Control Centre, the Chief's house and the transportation provider's house had hydro," explained Gary. Had the dike been breached in '97 about eight feet of water would have rushed through the community, explained Gary. "There certainly would have been a lot of damage," he said. The dike surrounds the

community south of Highway 201, the south perimeter of the reserve, and along the banks of the Red to the west, up around the north part of the community, and down the east side around the hockey arena and back across the highway.

At the highway are culverts that must be sandbagged during flooding. About nine houses are located North of the ring dike. These houses are left to fend for themselves during flooding and are evacuated more often than houses in the main community. I later learned that these households were given the option of relocating to the main village; otherwise they would not be protected during a flood. Many chose to stay including the two wonderful elders I would meet later this day. As we drove around the ring dike Gary pointed out the water pumps and where the dike was being built up. The farmlands surrounding the community are a part of Roseau River's traditional territory but are leased to local farmers. Within Roseau's territory the Red meets Roseau River, so that there is great potential for flooding. Gary and I wrapped our tour and he took me to meet two elders, Steve and Agnus Sennie, who lived North of the dike. I was eager to hear about their experiences.

We drove down their long driveway and approached a pretty little house surrounded by trees. The house sat atop a mound of earth, raised because of the flooding. We sat down for tea. They were a delightful couple that has been married longer than I have been alive. They were eager to share memories with me. From the start of my visit to Roseau I certainly got the impression that people were comfortable with me because I too am Anishinabe. There was a

certain element of trust already present and an element of curiosity about where I came from.

We sat down together and I audiotaped our conversation. I asked them about flooding. What is striking about this conversation is the humour that characterizes many comments. We laughed a lot that day:

> **Agnus**: Floods happen so much. The '50 flood, that was a bad one. We had to stay in the sticks somewhere, it was miserable. We had to stay in tents. Of course they had heaters. I wouldn't want to live in a tent again. It used to be wet and everything.
> **Steve:** It's life you know.
> **Agnus**: We had to go stay in a motel or at my daughter's. Then in '95 or '96 we stayed in Selkirk. There were a lot of guys working, building dikes everywhere. No, no that was the '97 flood. My dad said they had a big flood in the 1800s, water all over. They stayed in log houses. The water must have been pretty high then. We went through a lot of floods. I hope it doesn't flood anymore. Too many ditches. Water just rushes. There's a creek over there. Never really think of the water as bad, it's kind of dirty now. The guys in '97 never even started pumping these houses for a long time, they were slow. We fill up barrels with rainwater for dishes. Flood is not really scary. You have to go and find a place to stay. Water comes from back of house, packed everything up...
> **Steve**: ...even the old cat. (laughing) One time we went out by tractor.
> **Agnus**: We don't worry about the flooding. Well if it's a big flood you worry about it all floating away (laughing). But it doesn't bother us really. You want to come home, you watch the water. Not really worried.
> **Steve**: You get down to it, what can you do?

I spent only a couple of days in Roseau during this first trip. My main concern was whether or not a household survey would be appropriate. I asked Gary Roberts and he said it would be OK, that he didn't see a problem with it.

I returned to Roseau in December. Snow blanketed the ground and Christmas lights adorned several houses. I wasn't totally comfortable with disturbing people at their homes so close to the holidays but I needed to stay on schedule. So I got a room at

the Super 8 and headed out to the community. Professor Harun Rasid of the Department of Geography had drafted a lengthy household survey. In order to seek a representative sample I was required to draft a map of the community, assign each house a location number, and visit only every second household. This was much easier said than done. I drove through the community and began to draw a handmade map. This turned out to be a complete exercise in frustration. As I drove through the community it was clear the planning of the roads and houses was not based on a grid of any kind. In the early 1960s the Department of Indian Affairs developed a policy of "community development" (Shkilnyk, 1975: 135). In cases where Indian bands were scattered and isolated, the policy included their relocation to town-site developments. Grid planning was thus a foreign concept. There were houses scattered and hidden behind others. Also, this was a monumental task. Mapping 150 houses takes a lot longer than I thought. By mid afternoon I was distressed. I had spent half a day in the field and had not completed one survey. Later in the day, once my map was completed, I started knocking on doors.

I will not proceed to discuss all 67 household visitations. Rather I will highlight some of the more interesting experiences. The first house I went to turned out to be the home of a respected elder. Marjorie Nelson was gracious and like Steve and Agnus, bursting with wonderful stories. I stayed for over an hour having a cup of tea and visiting with her and her daughter. Marjorie had visited my hometown, Thunder Bay, several years before. She in fact studied at Lakehead University, in the Native Language Instructor's program. She told me her memories of the flood:

> **Marjorie Nelson:** We were told that these were coming, prophecy of a flood. Natives knew a long time ago. Told it was coming, it's the Creator's plan. There's too many living animals, it's a way of

> getting rid of them. New animals are coming up, same as human beings. Too many people living. It's the Creator's way of doing things, everything happens for a reason. There's a reason for the Red to flood, must have been...The flood is nature, it's natural.

During my visit with Marjorie I asked her to complete a household survey with me. I was a bit uncomfortable with asking an elder to rate anything on a scale. Likert scales are designed for academic intentions. I told her of my concern and she put my mind at ease. It's OK, she said, "The rating scales are good for the professor, he gets benefit from it." Marjorie offered me a plate of food while we talked. She told me how things used to be in her community:

> **Marjorie Nelson:** The Native person does not value the money, the wealth. It's the well being of a person. White man values buildings, money. Native person's value is sharing, share everything he has, shared our country, kindness. A long time ago we didn't lock the doors and we shared the food on our table. We used to put a stick next to the door, like a sign outside to say come and eat, it's OK.

Marjorie's daughter joined us and elaborated on her mother's comments. The white man has different values than the Anishinabe people she told:

> **Daughter:** One time I got hit by a drunk driver in my truck. I called the police. He said, "don't worry about your truck." I'm not worried about my truck. I'm worried about a drunk driver on the road, get him off before he kills somebody. I swore at him.

Although many community members spoke of lost possessions and vandalism the elders spoke of traditional values and beliefs. Traditionally possessions and ownership were foreign concepts diametrically opposed to the holistic values Native people used to survive. A difference in value systems is also reflected in beliefs about the Red itself. It has been poisoned:

Marjorie Nelson: The Red River is not an enemy but people are the enemy. What they dump in the river, the river is the victim, sprays and things they use. All water is a cleansing thing. No matter what kind. Red River must be in order for it to be flowing. A year after the flood I saw a bald wolf, sickly, dying, came to the road to die. Animals got sick and drowned. The deer were piled in a circle, stuck in one area together.

Marjorie believed that the Anishinabe people were treated differently than white people. She saw this in the media:

Marjorie Nelson: The Chief was here in the community during the flood. My brother-in-law has all the boats, so he was here looking after the dogs, feeding them. That saved his life! He held on to a package of dog food, helped him stay up when in hip waders and his rubbers filled up with water. If not for the package of dog food he wouldn't have made it. Here in the news, there were all these towns in the news, but they didn't even inform us about Roseau. There was one picture - of Pepper - my son's dog. That was the only thing in the news. They didn't inform us about our reserve and that bothered me because there were other Native reserves in the States willing to help us, but there was no news about us at all. We would have got help from our own people but they didn't even hear about us in the news. They forgot about us like we didn't exist.

Marjorie's daughter showed me a beautiful doll her mother made. The doll was handmade with traditional regalia. Marjorie, like other Elders I spoke with, talked about the days past when community members were closer, when folks used to visit each other. She noted how this happened again during the crisis in '97, "People tend to help each other when there's a disaster. People come to talk to you that hardly ever talk to you before." One of her closing comments was a concept shared with her by a good non-Native friend. On issues of racism she said, "Everybody has a soul and souls have no colour."

I visited several houses that day. One feature in common to most was sparse furnishings and dirty floors and walls. Perhaps this was a result of the recurrent flooding that people did not keep their homes tidy. At one house a young man pointed to the dirt and holes in the walls. It was a home he had just moved in to. "This is a part of the social life here," he said, indicating the filthy floors and walls. He couldn't explain it. Poverty is perhaps one answer. Substandard housing is a fact of life on most reserves but some of the houses in Roseau seemed particularly grubby. I asked another resident who had a very clean house with newer furnishings. He guessed that it was due to the alcoholism and people not caring about the homes. In some cases I was hesitant to remove my shoes for fear of stepping on something. One house in particular stood out from the rest. It was an older gentleman who lived by himself. He had many, many cats and dogs in his residence. There was very little furniture and there was dog excrement all over the floors of his house. This was by far the most disturbing home I visited. The odour emanated throughout the home. He didn't seem to notice or mind. The condition of some homes may be a direct result of the flood damage. As one resident told me, "Every year I'm just prepared, I only want a little bit so I can just grab them and fly away!"

During the second day of my visit I sat down with another elder and her grandson. She was 88 years old and had a wonderful sense of humour. She began by telling me about theft during the flood.

> **Elder:** They took everything in the house. Took the next door neighbour's poodle. They live in Alberta, the army

> who took the dog. Stole our satellite receiver, TV - all was missing after got home from evacuation. Everything was taken, left our mutt though (laughing).

She did not wish to speak ill of her community, particularly when I asked about the drinking. "I don't want to think of my reserve as being awful. I've lived here 88 years now. Don't' want to complain," she told me. She had six children, three boys and three girls. She has already lost three of them, one to an accident, one medical, and one at a drinking party. "It's still hard for me" she said. She told me of her financial hardships, but she was not complaining:

> **Elder:** I get a pension, no welfare. It all goes to groceries. I used to keep a boy. Got $25 every two weeks. We bought oatmeal one week, milk the next week. I can go without eating for a couple of days. I'm getting old. Never went to High School. But I can figure out things. Living this long I know what happens.

She sits on the custom council. She explained how she does not drink or smoke, never did. "If God wanted us to smoke we would have had a little chimney (patting back of her head) for it to come out!" she joked. Her grandson told me about the situation in their community, "Water table's too high here for basements. Really muddy here. We're living in a water filter!" he said.

I visited another house that afternoon. A middle-aged woman answered the door. She invited me inside. The home was not very clean and a man sat at the kitchen table. It was around 10 a.m. and he had three beer cans in front of him. I sat down and explained my study. He opened another beer can and took a sip. I decided to proceed even though he was obviously under the influence. He

stopped me several times during the survey to ask questions or to elaborate on his memories. He was very emotional in describing the crisis.

> **Community Member:** There was a lot of hardship when we got home... I didn't notice more drinking, was busy getting houses back together. It was kind of depressing, right at the moment, we were out there and it was flooded. Especially in Ste. Anne's it was stressful, in the arena, a big rink.

He then told me about his efforts to help out:

> **Community Member:** We would have got flooded in but we built up the dike about two feet, that's what saved our community. A guy working up at the north end died of a heart attack though. I started a collection for the family. Raised over $100, gave it to the family. The family came to the school, came there, the wife, she was really impressed with the work I was doing. She phoned me, cried, she was really moved by the work I was doing for them.

He praised the efforts of Gary Roberts saying, "I think the men would stay and fight next time. Women and children would not because the water is so strong. Gary Roberts is a big benefit to our community, that man." He continued to tell me about the flood:

> **Community Member:** I wasn't too worried during flood because I knew MEMO would help put our lives back together. But, everyone in this community was very leery about our community being destroyed by that water. One of our elders had a dream or something a month before the water came. There's gonna be a disaster coming, water was not even here yet. Sure enough, a month later disaster came.

His hands trembled and often he would place both hands on his legs under the table, to stop them from trembling. The woman who answered the door left during our visit. She was heading to the store. I continued to speak with the man. He became very emotional when talking about the community members who suffered during the flood, "We were never out of food, lots to eat. We went

through hard times. I was getting a pay check every two weeks but I felt for the people, that's all. The ones who didn't get any money and so on." He shook his head and his voice quivered. After our discussion I thanked him for his time. He asked if he could borrow ten dollars. I gave him a ten.

I concluded my second visit to Roseau on a Thursday. I had planned to stay and conduct more surveys on Friday but I was warned that it was welfare day and that there would be drinking Friday night. I attempted to visit houses Friday morning but nobody was home. I went down to the administration building and there was a line up of people down a long hallway. This was the welfare line. I stepped inside the office and was told that 95% of the community is on welfare. I was disappointed that I had only obtained about 30 surveys on this trip and was tempted to just ask folks standing in line but this would be unethical. It sure would be easier, but it would be dishonest and ultimately unfair to the residents of Roseau River and to my research. I would return to the community after Christmas.

My third and final field trip to Roseau River was in January of 2002. The winter roads were not bad aside from the heavy winds on the prairies of Manitoba. I first went to visit Gary and his wife. We sat down over a cup of coffee and I explained that I was hoping to conclude my surveys on this trip. The goal was to get 75 surveys. He was impressed with the map I managed to draw last trip. I visited several houses. Near the end of the day I visited a house with several horses in a field out back. The man who answered the door was an old

acquaintance of mine from Thunder Bay. I conducted the survey and he spoke eloquently about the losses due to the flood:

> **Community member:** People think that the floodwaters go down and it's over. It's really hard on families, causes break ups, its post-traumatic stress. I lost my fencing, barn, coral, they don't take that into consideration. The ground is so saturated, our horses would get a disease called thrush under their hoofs, they would become lame, and we'd have to put them down. I had to board the horses for months and couldn't afford it. So, I had to sell them, lost all my horses that year.

I went out back to visit the new horses. One is a champion show horse, called a painted horse because of his spots. I was shown his champion belt buckle. I was invited back for dinner and was treated to a feast of venison, potatoes, corn and bannock. The next evening we went out for dinner together. I dined twice with this couple that had lost so much during the flood. They told me, "After we were out of the house for five weeks the ground was so waterlogged every time it rained we kept flooding over and over, all year, for a long time." Compensation is helpful but is only a partial remedy to the suffering. "Compensation is a big factor too, your life being totally rearranged, how do you compensate for that? People here are pretty resilient though. There are still lots of after effects, you see it socially." They spoke both of individual and collective traumas:

> **Community Member**: We were evacuated again for the mould. We still have mould downstairs. Strangers tell you when you can come home, there's a feeling of uncertainty, not knowing what's happening here, your belongings, not knowing what is happening, if your house is being vandalized or if your house is even still there. Most of all is the emotional damage. You can replace a chair but when you lose something, those horses we lost were a part of me, makes me (pause) how do you replace? There are

> substitutions but you never really replace them. Personally, I lost my horses, ones I had that were very special to me.

I stayed in the community for three days. On my last day I managed to get a few more surveys bringing the total to 67. This was the grand total. I was relieved that I managed to get a representative sample. I visited Chief Antoine briefly and told him when the study was complete I would send him a copy. I met a few more community members. One resident spoke of the social issues that plague Roseau.

> **Community Member:** There are not very many people that don't drink. How many died in floods versus how many died from accidents, drinking? There's a fight here across the road every weekend. Flood you can't control but social problems you can, but you need the support of the whole community. The opinion is that drinking is fun and that's all there is to do. Can't convince my own sons not to. The ideal thing is to sit down and have a good look at ourselves. It's a pipe dream, wish it could happen, but the reality is, we're stuck in the situation we're in.

I wished to visit Gary Roberts one more time to thank him for all of his assistance and generosity. I was invited to a wedding but was unable to attend. I felt a sense of relief as I left, knowing I would not have to bang on any more doors and bring up any more sad or hurtful memories of the flood. I was only turned away from two houses in all that time. One older man just shook his head and said he didn't like answering questions. The second man was younger and when he opened the door I could smell weed. He was smoking up and had no time for surveys. Aside from these two households every other person was willing to take some time and answer my questions. I was grateful. Before I left I saw Gary Roberts one more time. I told him I was going home. He said that he

was glad I got what I needed. Hopefully there would be no more studies because "some people want to put things behind them" he said.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter I have outlined the events of the flood of 1997 and I have presented and discussed the data that emerged from the household survey, community interviews and my field notes. From my analysis of the data obtained from the survey and personal interviews, it was determined that Roseau River community members recounted the stress of the evacuation as the most traumatic experience of the "flood of the century." Findings from the household survey were followed by a presentation and discussion of the themes that emerged from personal interviews with community members. These themes were racism and being treated like second class citizens; an overwhelming sense of loss and an "emotional disaster"; "the dogs were more important" – discrimination and a blatant lack of media coverage; frustration with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs; it was different long ago; and, isolation. Findings from the interviews were followed by an ethnographic narrative account of three field trips to Roseau River.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSION

In this chapter I examine the contextual factors that influenced the framing of risk for members of Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation during the flood of 1997. I have argued that framing is one of the key factors influencing risk communication during this event. Framing for members of this community is not only a matter of cultural difference but also a matter of disparate political reality. After a brief discussion of similarities and differences in findings from my three data sources, and a discussion of how my findings relate to the secondary source material reviewed, I offer some recommendations for improving risk communication in Manitoba and suggestions for future research based on these sets of data.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The research results described in this study are based on a relatively small case study of Roseau River. Any conclusions must be tentative, possibly described as "hypothesis for further investigation" (Buckland & Rahman, 1999). Because of the small scale of this research project it is not possible to generalize these findings to all Aboriginal peoples affected by the flood of 1997.

SIMILARITIES FOUND AMONG THE THREE DATA SOURCES

Similarities were found among the data from the household surveys, the interviews and the field notes. A common theme was that of *discrimination*. There was a strong perception amongst community members that they were being treated like second-class citizens. This related to individual experience as well as collective experiences of the community. This feeling, in a sense, added insult to

injury for many. A manifestation of this attitude towards Indian people was the media coverage or lack thereof regarding Roseau during the flood. The media gave little or no attention to this community. This for many was further evidence of the second-rate treatment Roseau received.

An emergent theme from all three data sets also related to treatment during the flood, but focused on the evacuation and shelter. The experience in the rink was at worst a nightmare and at best a welcome alternative to being homeless for a month. Being evacuated en masse created for many a feeling of being herded like livestock. Many were quite bitter about this experience.

Another common theme in all data sets was the emotional damage caused by the flood. This again occurred on both an individual level and a collective level. Lost possessions, mould, flood damage, trauma, the fiscal deficit, the social pathology, to borrow a psychological term, were all discussed in relation to the ongoing effects of the flood of '97.

Another significant theme that emerged from all three data sets was a sense of mourning on the part of community elders. The elders' spoke eloquently about how life used to be. Some spoke of the impact of the settlers while others spoke of the environment. Common to all was a sense of longing for days when the social fabric of their community was less tattered and torn. There was a time when the Red was a source of life, not death.

DIFFERENCES FOUND AMONG THE DATA SOURCES

Some differences were also found between the data sources. According to survey results the majority of community members did not see an increase in

alcohol abuse after the flood. This was qualified though during interviews when many respondents indicated there was no increase because the drinking situation has *always* been bad and that this did not change after the flood. In other words, few noticed an increase but many indicated drinking is an issue in the community.

There were also differences between worldview questions during the survey and interview results. The Likert scales and wording of the questions did not always accurately reflect the true worldview of many people. The ideas required further discussion and explanation on many occasions. Thus the idea of the Red as an enemy does not refer to flooding but rather to pollution. The warlike metaphors used by media during the flood did not reflect the views of several Roseau members.

MY DATA THAT SUPPORTS SECONDARY SOURCE MATERIAL

My data supports secondary source material on the social construction of risk. The horrific flood of '97 was, for the residents of Roseau River, a question of justice, placing them on one side of the battle and government officials, not the Red River, on the other side. The residents and the decision-makers during and after the crisis had differing social constructions of meaning. Adopting a more technical assessment of risk government officials maintained an ethnocentric perspective largely ignoring the traditional views of the Aboriginal peoples affected by the flood. These views are grounded in a history of living in harmony with the Red River as well as living under the Indian Act. It was not floodwaters, but discrimination, trauma due to the evacuation, and hardships created by

dependence that was the risk for Roseau River. Constructionism is the point of departure for the following analysis.

My data supports secondary source material on the issue of *framing risk* and *risk communication*. For example, the community members of Roseau River frame issues around the flood of '97 differently than surrounding communities based on their different cultural perspective. For these people memories of the flood of '97 invoke a language of mourning, outrage and injustice, specifically blaming the government. Local farmers also have expressed outrage over having to evacuate but Roseau River is unique in its relationship with the government. For the people of Roseau River risk perception is viewed through the lens of justice. Vaughn & Seifert (1992) argued that persistent disagreements about risk have their origin in different belief and value systems. This argument is particularly relevant to the issue of framing.

For the people of Roseau River the flood was more about "Indian policy" than it was about floodwaters. It was more about a threat to wellbeing than a threat to house and home. For these people there continues to be a debate about the unfair treatment they received at the hands of the government. My findings support previously cited research put forward by Dynes (1993), who argued that risk is not only socially constructed, but that efforts by policy makers to improve disaster response must also include an understanding of the social units involved. Risk is best understood when the social context of framing is considered, rather than simply focusing on the physical or technological agents. My data supports the argument that culture plays an important role in framing of risk. For instance,

both sides of any debate frame an issue based on their 'thought collective', which has resulted in disagreements about what actions should be taken. Each side is unable to see the legitimacy of the other's position.

The environmental justice movement provides a solid framework for analysis of framing for Roseau River residents. Policy makers, such as the Department of Indian Affairs and the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization, tend to frame risk and environmental issues in the "rhetoric of rationality" (Hannigan, 1995:47). They tend to frame risks as scientific or economic questions, and have adopted this framing when searching for a resolution of conflict. Dake (1992) argues that policy makers are often confused and frustrated at what appears to them as an activist demand for a zero-risk society. The environmental justice movement has on the other hand adopted a "rhetoric of rectitude" which justifies their claims on purely moral grounds (Hannigan, 1995:47). "Rhetoric motifs" are recurrent metaphors and other figures of speech, which highlight some aspect of a social problem and imbue it with moral significance. As example of this is the concept of the Red as a living entity that has been slowly killed in the name of progress, as many elders told during their interviews. Partly due to this type of language, policy makers when asked to explain why the public's response in a risk situation may be inconsistent with that of experts, most frequently cite differences in scientific or technical knowledge as the basis for disagreements (Vaughn & Seifert, 1992:123). "One salient difference between experts and the lay public is that the latter, when assessing

risks, do not conceal their moral commitments but put them into the argument, explicitly and prominently" (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982:73).

My findings support research cited earlier by Kasperson et al. (1998) in which it was argued that the technical concept of risk is conceptually inadequate. A parallel can be drawn between my findings in Roseau River and environmental justice movement appeals regarding public health. For the community members of Roseau River risk is framed in terms of threats to wellbeing and issues of independence. For many of the respondents, there were long-term effects, not only to physical health because of the mould, but also to mental health and spiritual health. It is a holistic philosophy. These threats, however, are not recognized by policy makers and therefore are not dealt with in any substantial way. This supports research by Naomi Adelson (2000) who concludes that well being is situated within a particular form of political discourse, one in which the politics of the land are mediated though the landscape of the body (113). For the people of Roseau River their desire for well being is a distinctive form of agency. They are articulating dissent through cultural assertion, as the Cree people do through 'being alive well' (Adelson, 2000:110). The Roseau River Ojibway are fighting for their way of life when they fight to maintain and nurture well being despite the devastating impact of the flood and of colonialism:

> Health and identity are linked as part and parcel of the ongoing struggle for voice and endurance in a world that has, over the years, muted and disenfranchised native people's existence. 'Being alive well' is a means by which adult Cree can articulate their distinct status in opposition to the persistent encroachment of whiteman upon themselves and their land (Adelson, 2000:110)

More technicians are recognizing the validity of this holistic paradigm. These epidemiologists, who resemble more the 'thought collective' of the general public, provide the challenge to the formalist method of science. These scientists and policy makers approach the issue with a more holistic paradigm. A researcher was once quoted as saying, referring to contamination of rivers, "listen to the fishermen" (Hull, 1999:17). This scientist was making the point that those who are close to an environment often know when something is amiss. The elders know when something is amiss. "We never used to have asthma," told one elder. The only recourse the disadvantaged people [non-scientists and the non-policymakers] have is grass roots organizing. The people of Roseau River rely upon their Chief and Council to make their concerns known but this is not always the case because of the nature of Band politics in Canada. Bands are at the fiduciary mercy of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The people of Roseau frame risk very differently than the policy makers at DIAND.

My findings support Dake's (1992) research that risk perception is "socially constructed and culturally biased in the sense that individuals respond to and reshape the prevailing opinion in their own social circles" (Dake, 1992:32). The political negotiation of risk "is a process involving two distinctive and exclusive world views" (Dake, 1992:26). Given the belief system and history of the Roseau River people, one could say they operate from a 'holistic paradigm' while policy-makers operate from a 'technical paradigm'. Acceptable risk is a matter of judgement and nowadays, judgement differs. The people of Roseau River refuse to accept the technical assessment of risk that resulted in evacuation

en masse. In the future said many respondents; they will not listen to the government for they do not trust them. Here is a key finding. The technical paradigm is conceptually inadequate because it does not take into account culture. "Between private, subjective perception and public, physical science there lies culture, a middle area of shared beliefs and values. The present division of the subject that ignores culture is arbitrary and self defeating" (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982:194). Roseau River residents do not trust government policy makers because they do not acknowledge cultural difference.

Culture, shared experience, belief and meanings, shape how the people of Roseau River view risk and how they filter risk communication. My findings support previous research by Lichtenberg & Maclean (1991) who determined that a layer of empirical complexity often hinders effective risk communication; namely, risk communication aims to reach not a single audience but a variety of audiences with different interests, values and levels of intelligence, education and understanding. Furthermore, these audiences will frame the information presented to them differently. For instance, the residents of Roseau River were more likely to receive information from friends and relatives than any other source during the flood of '97. The Flood Operation Centre and local television coverage followed closely as most likely sources of information. Residents then rely on community sources rather than outside sources. Community members rely on Chief and Council and other community members for safety and protection.

This can be traced back to traditional social organization. Throughout much of Canada historically, the Native peoples lived primarily by hunting small and large game and by gathering plant foods, berries, lichens, nuts and other seasonally available land foods. Peoples such as the Cree, the Ojibway (Anishinabe), the Chipewyan, and the Inuit covered large territorial ranges on foot, hunting and fishing on a seasonal basis at known locales. "The primary social unit, the 'band', was relatively small, often consisting of only fifty to one hundred people" (Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995: 9). Today, the people of Roseau River continue to be a small 'band' living together in a community. They turn to each other in times of crisis. This supports previous cited research by Hallman & Wandersman (1992), which found people turn to others to cope with the stress of disaster. Successful risk communication must involve community level people and community outreach. Door to door visits and telephone calls from neighbours are most efficient.

Communication that originates with policy makers is framed with caution and mistrust. Roseau River residents tended to view decisions by government as a continuing process of subjugation and colonialism. Decisions have rarely been made in their best interest historically. This is a collective experience of Native peoples in Canada and it supports research by Shkilnyk (1975) in Grassy Narrows. All of the changes in the political and social order of Native peoples are the products of a public policy whose main thrust has always been, and continues to be, the assimilation of Indian people. Without the relocation of Indian people to Reserves changes might have come more slowly and without the devastating

impact on the "spirit of the community" (Shkilnyk, 1975: 107). The eclipse of self-government is an enduring tragedy for the Native peoples of Canada and for the people of Roseau River. Present day relations with government and policy-makers are characterized by massive federal government intervention in band affairs, as witnessed during the flood of '97 in Roseau River. The band is in deficit and under third party management as a result of Indian policy, say many community members.

My findings also support Jasonoff (1999) who argued that assessment of risk is a social and political exercise. Floodwaters are not a great risk to the residents of Roseau River. What is a greater risk is the *threat to dignity and self-determination* experienced during forced evacuation. The technical assessment of risk measures direct harms, i.e. injuries, disease and property damage. However, Roseau River residents placed more emphasis on harms at a macro level. Although respondents spoke of material losses it was the emotional losses and the discriminatory treatment that disturbed them most. This was evident in the personal interviews. Although my data was obtained several years after the flood most people had no difficulty recalling that time in their lives. Memories were fresh because the after effects linger in daily community life. Asthma, social pathology, poverty, although present prior to the flood of '97, seemed to be exacerbated by this event. This is the social reality of Roseau River that informs their social behaviour.

MY DATA THAT FURTHER DEVELOPS SECONDARY SOURCE MATERIAL

This research furthers existing data on the social construction of risk. A sociocultural perspective on risk emphasizes the very aspects that "cognitive science and other technico-scientific approaches have been criticized for neglecting" (Lupton, 1999:29). These are the social and cultural contexts in which risk is understood and negotiated. My research findings are consistent with theories of the social constructivist perspective. From this perspective, all knowledge about risk is bound to the sociocultural contexts in which this knowledge is generated, whether in relation to scientists' and other experts' knowledge or lay people's knowledges. Roseau River residents framed risks associated with flooding quite different from that of government officials and the media. They assign meaning to their world through their own powerful cultural lens. The dichotomy of opinion between this community and the policy makers illustrates how risk is always socially constructed.

Scientific knowledge, or any other knowledge, is never value-free but rather is always the product of a way of seeing. For instance the residents of Roseau River would argue that policymakers have motives beyond floodplain management. Their motives are of a more insidious nature, social control and colonialism. "A risk, therefore, is not a static, objective phenomenon, but is constantly constructed and negotiated as part of the network of social interaction and the formation of meaning" (Lupton, 1999:29). Expert opinion then is not value free or neutral, as is portrayed in technico-scientific literature. Rather it is

regarded as being "equally constructed through implicit social and cultural processes as are lay people's judgements" (Lupton, 1999:29).

The people of Roseau River speak of injustice during the flood of '97. Their pleas for consideration have been largely ignored in their opinion. Nothing has been done to alleviate the mould situation for instance. Their health has been jeopardized but their plight has been ignored, drawing little sympathy from policy makers or even surrounding communities, and consequently, there has been no political action. There have been repeated calls to involve laypersons in policy-making decisions surrounding risk. Involving Roseau River community representatives in the decision-making process during future floods would directly correlate with a sense of self-determination in ensuring the needs of the people of this community are being met.

My findings also further the discussions of Sorenson & Meletti (1991) who examined risk communication as related to emergencies and disasters. They concluded that the information channel used for the dissemination of public warnings has a clear effect on enhancing the receipt of a warning. They found that the mass media are typically the most effective and the broadcast media of television and radio have been the primary source of hearing warnings among all types. They also found that *community outreach* is an effective method of risk communication, particularly for reaching a target population. Community meetings, lectures at civic meetings, door-to-door canvassing, information centres, displays in public buildings and hot-lines are included in this method of risk communication. One of the main advantages is the ability to personalize and

target the information. It also allows two-way communications, which is important in establishing the credibility of the communication process. Other factors found to enhance hearing warnings are frequent interaction across a kinship system and the maintenance of close relationships with relatives. My data supports these findings.

Risk communication though extends beyond communication during emergencies. For the people of Roseau River risk communication is really about being heard. While weather forecasts and flood predictions provide measurements of risk at a technical level, this data can tell nothing of what Kaufert & O'Neil (1993: 43) refer to as the "construction and manipulation of risk as political and moral construct." For insight into this dimension of risk, policy makers must listen to what the people have to say. My findings also support a similar conclusion put forward by Buckland and Rahman (1999) regarding Roseau River and two other communities studied. These researchers argued "Community effectiveness in disaster management would be greatly enhanced by a relationship with government agencies that is based on equal partnership, mutual respect and open two-way communication" (Buckland & Rahman, 1999: 189). Along similar lines, my research support findings by Rasid, Haider & Hunt (2000) who concluded that a probable explanation of the "pervasive resentment against mandatory evacuation of flood plain communities, was that a 'command-control' or 'top-down' approach is inconsistent with the democratic tradition of the Canadian society" (Rasid, Haider & Hunt, 2000: 384). Mandatory evacuation "...is also inconsistent with the emerging paradigm of sustainable floodplain

management, which calls for empowerment of stakeholders (mainly floodplain residents) in decision-making process for flood alleviation (Simonovic as quoted in Rasid, Haider & Hunt, 2000: 384).

My research furthers discussions by Kaufert & O'Neil (1993) when they concluded that traditionally the Inuit people survived in a harsh and dangerous world by their own competence and self-reliance, just as Steve and Agnus of Roseau River described. Competence was linked with the possession of knowledge. To be without knowledge is to be at risk; to be dependent on others is to be at risk" (Kaufert & O'Neil, 1993: 49). Inuit women opposed evacuation for childbirth because medical control over childbirth is an expression of power. It is another attempt by government to create dependence. As such, opposition to evacuation for childbirth becomes a political act, a gesture of rebellion. Such will be the case in Roseau River during the next flood said many residents. They will not leave home. Refusing to evacuate will be a political act, a gesture of rebellion against colonial forces. To leave is to risk intensification of dependence upon a colonial government.

Finally my research furthers discussion by Erickson (1976) regarding the *loss of communality* as a result of both the flood, and flood relief programs which dispersed Buffalo Creek residents. Of particular significance to this study of Roseau River are the concepts, as developed by Erickson (1976), of *individual trauma* and *collective trauma*. These are extremely useful and appropriate conceptual tools for a study on community disaster. The Roseau River residents were dispersed among strangers during the flood of '97. People became

homeless; losing not only their physical place but also a sense of home that had previously defined their lives. My data also furthers the similar discussion by Shkilnyk (1975) about the destruction of community at Grassy Narrows. Disasters have the capacity to inflict at least two kinds of damage. One is the physical damage, injuries and property damage for instance. The second damage is not so obvious. As was well illustrated in Grassy Narrows, "disasters sometimes have the potential for destroying the sense of community that holds people together, for killing the spirit of neighbourliness and kinship that is so important a part of their world" (Shkilnyk, 1975: xvi foreword). This is collective trauma. Roseau River experienced collective trauma as demonstrated by respondents who spoke about the negative impact the flood had on social relations. People cared for each other during the flood but it went back to the same old sense of individuality after the crisis was over. It was even worse than before some said, because of the drinking.

3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study the following are some recommendations that might be helpful to address the concerns raised by the residents of Roseau River in the development of future floodplain management policy.

- At every stage those who develop floodplain management policy must make every effort to consult the people of Roseau River. They must be fully involved in the process and dictate its terms. Consultation must be real, not pretend, if a successful policy is to be developed.

- Policy makers must open effective two-way communication between themselves and the leaders of Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation. Effective communication must incorporate the Roseau River *language of risk.* The flood is not a risk. In their traditional way of life they survived in harsh circumstances, the elders told. They survived by knowing the land and being independent. Today, being dependent is to be at risk.
- Mainstream media in Manitoba and across the country must improve the coverage of Roseau River during future crises. Few minorities have experienced as much media ambivalence as Aboriginal peoples and the case of Roseau River during the flood of '97 is further evidence of this fact. Although there are formidable barriers to overcome before a truly inclusive and multicultural mainstream media in Canada can be established, attempts must be made in the future to improve the situation.
- Negotiations between Roseau River and the Department of Indian Affairs must begin. The debt incurred during the flood of '97 has severely undermined the financial well-being of Roseau River. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs should explore options for this community, which is struggling to deal with this situation. The people of Roseau River wish to break their dependence on government for the satisfaction of basic needs.
- The mould has not gone away. The government should undertake a serious medical study of the Roseau River community. The severity of

the situation seems to have been downplayed and pleas from the community have been suppressed.

- Roseau River should coordinate the development of a comprehensive program to compensate Band members for the social and medical consequences of flooding. In addition, counsellors, including traditional healers, should be made available during and after crisis so the emotional damage can be assessed and mended.
- Essential to any recovery effort is the support of the people of Roseau River. Like many First Nations in Canada, they must be encouraged in their effort to rediscover past values and an appreciation of Ojibway culture must be supported if they are to recover a sense of self-worth and maintain a healthy community.

Flooding is a recurring natural hazard in southern Manitoba. Roseau River is located in the heart of the floodplain. Although there have been technological advances to cope with flooding and although the institutional and organizational set-up in the basin is well established and strong, effective and optimum decision making cannot be reached. Roseau River continues to fight for a seat at the table. Their experience of the flood of '97 was unique and an indication of the oppressive restrictions that face many First Nations.

Having a seat at the table is at least a first step in restoring a sense of power to Roseau River as a community, with regards to floodplain management. The problem is that while unmet needs are experienced at the most local and personal levels, the resources needed to address them are far removed from local control.

Efforts to change this on the part of policymakers include real consultation and two-way communication with Roseau River.

3.2 CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research contributes to the field of sociology and expands on existing data on the social construction of risk and risk communication by detailing specific factors, which affected the framing of risk among the residents of Roseau River. Many of the residents experienced stress during and after the flood of '97 due to their specific circumstances as a First Nation community. Similar to other studies, this research confirms that risk must be understood in its sociocultural context. For example, risk for these residents is not about floodwaters, although this is viewed as a hazard. Risk is about *dependence* in the *risk dialogue* of the Roseau River residents. It is hoped that this research may assist the residents of Roseau River in their plight to heal from the devastation caused by the flood of the century. It is also hoped that this research may assist those policymakers who are responsible for floodplain management and risk communication. The information may provide them with an understanding of how culture shapes the 'thought collective' of the Anishinabe people and therefore determines their perception of risk and their response to various methods of risk communication. This study may be of interest to policymakers at the federal level in particular given their jurisdiction over matters pertaining to Aboriginal peoples. This study may also be of interest to other First Nation communities who struggle to be heard in matters concerning their well being. Overall this research is available to all

scholars, technicians, and lay people for the purpose of educating and policy implications.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Roseau River is not the only First Nation community to deal with risk issues. Whether it is natural hazards like flooding or technological hazards like the mercury poisoning at Grassy Narrows, Aboriginal people continually struggle for protection from the imminent dangers they face. For First Nations communities, the impact of colonialism and the right to self-determination continues to be a rigorous political and public debate. The social impact though is unmistakable and devastating. For the people of Roseau River dependence on the government is a human tragedy. My research highlights the need for future research to examine the contexts in which First Nations people negotiate risk. For example, there is the risk of suicide in Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory in Ontario, which has the highest suicide rates in the world. These people refer to the suicide rate among their youth as *a social crisis of epidemic proportions*. How do these people conceptualize risk? To explore the context within which risk is perceived, future research might include case studies of First Nations grappling with diverse issues. This may provide us with suggestions for minimizing risk and improving risk communication for Aboriginal peoples.

References

Adelson, N. (2000). 'Being Alive Well': Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Anderson, K. (2000). A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood. Toronto: Sumach Press.

Berg, B. L. (2001). Qualitative Research Methods For the Social Sciences. Long Beach: California State University Press.

Buckland, J. & Rahman, M. (1999). Community-based Disaster Management during the 1997 Red River Flood in Canada. Disasters, 23, (2), 174-191.

Chess, C. Salomone, K.L. & Hance, B.J. (1995). Improving Risk Communication In Government: Research Priorities. Risk Analysis Vol 15. (2), 127-135.

Dake, K. (1992). Myths of Nature: Culture and the Social Construction of Risk. Journal of Social Issues, 48, 21-37.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (1998). The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Doderlein, J.M. (1983). Understanding Risk Management. Risk Analysis,3, 17-21.

Douglas, M. & Wildavsky, A. (1982). Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dynes, R..R. (1993). Disaster Reduction: The Importance of Adequate Assumptions About Social Organization." Sociological Spectrum13, 175-

192.

Erickson, K. T. (1976). Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Fleras, A. & Kunz, J.L. (2001). Media and Minorities: Representing Diversity in a Multicultural Canada. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing Inc.

Ginew School. (2001). Community History. [On-line]. Available: http://www.ginewschool.com/chistory.html

Green, C.H., Tunstall, S.M. & Fordham, M.H. (1991). The Risks from Flooding: Which Risks and Whose Perception? Disasters, 15, (3), 227-236.

Halfmann, J. (1999). Community and Life-Chances: Risk Movements in the United States and Germany. Environmental Values, 8, 177-195.

Hallman, W.K. & Wandersman, A. (1992). Attribution of Responsibility and Individual and Collective Coping with Environmental Threats. Journal of Social Issues, 48, 101-115.

Hannigan, J.A. (1995). Environmental Sociology: A Social Constructionist Perspective. New York: Routledge.

Hinch, T. & Butler (Eds.). (1996). Tourism and Indigenous Peoples. Toronto: International Thomson Business Press.

Hull, C. L. (1999). When Something is to be Done: Proof of Environmental Harm And the Philosophical Tradition. Environmental Values, 8, 3-21.

Jasanoff, S. (1999). The Songliness of Risk. Environmental Values, 8. 135-152.

Kasperson, R.E., Renn, O., Slovic, P., Brown, H.S., Emel, J., Goble, R.,

Kasperson, J.X., & Ratick, S. (1988). The Social Amplification of Risk: A Conceptual Framework. Risk Analysis, 8, 177-87.

Kaufert, P.A. & O'Neil, J. (1993). Analysis of a Dialogue on Risks in Childbirth. In Knowledge, Power & Practice. (S. Lindenbaum & M. Lock, Eds.) University of California Press.

Lichtenberg, J. and Maclean, D.. (1991). The role of the media in risk communication. In Communicating Risks to the Public: International Perspectives. (R.E. Kasperson and P.J.M. Stallen, Eds.) Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 157-173.

Lifton, R.J. and Olson, E. (1976). The Human Meaning of Total Disaster: The Buffalo Creek Experience. Psychiatry, 39, 1-17.

Lupton, D. (1999). Risk. New York: Routledge.

Manitoba Industry, Trade & Mines. (2001). Paleofloods in the Red River Basin. [On-line] Available: http://www.gov.mb.ca/em/geoscience/pflood/pflood.html

Margolis, H. (1996). Dealing With Risk: Why the Public and the Experts Disagree on Environmental Issues. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Palm, R. & Hodgson, M. (1992). "Earthquake Insurance: Mandated Disclosure and Homeowner Response in California." Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 82, (2), 207-222.

Phifer, J. F. and Norris, F. H. (1989). Psychological Symptoms in Older Adult Following Natural Disaster: Nature, Timing, Duration, and Course. *Journal of Gerontology*, 44 (6), S207-217.

Quarantelli, E.L. & Dynes, R.R. (1977). Response to Social Crisis and Disaster. Ann. Rev. Sociol. 3, 23-49.

Quarantelli, E.L. (1997). Ten Criteria for Evaluating the Management of Community Disasters. Disasters, 21 (1), 39-56.

Rasid, H. Haider, W. & Hunt, L. (2000). Post-flood assessment of emergency Emergency evacuation policies in the Red River basin, Southern Manitoba. The Canadian Geographer 44, no 4, 369-386.

Roseau River First Nation. (2001). Roseau River/Roseau River Anishinabe First Nations. [On- line]. Available: http://www.abinfohwy.ca/Roseau/overview.htm

Rossman, G.B. & Rallis, S.F. (1998). Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Shkilnyk, A.M. (1975). A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibway Community. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sinclair, J.A. (2001). Flood Research Partnership (FRP): Promoting Stakeholders' Participation in Sustainable Flood plain Management in the Red River Basin. Unpublished research proposal, University of Manitoba.

Smart, S.B., & Coyle, M. (1997). Aboriginal Issues Today: A Legal and Business Guide. Vancouver: Self-Counsel Press.

Smith, L. T. (1999). Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. New York: Zed Books Limited.

Sorensen, J. and Mileti, D. (1991). Risk communication in emergencies.

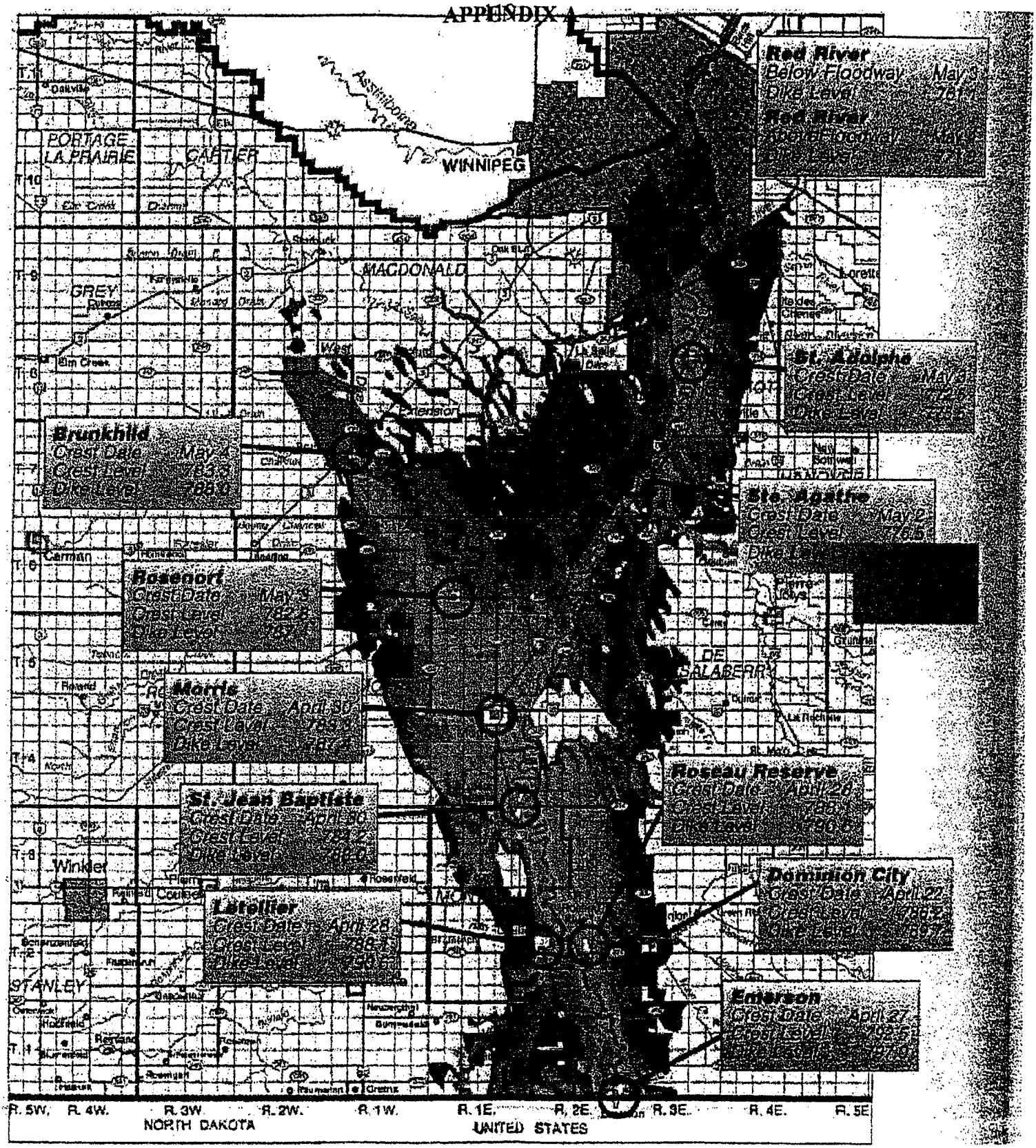
Communicating Risks to the Public: International Perspectives. Ed. R. E. Kasperson. & P.J.M. Stallen. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Pps. 367-392.

The Red River Valley Echo (1997). A Flood of Images: A Pictorial Journey through the Flood-Ravaged Red River Valley, 1997. Altona, MB: Friesens Corporation.

Vaughn, E., & Seifert, M. (1992). Variability in the Framing of Risk Issues. Journal of Social Issues, 48 (4) 119-135.

Winnipeg Free Press (1997). A Red Sea Rising: The Flood of the Century. Winnipeg, MB: Winnipeg Free Press.

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX C

Melanie Goodchild, Master's Degree Candidate
Department of Sociology, Lakehead University

T

Dear Participant:

I am conducting a study of the flood experiences of members of your community. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no possible risk posed to you as a subject.

My project is called a CASE STUDY OF RISK COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE ROSEAU RIVER ANISHINABE FIRST NATION. I am an Anishinabe from Ontario and I am interested in learning about how people in this community coped with the flood of 1997, particularly in comparison with other communities in the area.

In order to gain insight into your personal experiences of the flood, I am requesting that you complete a confidential survey and answer a couple of questions regarding this event. The intent of this research is to investigate the relationship between culture and flood experience.

All information you provide will remain confidential and securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. However, the findings of this project will be made available to you at your request upon the completion of the project. I will be returning to Roseau River after completion of my thesis to share my results in an open session in your community.

For further information please do not hesitate to contact me via the Sociology Department at the above listed telephone number. You may also contact my academic supervisor for this project, Dr. Thomas Dunk, at

Meegwetch,

Melanie Goodchild