Manitoba Hydro

Radisson to Henday (R44H) Transmission Project

Technical Review

Manitoba Métis Federation

December 18, 2024

Contents

1.0 Introduction

Manitoba Hydro (the Proponent) submitted its Environmental Assessment Report to the Province of Manitoba for the Radisson to Henday (R44H) Transmission Project in January 2024. This proposed transmission project, located in northeastern Manitoba, falls within the Thompson Region of the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. The Project crosses 24 watercourses, including larger waterbodies such as the Nelson River (Figure 1).

The Red River Métis maintain substantial historic and ongoing Métis Land Use, Occupancy, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge in this region. This includes hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and cultural land occupancy within 20 km of the Project (Figure 4). Considering the historic and contemporary Red River Métis presence in the area, project planning, approval, and all other associated activities must be analyzed for their impacts on the Rights, interests, and claims of the Red River Métis.

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) conducted a review of Manitoba Hydro's proposed Radisson to Henday Transmission Project Environmental Assessment Report. This review was undertaken to meet the following objectives:

- Identify environmental and/or technical issues with the Environmental Assessment Report and indicate where these issues have the potential to negatively impact the Rights, claims, and interests of the Red River Métis, as outlined in Section 3.0 of this report.

- Identify the areas of the proposed project that will require meaningful and ongoing communication between Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Métis Federation.

- Propose mitigations, accommodations, and/or licencing conditions to protect the rights, claims, and interests of the Red River Métis.

The MMF hosted a community engagement session on December 7, 2024, with Red River Métis Citizens. The MMF presented an overview of the Manitoba Hydro R44H Transmission Line Project and explained the technical review methods used to identify key concerns and recommendations. The key concerns and recommendations for the Project relate to fish and fish habitat, terrestrial ecology and the physical environment, heritage resources and socioeconomics. Additionally, the MMF asked Citizens about their land use and commercial harvesting in the area. Based on the information provided, Red River Métis Citizens provided feedback and expressed concerns about the Project. Citizen feedback is summarized in Section 3.2, What We Heard: Red River Métis Citizen Engagement.

In addition to the What We Heard section, the MMF has provided an overview of Red River Métis knowledge, land use and occupancy within a 20km buffer of the project development area (PDA) in Section 3.1. We also identified concerns, comments and recommendations related to aquatic impacts in Section 4.1, terrestrial impacts in Section 4.2, harvesting and important sites impacts in Section 4.3, and

socio-economic impacts in Section 4.4. Appendix 1 provides tables with specific comments and related recommendations. The MMF also completed a Red River Métis Rights Impact Assessment, which can be found in Section 5. Appendix 1 provides a table with specific comments and related recommendations.

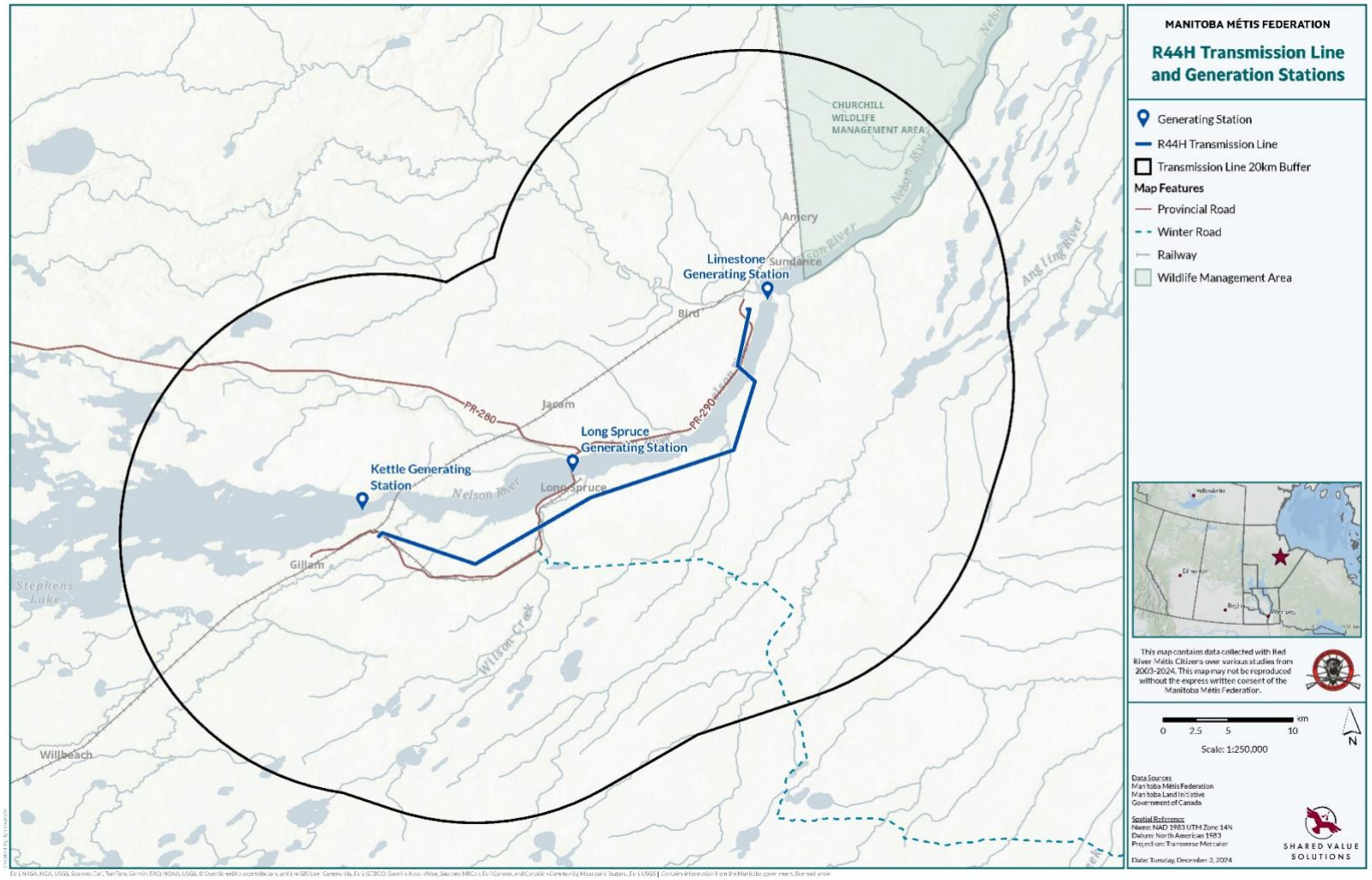

Figure 1. Map of project assessment area (20km buffer), watercourses, railway and main roads.

1.1. Project Description

The Radisson to Henday Transmission Project in Manitoba is a 230kV transmission line developed by Manitoba Hydro to improve electricity transmission in the northern part of the province. The line will span approximately 42 kilometres, connecting the Radisson and Henday converter stations, along the Nelson River near Gillam, Manitoba. This project will follow an existing right-of-way corridor. This project aims to enhance the capacity of the northern collector system, which is critical for transferring power from northern generating stations to the high-voltage direct current (HVDC) system. The project will also address aging infrastructure and aims to improve reliability and reduce the risks associated with power transmission.

Project activities include clearing land, installing foundations, assembling towers, stringing conductors, and integrating electrical components at the converter stations. The 42km right of way requires an additional clearing of 60m in width. Most of the existing land cover is comprised of natural forest (36%) and wetland habitat (45%) (Figure 2). The proposed timeline for completion is for summer 2026, however, due to delays in final permitting, construction is likely to extend beyond this period.

1.2. Review Methodology

This document provides a review of concerns and recommendations related to the potential impacts on the rights and interests of the Red River Métis. There are three main components:

- Community concerns and feedback from a community consultation session
- A technical review of Manitoba Hydro's Environmental Assessment Report
- An assessment of potential Project impacts on Red River Métis Rights and interests, including the identification of mitigations or accommodations to limit impacts

Manitoba Hydro's Environmental Assessment Report outlines their assessment of potential effects on the environment and socioeconomics in the regions but misses a significant list of considerations for the land, waters, and land users, specifically the Red River Métis. The full extent of the MMF's technical concerns and their potential impacts on the Rights, interests, and claims of the Red River Métis within our National Homeland are discussed in this report. The Red River Métis expect Manitoba to consider and provide written responses regarding the concerns and recommendations outlined in this report while reviewing the Radisson to Henday (R44H) Transmission Project.

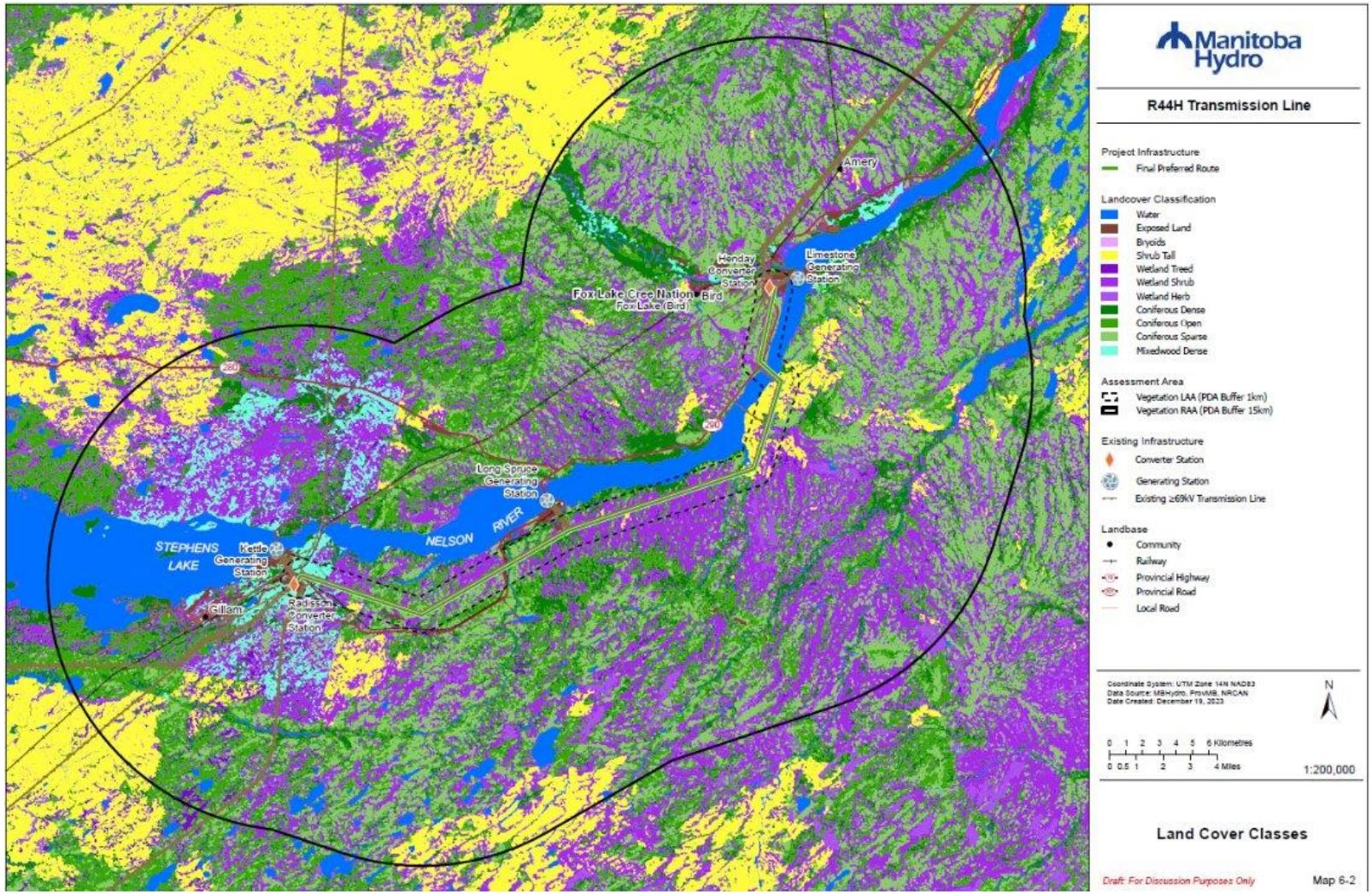

Figure 2: Landcover distribution within a 15km buffer of the proposed Transmission line (Source: Manitoba Hydro)

2.0 Background—The Red River Métis and the MMF

2.1. The Red River Métis

The Red River Métis is an Indigenous collectivity and Aboriginal People within the meaning of section 35 of *the Constitution Act, 1982*. Based on our emergence as a distinct Indigenous People in the Northwest prior to effective control by Canada and the creation of the province of Manitoba, the Red River Métis holds rights, interests, and claims throughout and beyond the Province of Manitoba.

Since 1982, Métis rights have been recognized and affirmed by section 35 and protected by section 25 of the *Constitution Act, 1982.* These rights were further confirmed and explained by the Supreme Court of Canada ("SCC") in *R.* v. *Powley,* 2003 SCC 43. Manitoba Courts also have recognized Red River Métis rights in *R. v. Goodon,* 2008 MBPC 59. These decisions have affirmed that the Métis hold existing Aboriginal rights throughout their traditional territories. Our Citizens and harvesters rely on and use the lands, waters, and resources of our traditional territory throughout the Province of Manitoba and elsewhere within the historic Northwest, to exercise their constitutionally protected rights and to maintain their distinct Red River Métis customs, traditions, and culture.

2.2. Red River Métis' Rights, Claims, and Interests

Based on its emergence as a distinct Indigenous People in the Northwest prior to effective control by Canada and the creation of the province of Manitoba, the Red River Métis holds rights, claims, and interests throughout and beyond the Province of Manitoba consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to self-determination.

The MMF is mandated to promote, protect, and advance the collectively held Aboriginal rights of the Red River Métis. Through this mandate, the MMF engages with governments, industry, and others about potential impacts of projects and activities on our community. In 2007, the MMF Annual General Assembly adopted Resolution No. 8, which provides the framework for engagement, consultation, and accommodation with the Red River Métis. Designed by Métis, for Métis, Resolution No. 8 sets out the process that is to be followed by governments, industry, and other proponents when developing plans or projects that have the potential to impact the section 35 rights, claims, and interests of the Red River Métis. It was unanimously passed by MMF Citizens and mandates a "single-window" approach to consultation and engagement with the Red River Métis through the MMF Home Office.[1]

In engaging the MMF, on behalf of the Red River Métis, the Resolution No. 8 Framework calls for the implementation of five phases:

Phase I: Notice and Response;

Phase II: Research and Capacity;

Phase III: Engagement and Consultation;

Phase IV: Partnership and Accommodation; and

Phase V: Implementation.

The application of the Canadian Energy Regulator (CER) Rules of Practice and Procedure has the potential to impact Red River Métis rights, claims, and interests and as such, engagement and consultation with the MMF, through the process set out above, must be followed. Federally regulated, energy projects are located within the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. The "postage stamp province" of Manitoba was the birthplace of the Red River Métis. We currently have an outstanding claim flowing from the Federal Crown's failure to diligently implement the land grant provision of 1.4 million acres of land promised to the Red River Métis as a condition for bringing Manitoba into Confederation and set out in section 31 of the *Manitoba Act, 1870* in accordance with the honour of the Crown.[2] Red River Métis section 35 rights are distinct from First Nations rights and must be respected.

The Manitoba Métis Federation is the National Government of the Red River Métis. Prior to the creation of Manitoba, the Red River Métis had always exercised its inherent right of self-determination to develop its own self-government structures and institutions centered around the Red River Settlement and throughout the Northwest. As described by Louis Riel in his 1885 memoirs, Métis self-government was well-established and functioning when Canada came to the Red River Métis in the late 1800s:

When the Government of Canada presented itself at our doors it found us at peace. It found that the Métis people of the North-West could not only live well without it . . . but that it had a government of its own, free, peaceful, well-functioning, contributing to the work of civilization in a way that the Company from England could never have done without thousands of soldiers. It was a government with an organized constitution whose junction was more legitimate and worthy of respect, because it was exercised over a country that belonged to it.

Métis self-government has evolved and changed over time to better meet the needs of the Red River Métis. Today, the MMF is the recognized, democratically elected, national self-government representative of the Red River Métis. On November 30, 2024 the Red River Métis and His Majesty the King signed the Red River Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Treaty. The Treaty recognizes the Manitoba Métis Federation as the government of the Red River Métis.

Since 1967, the MMF has been authorized by the Red River Métis through a democratic governance structure at the Local, Regional, and national levels. As part of this governance structure, the MMF maintains a Registry of Red River Métis Citizens.[3] By applying for Red River Métis Citizenship, individuals are confirming the MMF is their chosen and elected representative for the purposes clearly set out in its Constitution,[4] including as related to the collective rights, claims, and interests of the Red River Métis.[5]

The MMF Constitution confirms that the MMF has been created to promote the political, social, cultural, and economic rights and interests of the Red River Métis. The MMF is authorized to represent the Red River Métis' collective rights, interests, and claims. This authorization is grounded in the MMF's democratic processes that ensures the MMF is responsible and accountable to the Red River Métis.

The MMF governance structure includes a centralized MMF President, Cabinet, Regions, and Locals. There are seven (7) Regions and approximately 135 Locals throughout Manitoba (Figure 1). There are more than three thousand Citizens who live outside of Manitoba. All MMF Citizens are Members of a Local. Locals and Regions work together to authorize and support the MMF Cabinet, and the MMF's various departments and offices. Through elections held every four years, Citizens choose and elect the MMF Cabinet consisting of the MMF President, who is the leader and spokesperson for the MMF, a Vice-President of each Region, and two Regional Executive Officers from each Region. The MMF Cabinet also includes the spokeswoman from the Infinity Women Secretariat.

The MMF, as the duly authorized government of the Red River Métis, has been recognized by both the federal and provincial governments in agreements, policies, and legislation. For example, in 2002, *The Child and Family Services Authorities Act* recognized the MMF for the devolution of child and family services to MMF institutions. This Act establishes a series of Child and Family Services Authorities to administer and provide the delivery of services to various distinct Indigenous communities in Manitoba. It creates a Métis Child and Family Services Authority, the directors of which are appointed by the MMF.

In 2008, the courts in Manitoba further recognized that "[t]he Métis community today in Manitoba is a well organized and vibrant community. Evidence was presented that the governing body of Métis people in Manitoba, the Manitoba Métis Federation, has a membership of approximately 40,000, most of which reside in southwestern Manitoba."[6] In 2010, the Manitoba Government adopted a Manitoba Métis Policy, and stated that:

The Manitoba Metis Federation is a political representative of Métis people in Manitoba and represents in Manitoba the Métis who collectively refer to themselves as the Métis Nation.... Recognition of the Manitoba Métis Federation as the primary representative of the Métis people is an important part of formalizing relationships.[7]

In 2012, the *MMF-Manitoba Harvesting Agreement (2012)* negotiated between the MMF and the Manitoba Government recognized some of the collective section 35 harvesting rights of the Red River Métis and relied on the Citizenship processes of the MMF as proof of belonging to a rights-holding Aboriginal community:

For the purposes of these Points of Agreement, Manitoba will recognize as Métis Rights-Holders, individuals who are residents in Manitoba and who hold a valid MMF Harvesters Card, issued according to the MMF's Laws of the Hunt. [. . . and will] consult with the MMF prior to implementing any changes to the current regulatory regime that may infringe Métis Harvesting Rights.[8]

In 2013, the SCC recognized the "collective claim for declaratory relief for the purposes of reconciliation between the descendants of the Métis people of the Red River Valley and Canada." It went on to grant the MMF standing as the "body representing the collective Métis interest" in the *MMF Case.*[9] Additionally, in 2016, the *MMF-Canada Framework Agreement* stated:

the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that the claim of the Manitoba Métis Community was "not a series of claims for individual relief" but a "collective claim for declaratory relief for the purposes of reconciliation between the descendants of the Métis people of the Red River Valley and Canada" and went on to grant the MMF standing by concluding "[t]his collective claim merits allowing the body representing the collective Métis interest to come before the court. [and that] Canada is committed to working, on a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis, with the Métis Nation, through bilateral negotiations with the MMF."[10]

The MMF signed the *Manitoba Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement* (MMSGRIA) on July 6, 2021. This marked a major step forward in reconciliation between the Red River Métis and Canada. The MMSGRIA, among other things, immediately recognized the MMF as the National Government of the Red River Métis and sets out a path forward towards the completion of a modern Treaty. As noted above, that Treaty was signed on November 30, 2024.

Consistent with the direction of our Citizens, MMF removed the arbitrary provincial borders from our Constitution that separated Red River Métis who live outside of Manitoba from those within. Today, the MMF represents over 125,000 Citizens within Manitoba, and thousands more across our National Homeland, and around the world. Because of this the MMF has a regional, provincial, national, and international mandate.

Our modern Treaty was ratified by thousands of Red River Métis Citizens in June 2023 and builds upon the important work of the MMSGRIA. The signing of the Treaty with His Majesty the King, and passage of its implementation legislation will enable the Red River Métis, acting through its National Government the MMF, to renew its partnership with Canada.

3.0 Review Findings

3.1. Red River Métis Knowledge, Land Use and Occupancy

The MMF's data catalogue of Red River Métis knowledge, land use and occupancy (MKLOU) demonstrates that there is longstanding cultural land occupancy within the project development area (PDA), the local assessment area (LAA) and the regional assessment area (RAA) (Figure 4). Many Citizens hunt, trap, fish and gather for food, social, or ceremonial purposes. More specifically, the MKLOU data shows that Red River Métis Citizens occupy and use this area for:

- Camping, overnighting, and recreational purposes,
- Fishing including, but not limited to jackfish/northern pike, pickerel/walleye, brook trout and whitefish,
- Hunting birds and mammals including, but not limited to upland birds, geese, woodland caribou, barren land caribou, moose,
- Trapping and snaring rabbits,
- Gathering berries (various) and labrador tea.

Red River Métis knowledge of the area shows that there are mammal habitats, migration routes, wildlife corridors and species at risk (namely Woodland and Barren Land caribou) within a 20km buffer of the PDA. Lastly, the MKLOU data demonstrates that Citizens have noticed changes to the environment and, to fish and fish habitat within a 20km buffer of the PDA. These changes and concerns were also mentioned by Red River Métis Citizens in the Citizen Engagement Session (Section 3.2).

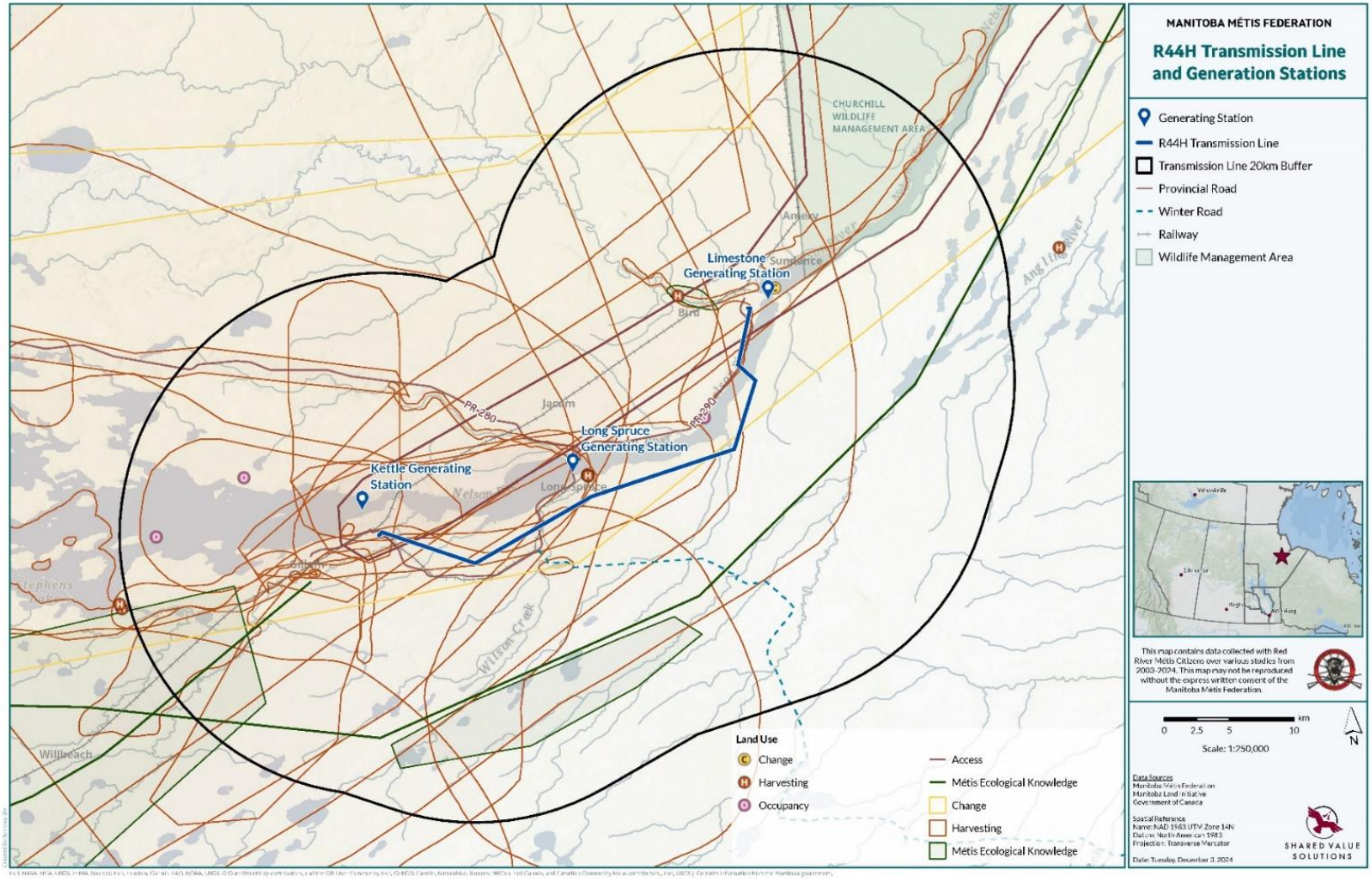

Figure 4: Red River Métis ecological knowledge and land use in the area surrounding the project

3.2. What We Heard: Red River Métis Citizen Engagement

The MMF hosted a Citizen engagement session with Red River Métis Citizens on December 7, in Thompson, MB. During this session, the MMF presented an overview of Manitoba Hydro's Radisson to Henday (R44H) Transmission Line Project, including key components and the project timeline. They also presented anticipated and potential impacts related to fish and fish habitat, forest and wetland habitat, and the physical environment, as well as possible mitigation and accommodation measures. Red River Métis Citizens provided feedback and expressed concerns about the Project based on the information provided during the Citizen engagement session.

Concerns and Comments

General concerns were expressed regarding Manitoba Hydro's history of engagement with the MMF and Red River Métis Citizens. It was mentioned that there have been many concerns repeatedly raised over the years without being adequately addressed by Manitoba Hydro. However, it was noted that the recent agreement signed between Manitoba Hydro and the MMF is expected to address these issues and presents an opportunity for meaningful and impactful change.

Citizens also voiced concerns about increased traffic on Highway 280 being a safety hazard for Red River Métis, especially during the winter months. One Citizen raised the potential impact of increased traffic and construction activities on their snowmobile trails.

The clearing of the remaining forest also sparked concerns amongst Citizens, particularly the anticipated increase in wind in the area. Trees and vegetation serve as natural barriers against wind, protecting wildlife, habitats, and other vegetation. Clearing the forest is expected to have negative effects on these ecological protections. Additionally, Citizens emphasized the need for ongoing monitoring of the tree and vegetation buffer zones between the transmission line right of way, shoreline, and roads, as previous Manitoba Hydro projects have failed to respect these buffer zones. Concerns were also raised about the maintenance of existing Hydro line right of ways, with reports of overgrown trees in some areas. Ensuring proper maintenance of the R44H right of way throughout the project's lifecycle will be crucial.

Another concern raised by Red River Métis Citizens is the potential decrease in water quality in the area due to Manitoba Hydro's activities. Citizens stressed the importance of monitoring water quality and conducting tests for mercury and other metals in the water throughout the project.

Lastly, Citizens raised concerns about the impacts of the R44H project on trappers and traplines. One Citizen mentioned that they recognize the need for power, but that trappers need to be adequately compensated for the loss of wildlife habitat and impacts on their trapping activities.

Proposed Accommodation Measures

Several accommodation measures were proposed to address and mitigate the impacts and concerns raised during the Citizen engagement session. First, it was suggested that distinctions-based economic and training opportunities be made available to Citizens that reflect their unique rights, claims, and interests. Additionally, ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the project area should be implemented to ensure minimal effects on the lands and waterways.

As noted earlier, specific compensation for trappers was also proposed as a highly valued consideration. Finally, it was recommended that the Proponent offset the loss of access to Crown land caused by the project by providing accommodation for the affected rights holders.

4.0 Technical Concerns and Recommendations

4.1. Aquatic Impacts

Impacts to the aquatic environment are presented in the Environmental Assessment Report prepared by Manitoba Hydro. The data collected by Manitoba Hydro to characterize baseline conditions of the affected aquatic ecosystems lacks important details and considerations for the protection of water, fish, and other aquatic life.

The Proponent planned their construction schedule to ensure no construction at watercourse crossings would happen during the summer season to limit project impacts on spawning fish. However, based on the background data of fish communities in the regional assessment area (RAA)[1], species that are critical to Red River Métis harvesters are known to spawn and have sensitive life stages in the affected watercourses in the spring (northern pike, walleye, longnose sucker, white sucker) and fall (lake whitefish) seasons as well. The background fish community data referenced in the Environmental Assessment Report is 12 years old or more at the time of this review. Fish communities could have changed in the past 12 years due to habitat pressures, higher water temperatures from developments and climate change. The implications of utilizing suchdated information are a potential for impacting species that were inventoried and or exacerbating effects on fish habitat with the new development without knowing the present-day diversity of the fish community and their habitat needs. Updated field data of fish habitat use in the areas

[1] Includes the PDA and LAA and consists of a 15 km buffer around the PDA. This area is where there is the potential for cumulative and wider-spread effects of the project. The total area of the RAA is 192,442 ha (Environmental Assessment Report, pp. 6-7).

around proposed watercourse crossings is essential for project construction scheduling that avoids impacts on fish and the aquatic environment throughout the life of the proposed Project.

The MMF was pleased to see watercourse crossings designated as sensitive areas in the Environmental Assessment Report to ensure there are more specific guidelines for vegetation removal (specifically trees that pose a threat to the transmission line referred to as “danger trees” by Manitoba Hydro) and the use of heavy equipment. These guidelines include protections from erosion and sedimentation and help to mitigate impacts to fish and fish habitat from:

- Change in water temperature
- Change in habitat structure and cover
- Change in nutrient concentrations
- Change in sediment concentrations
- Change in food supply
- Change in contaminant concentrations

These protections will support the MMF’s goals of maintaining a naturalized buffer on either side of all watercourse crossings. By maintaining a buffer, Manitoba Hydro can better preserve riparian habitat and reduce impacts to water quality from sediment mobilization or other releases from spills. However, some details require clarification. For instance, the Environmental Assessment Report proposes that the riparian zone around watercourses will not be touched by vegetation clearing (aside from danger trees) and an additional seven meters passed the ordinary high-water mark of watercourses which is referred to as the machine-free zone. What is not clear is how the Proponent proposes to remove danger trees from the Riparian area without disturbing, damaging, or destroying the surrounding vegetation and soil and without the use of heavy equipment. The MMF requests a commitment to prohibit the use of any heavy equipment use for clearing activities within these areas, and that Manitoba Hydro employ practices for downing and removing danger trees that avoid dragging the tree and scouring the soil and surrounding plant life. With these commitments, the MMF would be more confident with the Environmental Assessment Report’s proposed aquatic environmental protections. The MMF feels an approach that limits

impacts to environmentally or culturally sensitive features should be applied throughout the right of way, including for the following features within the project development area (PDA)[2]:

- Cultural sites
- Harvesting patches
- Wetlands

The MMF has detailed these concerns and additional issues related to other aspects of the fish and fish habitat in the comment table attached in Appendix 1.

4.2. Terrestrial Impacts

Impacts to terrestrial resources (e.g., vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat) are presented in the Environmental Assessment Report prepared by Manitoba Hydro. Based on this review, Manitoba Hydro's report has not met the MMF's standards as stewards of lands and waters within the National Homeland, and the commitments the MMF has made to protect the plants and animals that sustain and teach Red River Métis Citizens. The data collected by Manitoba Hydro to characterize baseline terrestrial resources and potential impacts of the Project lacks important detail to ensure potential adverse impacts are minimized. For example, the dates of vegetation surveys in support of the Environment Act Proposal were not provided. Different plant species maintain a variety of life histories and seasonality, because of this, the MMF is concerned that species at risk or of cultural concern [SAR/SOCC], and invasive/noxious species may have been inadvertently omitted based on the timing of these surveys. Further, there were not any follow-up or monitoring programs proposed to ensure that the mitigation measures for vegetation are successful.

Red River Métis Citizens are generally concerned with the increase in linear disturbance Manitoba Hydro has already caused in northeastern Manitoba. These disturbances have resulted in significant fragmentation of habitat for wildlife and vegetation (including SAR/SOCC, and traditional use species), increased access to harvesting traditional use species by non-Indigenous land users, and long-term changes in habitats, among other effects. The primary mitigation for the Project interactions with terrestrial resources is—notably—the routing process. From a Red River Métis perspective, all habitats (regardless of perceived quality or quantity) are important and contribute to our way of life. Manitoba Hydro justifies its assessment of "low" impacts to terrestrial resources based on the paralleling of existing

[2] The project footprint and anticipated area of physical disturbance during construction, operation, and decommissioning of the project. The PDA is described in detail in Chapter 2.0 (Project description) [of the Environmental Assessment Report] (Environmental Assessment Report, pp.6-7).

infrastructure (the shared transmission line ROW spans approximately 400-450m across) and the small/isolated number of natural habitats traversed by the final preferred route. Considering there are concerns about existing infrastructure, this does not reflect the MMF's perspective on impacts on terrestrial resources.

Baseline and Assessment Methodology

The timelines provided in the Environmental Assessment Report (pre-construction and construction for approximately 2 years, operation and maintenance for approximately 75 years, decommissioning for approximately 2 years) may not align with adequate timelines required for further baseline study, pre-construction surveys, additional permitting, or comprehensive rehabilitation. For example, reptiles and amphibians were characterized in the Project baseline using only a desktop review of available information but are assumed present at all wetland areas traversed by the Project. No targeted or species-specific surveys were completed for reptiles and amphibians that would trigger protection measures identified in the Construction Environmental Protection Plan [CEnvPP]). Select species of amphibians have extended breeding and/or larval periods which may not be captured by a single year of assessments in breeding wetlands. Most species of reptiles and amphibians are elusive, and many species will require various methods and/or significant effort to determine with certainty, if those species are present, and in need of further protection. The desktop review also noted amphibian SOCC (leopard frog) have the potential to occur in the Project Development Area. There are currently no follow-up or monitoring programs proposed to ensure mitigation or protection measures for reptiles and amphibians.

The methodology used by Manitoba Hydro did not ensure specific surveys for select species (e.g., reptiles/amphibians, woodpeckers, mammals) that have the potential to be impacted by the proposed Project, or that may have been inadvertently omitted due to the time of year/day surveys were completed. For example, the breeding bird studies had limited geographic coverage along portions of the preferred route during the first year (2022), and additional surveys were added (2023). It is unclear if all habitat types identified along the preferred route were sampled for breeding bird activity. Knowing this information will provide a better understanding of existing conditions for breeding birds along the preferred route.

Follow up Monitoring

Manitoba Hydro proposes follow-up monitoring to verify the accuracy of the Environmental Assessment Report, assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures/actions, and determine regulatory compliance. It is unacceptable that Manitoba Hydro has not identified a specific Environmental Protection Plan (EPP) for the operations and maintenance phases of the proposed Project. Having an EPP is important given that several terrestrial resources will be repeatedly (directly/indirectly) impacted throughout the defined Project operations/maintenance Project life (approximately 75 years), with cumulative and residual effects.. There are not any environmental monitoring programs developed for terrestrial resources due to the "understood effects to natural habitat" traversed by the Project. Manitoba Hydro states that there

is, “confidence in predictions based on monitoring results learned from recently completed projects in Manitoba”. As mitigation measures have been proposed for vegetation, wildlife, and wildlife habitat resources, the MMF expects Manitoba Hydro to conduct follow-up and monitoring actions to verify their assessment of impacts and effectiveness of mitigation measures. This information will ultimately be used to determine the appropriate rehabilitation measures for decommissioning and ensure that mitigation measures are effective and operating as intended. F. The project description identifies vegetation maintenance along the shared corridor during construction, in addition to modifications and upgrades to the Bipole I transmission line. The MMF feels that Manitoba Hydro has not accounted for all potential cumulative residual effects as described in the Environmental Assessment Report

Recommendations

The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro:

- Provide clarity and further information regarding planned pre-clearing surveys (e.g., timing, duration, frequency).
- Complete at least one year of pre-construction surveys (targeting species/groups that were not surveyed in support of the Proposal, such as mammals or amphibians), and wildlife sweeps immediately preceding construction by Qualified Professionals, for protected wildlife and features along the preferred route.
- Update cumulative effects assessments for terrestrial resources (vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat), including the significance determination and confidence levels for characterization of residual and cumulative effects that include those foreseeable projects or activities identified in the Project Description.
- Update climate data (and associated VC assessments using climate data) to include current climate normals for the period of 1991-2020.
- Update the CEnvPP – Reduced Risk Timing Windows and Buffers and Setbacks requirements to include all species (e.g., lynx) and sensitive timeframes/features for identified species (e.g., lek sites used by sharp-tailed grouse) assessed in the Proposal, and incorporate bird species (e.g., woodpeckers) that may breed outside of migratory breeding bird season.
- Provide notice, access, and opportunity to the MMF at appropriate times of year to exercise pre-construction cultural, harvesting, and gathering rights-based activities.
- Provide dates of vegetation assessments completed in 2022 and 2023.

- Confirm breeding bird studies were completed in all habitat types along the preferred route, clarify if locations surveyed in 2023 were the same sites as 2022, and identify which sites had no data retrieved for analysis and the reason why there is no data.
- Provide information on wetland classes for habitats assessed along the preferred route.
- Provide information on the extent of permafrost areas along the preferred ROW, and implications for the Project if rehabilitation measures cannot restore permafrost soils to pre-construction conditions.
- Incorporate the re-establishment of permafrost soils in the Rehabilitation and Invasive Species Management Plan.
- Provide a fulsome list of potential implications of anticipated projected delays in scheduling.
- Provide criteria or triggers for the assessment of amphibian breeding sites that require the identified protection and mitigation measures from the CEnvPP.
- Provide updated information regarding the assessment of connections to the existing deluge system at the Radisson converter station and clarify if relocation of the system is required.
- Provide further information regarding the timing of geotechnical testing required prior to construction.
- Provide information about the anticipated volumes of oils and gases need for Project equipment.
- Opportunity and capacity funding to review the Clearing Management Plan (once developed), future engagement regarding the location(s) of proposed mobile construction camps for the Project, collaborate and execute post-decommissioning follow-up investigations and monitoring efforts (e.g., to determine if mitigation measures and rehabilitation efforts are successful), and collaborate on the execution of the Biosecurity Management Plan.
- Update the inspection schedule during operations and maintenance activities to incorporate more frequent visits that ensure appropriate management actions and mitigation measures for terrestrial resources are effective and successful.
- Prepare a management plan or protection document for mammals in advance of construction.
- Prepare a monitoring plan for vegetation and wildlife VCs that consider:

- SOCC, SAR, and traditional use species that have the potential to occur at the Project.
- Measures to determine the effectiveness of mitigation and management measures.
- Adaptive management measures and triggers, or criteria that establish various actions.
- Ensure that the MMF is provided with a meaningful opportunity to engage in the development and implementation of this plan.

The MMF further requests Manitoba Hydro adopt a conservative approach to:

- Timing of air/ground patrols, and in general, the timing of helicopter-related activities, to avoid sensitive timeframes and active times of day (e.g., dawn/dusk) for birds/wildlife.
- Prioritize the use of mechanical or manual and biological control methods over the use of chemical herbicides/fertilizers.
- Cleared vegetation should be prioritized for rehabilitation activities (e.g., chipped/mulched), or donated to Red River Métis Citizens for use, over the proposed burning or disposal.
- Adopt a chance-find procedure for the operations/maintenance period to ensure incidentally encountered wildlife have adequate protections and mitigations in place.
- Adopt an annual monitoring program to assess permanent vegetation plot sites for changes in community and species diversity over time.
- Provide an additional qualitative evaluation for the potential effects to wetland vegetation/benefits if construction activities are expanded into fall or spring seasons.
- Provide an Environmental Protection Plan for the operations phase to manage or coordinate schedules and requirements for vegetation maintenance, planned inspections, monitoring or follow-up, rehabilitation efforts and adaptive management actions.
- Install bird diverters at identified ESSs, on parallel lines.
- Prioritize Red River Métis registered trappers for aquatic furbearer management required for the Project (e.g., beaver, muskrat).
- Offset the ongoing and residual/cumulative effects of Manitoba Hydro transmission projects by creating wildlife linkages/corridors across the shared ROW (400-450m across), in areas of frequent use by mammals, specifically caribou (SAR, traditional use species).

- Mammal pre-construction surveys should be completed to identify high use crossing locations for enhancement and connectivity opportunities.

- Linkages should be designed to provide security cover for safe crossing, forage/mast species compatible with the requirements of the ROW for operations, and areas that provide relief from deep snow. The linkages should also be classified as Environmentally Sensitive Sites (ESSs) in the Construction Environmental Protection Plan (CEnvPP) and throughout the duration of the Project.

- Vegetation may be locally sourced through pre-construction seed collections (e.g., for use in seeding/propagation), cuttings, or transplanting.

- Objectives align with Rehabilitation and Invasive Species Management Plan to enhance aesthetics, wildlife habitat and biodiversity along the right of way, while reducing the potential for invasive species establishment and may contribute information to the recovery strategy for the species or offer increased harvesting opportunities for Indigenous land users in the RAA.

- For linkages/wildlife corridors targeting caribou, the MMF can support Manitoba Hydro in the monitoring and rehabilitation efforts by expanding Project Caribou.

4.3. Harvesting and Important Sites

Many locations throughout the regional assessment area (RAA) including much of the project development area (PDA), hold significant cultural and practical importance for Red River Métis Citizens. These areas are actively used to support traditional harvesting practices, which are central to the Red River Métis way of life. The act of harvesting – including hunting, trapping, fishing, and the gathering of medicines, edible plants, and other forest products – represents the exercise of Aboriginal Rights held by Red River Métis. In addition to the act of harvesting, the specific locations that enable these activities are equally important, as they reflect and sustain these traditional practices.

Harvesting

Feedback from Red River Métis Citizens highlighted concerns about impacts on wildlife from noise disruptions, herbicide use, and lost access to harvesting areas, with specific species like caribou and moose being of chief concern. Manitoba Hydro has identified mitigation measures including limiting vegetation clearing, providing notifications, using bird diverters, and minimizing helicopter use during non-frozen conditions. Residual effects on harvested resources, access, and experiences are characterized as adverse but not significant, as they are classified as moderate to low in magnitude though long-term duration. Cumulative effects consider past, present, and future projects, with the Kivalliq Hydro-Fibre Link potentially interacting with the project, leading to moderate to low cumulative impacts. Manitoba Hydro

proposes monitoring and follow-up to involve continued engagement, implementing an environmental protection program, and considering climate change impacts on harvested resources and harvesting practices.

Manitoba Hydro notes that the increased access by new harvesters and recreationists is anticipated to be small given that the project is proposed in an existing developed right of way, however, Manitoba Hydro does not consider the temporary increase in harvest pressure associated with the increased presence of workers to the area. The MMF requests that workers from outside of the Gillam area or who do not hold Section 35 rights be restricted from harvesting (hunting, fishing, gathering) within the RAA. This will curb increased harvest pressure from workers on the project during construction.

As noted in the submission provided by the Manitoba Métis Federation (2017), some Red River Métis Citizens prefer to harvest "where it is quiet...where there is no development"[3]. While this issue is inherent to the nature of the project, the MMF is concerned regarding both the additive effects of the R44H project as well as overall the immense amount of development as it relates to hydropower development along the Nelson River, and how matters of aesthetic or experience, and other non-tangible impacts to way of life for Red River Métis Citizens is being contemplated within the scope of this assessment. Red River Métis Citizens rely on access to undisturbed public lands/waters to harvest, conduct other traditional practices, and maintain the Red River Métis way of life. As the Red River Métis in other parts of the National Homeland have seen, development and erosion of natural elements of these lands and waters does not happen all at once, rather it is the result of continued and progressive development that causes cumulative and interactive effects. The Red River Métis in being forced to respond to these effects have progressively had to adjust behaviours, timing, locations, and activities based on lands/waters which are available for activities.

Pulling from the experience felt in other parts of the National Homeland, when considering the implications of R44H, the MMF views this not simply as another transmission line, but rather yet the further progressive erosion of areas of pristine and natural environment, which results in the need to further adapt, adjust, or avoid in order for Red River Métis Citizens to maintain their way of life. In looking at the potential aesthetic or experiential effects of this project, the quote presented by Manitoba Hydro though correct where some may prefer to harvest “where it is quiet...where there is no development", only reveals half of the story, in which Manitoba Hydro is imposing a decision on Red River Métis Citizens to harvest (or conduct other activities), in a degraded experiential environment or elsewhere. Ultimately, where the MMF maintain the biggest concerns is that for some, a third option may be contemplated which is to avoid or abandon an activity altogether, as adapting or moving locations to do so is just not possible.

[3] Manitoba Metis Federation. 2017. "Birtle Transmission Project Metis Land Use and Occupancy Study." Birtle Transmission Project. Accessed December 2023. https://www.hydro.mb.ca/docs/projects/birtle/appendix_c_manitoba_metis_federation_report.pdf.

All too frequently this is the decision which has been imposed on Red River Métis Citizens in developed areas of the National Homeland, but with the continued development of hydro resources and other activities, the RAA has been placed on a similar trajectory. The MMF strongly believes in sustainable development and the opportunities it brings to Red River Métis Citizens. However, it is essential to balance this with responsible stewardship of the land and waters which ensures that the conditions needed to allow the Red River Métis way of life to flourish are sustained for future generations.

The MMF does not fully agree with Manitoba Hydro's assessment of significance as it relates to cumulative effects on changes to harvester resources, changes in access to harvesting and recreational areas, and changes to harvesting and recreational experience. With transmission lines requiring linear disturbance, the MMFs agree that the new greenfield disturbance represents the single greatest source of additive or cumulative effects, however, subsequent transmission lines along an existing right of way act to cement the linear disturbance, effectively extending the life of the disturbance, rather than limiting it to simply the life of a single line. R44H has an anticipated life of 75 years, presumably the existing four transmission lines which run parallel with R44H would also have similar life spans. In an instance where only one transmission line existed, the likelihood that after 75 years the line would be decommissioned and revegetated would be greater than an instance where five lines run parallel. As a result, while the additive impacts as represented by linear distance or area disturbed may be relatively small when considering cumulative effects, the temporal aspect for maintaining the disturbance beyond the initial proposed life span is significant. The MMF therefore disagrees with the characterization that cumulative effects will be limited, as this highlights the need for Manitoba Hydro to work with the MMF to minimize the overall extent of disturbance limiting concerns related to fragmentation both spatially as well as temporally.

Important Sites

Heritage resources encompass physical, cultural, and natural elements of historical, cultural, scientific, or aesthetic significance, including tangible remains of human activity. Cultural sites, from the Red River Métis' perspective, are those which hold historic or cultural significance and may be associated with both tangible (e.g., measurable or physical elements) and intangible (e.g., knowledge or the exchange of methods) cultural heritage.

Manitoba Hydro considers the following two factors in considering the project impacts:

- Disturbance of heritage resources from their in-situ context.
- Disturbance of cultural sites or features important to Indigenous peoples.

The assessment considers the disturbance of heritage resources and cultural sites during the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the project. Generally, Manitoba Hydro concludes that residual effects though low will be permanent.

The MMF has indicated that the Nelson River corridor was, and to a degree continues to be a major travel route for Red River Métis Citizens. Since there is occupancy and use of the corridor, there is significant potential for Red River Métis cultural heritage resources in the area. The MMF further expressed interest in learning from the work of the archaeologists and requested to be informed about what the archaeologists find.

At this juncture, the MMF is unaware of any archaeological assessment which has been conducted for this project to date. We are therefore concerned that the potential impacts on archaeological or cultural heritage resources may not be considered within the scope of this Environment Act review, and b) as we have yet to have meaningful engagement with Manitoba Hydro or their archaeologist regarding the assessment of cultural heritage resources. Any archaeological impact assessment is performed will be done without a complete understanding of how Red River Métis Citizens would have, and currently use the Nelson River corridor. Without this knowledge, archaeological potential may go overlooked.

The MMF restates its request to be fully involved in the archaeological assessment of this project, which includes ensuring appropriate consideration for how Red River Métis Citizens may have used the local assessment area (LAA)[4] historically. If elevated cultural heritage potential is identified within the LAA, the MMF requests to be an active participant in any Stage 2+ archaeological assessment work necessary to understand cultural resources in the LAA. Additionally, the MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to develop an appropriate chance finds protocol that is sensitive to the unique and distinct needs of the Red River Métis.

In reflecting on the potential lack of information regarding culturally important sites, which may include harvest areas for the Red River Métis, the MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF and Red River Métis Citizens to engage in mapping exercises along the proposed right of way to identify any yet unknown areas which should be protected as areas of cultural interest. This work should occur before construction, and where construction activities may disturb harvest sites for plant-based medicines or foods, afterwards to determine areas that should be protected from both construction and ongoing maintenance.

The MMF supports the implementation of a Cultural and Heritage Resource Protection Plan (CHRPP) for this project. The MMF recommends that beyond the steps listed in Section 10.4.3.1 of the Environmental Assessment Report, Manitoba Hydro will also work with MMF staff to ensure that archaeological monitors will be employed and that they have a firm understanding of the potential differences in what constitutes heritage resources and where they may be found for the Red River Métis, which may differ from those

[4] Includes all components of the PDA plus a 1 km buffer around the PDA, which is used to evaluate measurable effects on vegetation. The total area of the LAA is 8,938 hectares (ha) (Environmental Assessment Report, pp. 6-7).

which exist for local First Nations. It is essential that Manitoba Hydro take a distinctions-based approach to understanding and communicating cultural heritable resources for this project.

Heritage Resources Impact Assessments are a good tool for conducting a preliminary evaluation of cultural resource potential, however, they are simply a tool and are not without their limitations. Most notably, in the MMF's experience areas identified as having low archaeological potential may still yield important cultural resources, and as a result, require elevated vigilance similar to areas of higher cultural resource potential. The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro apply the CHRPP including active chance finds protocols for the entirety of the project right of way not simply areas where high archaeological potential is identified.

Manitoba Hydro concludes that the project may result in low-magnitude irreversible residual effects. The MMF accepts this assessment, however, is concerned that Manitoba Hydro has not proposed any meaningful mitigations to actively attempt to eliminate these effects on cultural resources. The MMF would like to reiterate the need to ensure that cultural resource monitors are employed as part of this project and that they are competent in identifying cultural resources and non-tangible cultural resources as they relate to locations or items of specific value to Red River Métis Citizens. Additionally, the MMF notes there remain opportunities for Manitoba Hydro to fill knowledge gaps to map out areas of specific cultural importance along the proposed project right of way. The MMF therefore recommends that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF and Red River Métis Citizens to develop those maps such that the Environmental Protection Plan and other management documents can appropriately reflect the need for site-specific mitigations or avoidance measures.

4.4. Socio-economics

Socio-economic impacts as a result of the R44H project are described through sections 11-13 of the Environmental Assessment Report, as well as elsewhere throughout the Environmental Assessment Report as they relate to other technical disciplines. The MMF is disappointed by Manitoba Hydro's approach which lacks a distinctions-base to examining the potential project interactions with the rights, interests, and social well-being of Red River Métis Citizens. As noted in depth in Appendix 1, Manitoba Hydro has failed to consider the unique impacts of this project on Red River Métis Citizens, by characterizing baseline health, safety, and economic conditions. Manitoba Hydro will be ill-equipped to identify potential project interactions and understand potential residual effects and will not be well positioned to develop programming or alter project details to address potential residual effects, and where blanket pan-Indigenous or general programming is developed to address general project effects, it may not be appropriately tailored to address the unique concerns or conditions facing Red River Métis Citizens.

Economic Opportunities

Manitoba Hydro highlights several important economic opportunities associated with this project including regional employment, business subcontracting, and contributions to the regional and provincial economies. The project is expected to create direct, indirect, and induced employment opportunities, with a workforce ranging from 30 to 110 persons during construction.

- The project will generate tax revenue through income and consumption taxes, contributing to the GDP at regional, provincial, and federal levels.

- To encourage local businesses to benefit from this project, Manitoba Hydro has stated that they will contact local authorities and Indigenous representatives, to promote the participation of Manitoba businesses, and provide information on training and employment opportunities.

- Furthermore, while Manitoba Hydro proposes monitoring to track training, employment, and business outcomes for Indigenous peoples, women, and apprentices in Manitoba, monitoring programming was not specified.

The MMF is concerned by the lack of detail provide by Manitoba Hydro to ensure that economic benefits stay within the local or regional area. Specifically, while Manitoba Hydro states that local workers will be hired whenever possible, they fail to outline any specific measures that will ensure that they follow through on that commitment. The MMF is seeking more detail on efforts Manitoba Hydro will make to hire locally or regionally, specifically concerning the prioritization of hiring Red River Métis Citizens. Acknowledging potential barriers to realizing meaningful employment, the MMF further is interested in working with Manitoba Hydro to develop targeted and distinctions-based training and skill development opportunities for Red River Métis Citizens to ensure that benefits stay within the community affected by the project.

The MMF finds Manitoba Hydro's overall approach for ensuring local and Indigenous (specifically Red River Métis) employment and business opportunities to be lacking and unstructured. The MMF believes strongly that for Manitoba Hydro to realize the benefits of hiring local staff and procuring from local businesses, Manitoba Hydro must position itself, Red River Métis Citizens and Red River Métis-owned businesses to realize benefits of this work, which may include identifying local opportunities for labour and procurement, proactively working with the MMF local and other local programming to identify potential candidates, developing training and skills development, and establishing employment/procurement targets and set asides.

Finally, to ensure that Manitoba Hydro fosters a safe and respectful working environment, the MMF does support required Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training. However, the MMF is concerned that by focusing solely on Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training co-presented by Fox Lake Cree Nation, workers may not be exposed to the unique and distinct cultural differences of the Red River Métis. The MMF requests that Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training is undertaken by Manitoba Hydro to ensure that its

workforce understands the nuance of the Red River Métis presence in the Nelson River area and how the project and workforce may impact the rights, interests, and values of Red River Métis Citizens.

Health and Safety

This chapter addresses health and safety measures to protect individuals and communities, focusing on environmental changes from the project that affect health risks and psychological stress, based on feedback from past projects. Specifically, Manitoba Hydro focuses its assessment on:

- Change in air quality from project activities
- Change in noise levels from project activities, including noise from corona discharge
- Changes to a sense of community safety
- Changes to psychological stress related to human health concerns and stress related to changes in tranquillity and exposure to electric and magnetic fields (EMF)

The project activities, including mobilization and staff presence, may impact community safety and increase psychological stress, especially given the historical distrust in Manitoba Hydro due to past hydroelectric developments along the Nelson River since the 1960s. This distrust may exacerbate concerns about potential adverse impacts.

Baseline information was gathered through a detailed review of available desktop data, focusing on regional population health, well-being, air quality, noise, and legacy impacts of hydroelectric development. Key health issues include higher rates of acute care stays, lower immunization rates, higher rates of diabetes, sexually transmitted infections, and tuberculosis, as well as higher prevalence of substance abuse disorders. Baseline conditions found the following:

- The Community Well-Being (CWB) index shows an average score of 69.2 for Manitoba, with First Nations communities scoring 49.3 and non-First Nations communities scoring 78.0. Importantly, similar scores as they relate to Red River Métis Citizens was not assessed.
- Air quality in Manitoba is generally good, but wildfire smoke and transboundary pollutants can cause issues; in 2023, 137 fires affected 137,814 hectares in northern Manitoba.
- Noise levels in the area are typical of rural settings, with transmission lines complying with provincial guidelines related to audible noise.

- Hydroelectric development has led to adverse impacts on communities, including reduced ability to harvest traditional foods, cultural and identity loss, and increased reliance on store-bought foods.

Overall, Construction activities are expected to have the most pronounced health and safety effects, including decreased air quality, increased noise levels, and psychological stress. The influx of non-local workers may lead to social issues such as substance misuse, increased violence, and exploitation, particularly affecting women and girls. Psychological stress may increase due to perceived health risks, unresolved issues from past developments, and changes in the environment. EMF exposure from transmission lines is a concern, though studies show levels are below harmful thresholds. Aesthetic changes from vegetation clearing and the presence of transmission lines may affect community enjoyment and well-being. The project workforce could peak at 170 workers, representing a 14% increase in the local population, potentially straining local services and infrastructure.

Efforts to curb potential impacts to health and safety effects, including air quality, noise, community safety, and psychological stress, include:

- Mud, dust, and vehicle emissions will be managed to ensure safe public activities near construction sites.
- Burning will be conducted only in winter, under supervision, and away from permanent human receptor locations to limit smoke drift.
- Noise mitigation includes informing communities of major noise activities and using barriers or noise cancellation techniques.
- Indigenous cultural awareness training and adherence to various policies will be required for all project workers to reduce adverse interactions with local communities.
- Continuous project engagement and open communication will be maintained to address psychological stress during all project phases.

The MMF is strongly concerned by Manitoba Hydro's lack of consideration for the potential distinct impacts the project will have on Red River Métis Citizens' Health and Safety. Specifically, Manitoba Hydro makes no effort to distinguish Red River Métis Citizens from the general population of the RAA, and as a result, assessment and mitigation measures which may be proposed as a result may fail to consider the distinct circumstances associated with Red River Métis Citizens living within the RAA.

The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to establish a meaningful health, safety and wellness baseline for Red River Métis Citizens living within the RAA or using the area for harvest and cultural practice. Based on this characterization, the MMF specifically requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to identify programming targeting the mitigation or elimination of health, safety, and

wellness of Red River Métis Citizens, ensuring that health, safety, and wellness is monitored through the life of the project and that appropriate adaptive management measures be employed to address issues as they are identified. Without this baseline characterization, this project may lead to adverse impacts to the health, safety, and wellness of Red River Métis Citizens without it being detected with the result being adverse impacts which could have otherwise been addressed.

The MMF has concerns about how Manitoba Hydro has characterized the decline in the sense of community safety for the R44H line, which ranges between No Measurable Change and Moderate. As acknowledged by Manitoba Hydro throughout Section 13, there is a well-established link between construction camps and the risk to public and personal safety from an increase in a transient male-dominated population and an increase in the consumption of alcohol, drugs or other substances, gender-based violence, and crime. The MMF challenges Manitoba Hydro's approach to mitigating these factors, as they appear to implement very little in the way of preventative programming, monitoring, or corrective actions to deal with social wellness issues which may arise from this project.

The MMF strongly recommends that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to identify culturally appropriate programming both for the project workforce as well as those Red River Métis Citizens living within the RAA aimed at curbing possible impacts to health, safety, and wellness.

5.0 Rights Impact Assessment

The MMF completed a Red River Métis Rights Impact Assessment (RIA) for this project. The RIA details potential impacts to Red River Métis Rights, claims, and interests caused by the proposed R44H transmission line, and identifies appropriate mitigation and follow-up measures to reduce or avoid these impacts (*Table 1*). Definitions for the terms in this table (Geographic Extent, Reversibility, Duration, and Likelihood) as they apply to this RIA are provided in *Table 2* below.

Table 1. Red River Métis Rights Impact Assessment

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
Hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering for food, social, or ceremonial purposes	The Red River Métis rely on and use the lands, waters, and resources throughout the National Homeland of the Red River Métis to exercise their constitutionally protected rights and maintain their distinct Red River Métis customs, traditions, and culture. As demonstrated through Red River Métis land use and occupancy data, this includes the proposed R44H project development area (PDA), local assessment area (LAA), and regional assessment area (RAA). Hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering are key sources of sustenance and/or subsistence for the Red River Métis. These practices are also critical in supporting Red River Métis social and cultural values including the preservation and transfer of Red River Métis knowledge, practice of ceremony, and other elements of traditional ways of life. The proposed R44H project has the potential to impact Red River Métis hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering for food,	Lands become inaccessible for harvesting	PDA	Reversible	Medium	High	• Ensure the PDA and LSA remain accessible for Red River Métis harvesters during operation when it's safe to do so • Work alongside the MMF to develop and share a detailed construction schedule with local Red River Métis harvesters to ensure they can continue to use the area whenever possible • Work alongside the MMF to allow Red River Métis harvesters access to the PDA and LSA in advance of any clearing activities to harvest species of importance • Avoid restricting access during important times of the year for Red River Métis harvesters (e.g. hunting season), and work with the MMF to identify these times • Provide a construction schedule with the intention of limiting areas closed off at a time and communicate this to Red River Métis Citizens.

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
	social, or ceremonial purposes through: • Limitations to access of PDA/LAA during construction, maintenance, and decommissioning • Disturbances to the land and wildlife through construction (e.g. noise, vehicles, lighting, implodes) • Disturbances to the land and wildlife through operation (e.g. chemical sprays, increased human presence) • Direct removal of trees and vegetation associated with ROW clearing • Disturbances to nearby watercourses that support fish and other wildlife • Decreased quality of experience on the land and psychosocial impacts • May create new access points and may allow for additional access for non-Red	Avoidance behaviour	LAA	Partially Reversible	Long-term	Moderate	• Work with the MMF to develop appropriate monitoring and sampling programs focused on the safety of wild foods in the area • Work alongside the MMF to develop a communications plan with local Red River Métis harvesters to ensure they are informed of the results of monitoring and sampling programs

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
	River Métis Citizens to access natural lands for harvest. • Presence of helicopters • Revegetation may introduce the wrong habitats • Compounding effects of caribou avoidance • Blasting may push fish away from an area, or if blasting occurs during sensitive spawning periods • Erosion and sediment outside of winter months may push fish away from nearshore habitats.	Reduced Resource Availability	LAA	Partially Reversible	Long-term	High	• Refer to technical comments related to fish and wildlife in the MMF's technical review of Manitoba Hydro's Environmental Assessment Report to ensure outstanding issues and concerns are appropriately addressed • Limit Grubbing to on the footprint of the towers • Work alongside the MMF to develop appropriate programs and methods to monitor Red River Métis values and species of importance over time, and ensure Red River Métis knowledge is included in these programs appropriately • Work alongside the MMF to develop offsetting and vegetation support programs where clearing and other impacts to vegetation are unavoidable to ensure these programs are aligned with supporting Red River Métis values • Replace/reclaim other linear disturbances in the RAA; Develop a series of "wildlife habitat crossings" to intersect the ROW and reduce the
		Reduced Resource Quality	LAA	Partially Reversible	Long-term	Moderate	

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
							effective length of linear disturbance. Recommend one habitat crossing to be created every 5 km • MH to commit to a habitat study aligning with the federal caribou recovery strategy, and support MMF's Project Caribou to improve understanding of caribou use of RAA.

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
Knowledge Transmission and Way of Life	Implicit to the Red River Métis way of life is the intergenerational knowledge transfer about the lands and waters used for harvest and traditional practice. While intergenerational knowledge transfer is often not an activity within itself, but rather an action inherent when families share time on the land, harvest from the land, and engage in trade or activities common to the Red River Métis way of life. Project effects which interrupt the ability of Red River Métis Citizens to engage in such activities, even for short periods of time, and or where reversible can significantly alter how knowledge is reflected and passed between generations. Instances where cumulative effects from multiple disturbances can mean that Red River Métis Citizens are forced to adapt to an ever-changing patchwork of a landscape comprised of unimpacted lands or waters, impacted lands or waters, and recovering lands or waters, which may further interrupt or in some instances prevent knowledge transmission and the Red River Métis way of life.	Inter-generational Knowledge Transfer	RAA	Non-Reversible	Long-term	High	• MH work with MMF to develop programming to support Métis-specific "on-the-land" programming. • Notification and communication of areas which are closed • Red River Métis Citizens be invited to support transplanting SOCC • MH to commit to offsetting and natural area compensation (especially as it relates to caribou and SOCC) • Red River Métis Citizens to be Citizen monitors • Red River Métis Citizens to support mapping of SOCCs and sensitive features post-construction • MH to support programming aimed at capturing and sharing knowledge throughout the RAA

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
Cultural, historical, or otherwise significant sites and the practice of Red River Métis customs, traditions, and ways of life.	The Red River Métis are deeply connected to the lands and waters throughout the National Homeland of the Red River Métis, which is home to numerous sites of cultural and historical significance. These sites continue to support the Red River Métis in exercising their constitutionally protected rights and maintaining their distinct Red River Métis customs, traditions, and culture. As demonstrated through Red River Métis land use and occupancy data, this includes the proposed R44H project development area (PDA), local assessment area (LAA), and regional assessment area (RAA). Red River Métis cultural, historical, or otherwise significant sites include historical family or village sites, burial sites, important landscape features, locations supporting the transfer of Red River Métis knowledge, recreational or gathering areas, spiritual or ceremonial sites, sites that support Red River Métis traditional economies and others. The proposed R44H project has the potential to impact Red River Métis cultural, historical, or otherwise significant sites and the practice of Red River Métis customs, traditions, and ways of life through:	Physical Access	PDA	Reversible	Short-term	High	• Ensure the PDA and LSA remain accessible for Red River Métis Citizens during operation when it's safe to do so • Work alongside the MMF to develop and share a detailed construction schedule with local Red River Métis Citizens to ensure they can continue to use and travel through the area whenever possible • Work alongside the MMF to allow Red River Métis harvesters access to the PDA and LSA in advance of any clearing activities to harvest resources of importance (e.g. medicines, natural materials)
		Avoidance behaviour	LAA	Partially Reversible	Long-term	Moderate	• Avoid the spray of herbicides and other chemicals wherever possible and use mechanical means to manage vegetation. Work alongside the MMF to determine culturally appropriate methods of vegetation management. • Work alongside the MMF to develop and share a detailed schedule of activities, including spraying and vegetation management efforts, to share

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
	- Limitations to access during construction and decommissioning - Disturbances to the land and resources through construction (e.g. noise, vehicles, lighting, implodes) - Disturbances to the land and resources through operation (e.g. chemical sprays, increased human presence) - Potential identification or disturbance of heritage resources during project activities - Decreased quality of experience on the land and psychosocial impacts						with local Red River Métis Citizens who may be interested in accessing the area, or travelling through the area to access other Red River Métis cultural, historical, or other sites of importance
		Reduced quality of experience	LAA	Partially Reversible	Long-term	Moderate	• Replace/reclaim other linear disturbances in the RAA; Develop a series of "wildlife habitat crossings" to intersect the ROW and reduce the effective length of linear disturbance. Recommend one habitat crossing to be created every 5 km
		Disturbance of Red River Métis cultural or heritage resources	LAA	Irreversible	Long-term	Low	• Manitoba Hydro should ensure information related to Red River Métis cultural, historical, or otherwise significant sites in the area provided by the MMF in recent Métis Knowledge and Land Use studies is effectively included in their assessment and planning processes related to heritage resources (e.g. the presence of historically significant sites, burial sites,

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
							and other cultural sites in the LAA and RAA) • Co-develop a Heritage Resource Protection Plan with the MMF to ensure that the approach meaningfully recognizes Red River Métis rights, claims, and interests in the area and reflects a distinctions-based approach to chance finds that is in alignment with Red River Métis heritage protocols

		Disruption to Traditional Economies	LAA	Partially Reversible	Long-term	Moderate	• Work with the MMF to verify the presence of Red River Métis commercial harvesting (especially trapping) intersecting with or in close proximity to the proposed PDA, and work with local Red River Métis commercial harvesters to develop appropriate mitigation measures for their specific practices. This could include: • Avoid reducing access during key harvesting times through the year • Avoid wildlife disturbances at sensitive times for wildlife through the year • Ensure continued access to harvesting areas whenever possible • Avoid the use of interventions such as herbicide or other chemical sprays in proximity to Red River Métis commercial harvesting areas

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
The MMF's ability to protect the rights, claims, and interests of Red River Métis Citizens, and exercise self-determination now and into the future.	The Red River Métis have the right to self-determination and the ability to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources. As the elected government of the Red River Métis, the MMF is mandated to promote, protect, and advance the collectively held Aboriginal rights of the Red River Métis. The MMF's ability to protect the rights, claims and interests of Red River Métis Citizens and exercise self-determination now, and into the future, may be impacted by the project through:	Loss of ability to determine future land use	PDA	Irreversible	Long-term	High	• Involve the MMF in any discussions related to project decommissioning and site rehabilitation or reclamation plans to ensure the land can continue to support Red River Métis rights, claims, and interests after the project is complete • Replace/reclaim other linear disturbances in the RAA; Develop a series of "wildlife habitat crossings" to intersect the ROW and reduce the effective length of linear disturbance. Recommend one habitat crossing to be created every 5 km

Established/ Potential/ Asserted Right	Context	Potential Impact	Geographic Extent (PDA, LAA, RAA)	Reversibility	Duration	Likelihood	Mitigation and Follow-up Measures
	• Cumulative effects as a result of this project in combination with other development projects and disturbances throughout the National Homeland of the Red River Métis • Land use changes associated with this project, or those initiated by other related projects and reinforced by this project • Lack of meaningful consultation and engagement with the Red River Métis surrounding involvement in the project and equitable opportunities to benefit from the project • Lack of consultation and engagement with the Red River Métis surrounding future use of the land, decommissioning, reclamation, and restoration initiatives	Loss of ability to meaningfully participate in economic opportunities	LAA	Irreversible	Long-term	Moderate	Work alongside the MMF to create a plan to ensure that the Red River Métis can equitably benefit from the project. This plan must include measures for: • Procurement of Red River Métis businesses • Employment and training opportunities • Opportunities for partnerships with the MMF or Red River Métis businesses • Employment of Red River Métis environmental or cultural monitors

Table 2: Definition of terms used in the Rights Impact Assessment

Term	Definition	Rating		
Geographic Extent	The area over which the impact is expected to occur. This may differ from the physical footprint of the change.	**Project Development Area (PDA)**. As defined by Manitoba Hydro: Footprint of the proposed project including the transmission line right-of-way, any additional areas such as fly yards or marshalling yards and access road allowances.	**Local Assessment Area (LAA).** As defined by Manitoba Hydro: Represents the area where direct and indirect or secondary effects of construction, operation, and maintenance are most pronounced or identifiable.	**Regional Assessment Area (RAA).** As defined by Manitoba Hydro: Encompasses the area where D83W project-specific environmental effects overlap with those of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects and activities.
Reversibility	Ability to return to an established baseline. Considers both the reversibility of the impact pathway and the reversibility of the impact to the exercise of rights.	**Reversible.** Easily reversible without delay or intervention.	**Partially Reversible.** Reversible but requires significant effort and cost or will take a long time via natural processes.	**Irreversible.** Permanent or persistent.
Duration	How long an impact may last in relation to the activity.	**Delay.** The ability to exercise the right will be delayed in the short term. For example, a few days of a harvesting season are missed.	**Prevention.** The ability to exercise the right is temporarily prevented. For example, an entire harvesting season is missed.	**Destruction.** The ability to exercise the right is lost for a generation or more. For example, harvesting can no longer occur in the area.

Likelihood	An estimate of the probability that a potential impact on the exercise of rights will occur as a result of the Project. Considers the degree of evidence available and level of certainty to characterise the likelihood of occurrence.	**Low.** Potential impact on the exercise of rights is unlikely but could occur.	**Moderate.** Potential impact on the exercise of rights is probable and likely but may not occur.	**High.** Potential impact on the exercise of rights is highly likely to occur.

6.0 Recommendations and Conclusions

The MMF has completed a review of the Environmental Assessment Report for the Radisson to Henday (R44H) transmission line project. In this report, the MMF has identified **52 comments and has provided specific recommendations for each.** The comments concern every phase of the Project, from pre-project surveys to decommissioning. The MMF also identified several potential impacts on the Rights of the Red River Métis in the Rights Impact Assessment section, as well as specific recommendations for each. This report also includes a *What We Heard* section based on comments, concerns and proposed accommodations raised by Red River Métis Citizens during the engagement session in December 2024.

Overall, the MMF is disappointed in Manitoba Hydro's engagement process for the R44H project. Manitoba Hydro failed to engage meaningfully with the MMF and failed to take a distinctions-based approach to consider the unique impacts and opportunities of the project on Red River Métis Citizens. To this end, considerations for impacts to rights, health and wellbeing, and opportunities specific to Red River Métis regarding this project are lacking.

Furthermore, the MMF identified inadequacies in the Environmental Assessment Report with respect to many components, notably Manitoba Hydro's choice of environmentally sensitive areas, baseline characterization and monitoring (namely for fish and fish habitat, vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat), the cumulative effects assessment, project timeline and construction schedule, determination of significance, the archeological assessment and the characterization of residual effects. The resultant outcome of this lack of distinctions-based assessment approach is that Red River Métis Citizens may experience disproportionate impacts of the project compared to others affected, while not being provided with the same opportunities to realize project benefits.

In addition to the comments and recommendations included in this report, the following high-level recommendations aim to guide Manitoba Hydro to engage meaningfully with the MMF and address identified concerns and potential impacts:

1. Manitoba Hydro to provide written responses to each comment, potential identified impact on the Rights of the Red River Métis and recommendations put forward in this report. Responses should include specific information and actions to be taken by Manitoba Hydro to minimize the identified potential impacts and address the comments. Where recommended actions by the MMF will not be taken by Manitoba Hydro, a rationale and alternative recommendation should be given by the latter. MMF recommends the use of a comments and recommendations tracking table to ensure adequate follow-up.

2. Manitoba Hydro to engage meaningfully with the MMF to discuss distinctions-based economic and training opportunities for Red River Métis Citizens and businesses.

3. Manitoba Hydro to engage meaningfully with the MMF to discuss how the recommendations, mitigation and accommodation measures will be implemented to ensure that there are no significant residual impacts of the R44H project on Red River Métis rights and interest.

4. Manitoba Hydro to engage meaningfully with the MMF prior to any future project on and around the Red River Métis National Homeland, to ensure a distinctions-based assessment of impacts on Red River Métis is undertaken in all future Environmental assessment reports. This process should be undertaken as early as possible in the development of the project.

Appendix 1

Table 3: Comment and Recommendation Table

Comment #	Section Reference	Comment	Recommendation
General			
1.	3.7 Training, employment, and business opportunity engagement	The MMF believe that there are significant mutually beneficial opportunities for Red River Métis-owned businesses to work with Manitoba Hydro in support of this work. Additionally, local Red River Métis Citizens may be well positioned to provide skilled and general labour to support Manitoba Hydro and ensure project benefits are maximized for those in the Gillam area.	It is requested that Manitoba Hydro engage with {INSERT CONTACT} to discuss economic and training opportunities for Red River Métis Citizens and businesses
2.	3.9.1.5 Manitoba Métis Federation	Based on the information provided in the Environmental Assessment Report , the MMF is concerned that this engagement to date hasn't been meaningful, nor have Manitoba Hydro positioned itself to understand the concerns of Red River Métis Citizens. The MMF maintains an open dialogue with Manitoba Hydro, however, it is evident throughout this Environmental Assessment Report that consideration for the distinct interests and concerns of the Red River Métis has not been meaningful.	The MMF notes that considerations for impacts to rights, health and wellbeing, and opportunities specific to Red River Métis for this project is deficient. In many instances, as noted throughout this response, the interests of the Red River Métis have not been identified or been reflected in the project. The MMF is disappointed by the lack of effort on the part of Manitoba Hydro to distinguish Red River Métis Citizens, their concerns, and interests from the general population in several instances as it relates to health and well-being, as well as economic opportunities. The potential result is that impacts to Red River Métis may go undetected or in the instance of benefits go unrealized, placing Red River Métis at a disadvantage. Further, targeted efforts to address or mitigate impacts may be misaligned with the interests, concerns or needs which are distinct to Red River Métis Citizens. The MMF requests that prior to the commencement of this project, Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to better understand and

			characterize the distinct concerns of Red River Métis as they relate to health and wellbeing, as well as economic baseline conditions. Based on this information, the MMF requests further that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to develop mitigation measures and programming aimed at ensuring adverse impacts unique to Red River Métis Citizens are avoided or minimized, and that Red River Métis Citizens have ample opportunity to benefit from training, employment, procurement, and other economic or social development opportunities.
3.	4.1.2 Selection of Valued Components	Manitoba Hydro have stated that engagement with the MMF at the time of drafting the Environmental Assessment Report has been limited. The MMF recognize that additional engagement and dialogue has occurred since, however, the MMF is interested in how Manitoba Hydro will incorporate values identified after the completion of the Environmental Assessment Report, as well as through this response, to influence the design, execution and operation of this project.	The MMF requests Manitoba Hydro provide a clear description of how Manitoba Hydro will incorporate feedback received after the submission of the Environmental Assessment Report, as well as through ongoing and future engagement with the MMF to the project description, mitigation and management plans, or accommodations for the Red River Métis.
4.	4.4.1 Project/Activity Inclusion List	The MMF has an interest in the Kivalliq Hydro Fibre Link, specifically the potential disturbance to both terrestrial and aquatic environments used by Red River Métis Citizens to harvest and engage in other rights-based (and non-rights-based) activities. As a result of this interest, the MMF is also interested in better understanding the interaction between KHFL and R44H (as well as the other hydro transmission lines or projects in the Gillam area).	The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro conduct additional analysis on the foreseeable cumulative linear disturbance that would be created as a result of R44H and KHFL as foreseeable projects. Additionally, the MMF requests Manitoba Hydro elaborate on how KHFL may connect to the Manitoba Hydro grid and the possible implications overall to the local grid and infrastructure in the Gillam-Churchill area.
5.	4.4.3 Mitigation of Cumulative Effects	The MMF agrees that the management of a project's impacts is the responsibility of that project's proponents, however, in considering the impacts of cumulative effects, Manitoba Hydro cannot be ignorant to the cumulative or interactive nature of their projects with others impacting the region.	Manitoba Hydro must consider how the project specific effects of R44H may add to or interact with both existing and foreseeable disturbances on the land, or with waters, especially as it impacts values which are sensitive to linear disturbances such as caribou, and those associated with caribou hunting.
6.	4.7.2 Monitoring	With respect to monitoring and inspection, the MMF supports Manitoba Hydro's efforts to implement stringent and robust	The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to identify opportunities for Citizen-led monitoring, inspection, and

		surveillance programming to ensure project effects are minimized and do not exceed those which are predicted within the Environmental Assessment Report. However, the MMF feels that Manitoba Hydro-led assessment can only go so far in ensuring that values of interest for Red River Métis Citizens specifically are protected.	assessment, specifically focusing on areas of specific value for Red River Métis. The MMF expects that in fulfilling this role, these Citizens will be provided the opportunity to meaningfully participate in project oversight and environmental protection, while also building meaningful capacity transferable beyond the scope of R44H.
7.	4.7.3 Management	The MMF note that Manitoba Hydro only speak to "Management" but fall short of describing "Adaptive Management" which is not only the implementation of pre-determined responses to pre-defined environmental effects, but the cyclical process in which Manitoba Hydro actively seeks out new information regarding previously unknown (and known) or unforeseen (and foreseen) project effects, assess the issue, and develops tailored responses to address both the effect and the root cause of the effect. The final stage of adaptive management is reassessment of the response to determine effectiveness.	The MMF seeks assurance that Manitoba Hydro will implement a robust adaptive management process for all key areas of potential project interaction.
Fish and Fish Habitat			
8.	2.3 Transmission Line, Table 2-1: Construction schedule for the R44H transmission line project	The Environmental Assessment Report shows construction activities at watercourse crossings will occur through all seasons except for summer. The MMF is concerned that Spring and Fall spawning fish will be impacted by construction activities including higher traffic disturbing the areas, ROW clearing, blasting, and potential sedimentation from these activities.	To ensure no impacts to spawning fish, the MMF request that Manitoba hydro undertake fish community monitoring in the spring, summer, and fall at all watercourse crossings to ensure the construction scheduling will not interrupt spawning activities that occur near the watercourse crossings of the line.
9.	2.3.3.3 Right-of-way clearing	The Environmental Assessment Report states that “clearing will be modified in environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., river and stream crossings) and will be subject to a variety of pre-determined but adaptable environmental protection measures.” The MMF is concerned that watercourse crossings are the only identified sensitive areas that will be afforded extra protections during vegetation clearing activities.	The MMF requests that the Proponent expand the list for adaptive environmental protections during clearing activities to include • Watercourses • Riparian areas • Patches of harvested plants • Wetlands • Cultural sites

			Marking sensitive sites in advance of construction to protect these areas, and providing additional training for construction staff to ensure they understand the prescription for these areas is also essential. Secondly, the MMF would like to request any necessary clearing in these areas are done without any heavy machinery to avoid excess disturbance to these important sites to Red River Métis Citizens.
10.	8.3.3 Fish species	The Environmental Assessment Report reports on fish species in the RAA all of which are culturally important to Red River Métis Citizens and require the RAA for important life stages like spawning and nursery. The MMF is concerned that no contemporary data was captured in the Environmental Assessment Report for fish community or habitat use in the RAA. The most recent data captured in the desk top review was from 2012, which is 12 years before this proposal was submitted to the MMF for review. With a changing climate and fish and wildlife adapting to changing temperatures and seasons it is critical that contemporary field data is captured for new projects to adequately assess impacts and plan adaptive management practices to protect the environment.	The MMF requests that the Proponent conduct fish community and habitat use field surveys in all areas near watercourse crossings in all seasons that will experience some disturbance from construction activities of this project to ensure impacts to fish and Red River Métis Citizen Rights and interests are adequately assessed and mitigated against.
11.	8.3.5 Riparian vegetation cover at watercourse crossings	The Environmental Assessment Report states that 7 crossings have half forested riparian areas and that all those trees will be cleared for construction. The Environmental Assessment Report states that shrubs and grasses will be left in place, but the MMF is concerned that it is highly probable that tree removal via heavy machinery or tree-dragging scour will disturb other vegetation and the land and cause undue destruction to the environment and potentially impact fish habitat through sedimentation from	The MMF would like to reiterate our request that any necessary clearing of trees at watercourse crossings are done selectively and without any heavy machinery or tree-dragging to avoid excess disturbance to the grasses and shrubs and reduce the risk of sedimentation.

		the soil compaction, reduced vegetation, and exposed soil at scours from dragging trees away.	
12.	Section 8.4.1.2 Use of industrial equipment	The Environmental Assessment Report explains that there will be a machine-free zone for a minimum of 7m around the ordinary highwater mark around all watercourses. MMF wants to confirm that no machines will be used for even selective cutting or removal of trees or other vegetation within those areas. MMF also wants to ensure that the sensitive sites listed in comment #9 are also designated as machine-free zones. The MMF is concerned with soil compaction vegetation destruction, accidental leaks and spills of machine fluids, and the mobilization of potentially contaminated soils into sensitive areas.	Please confirm that absolutely no machinery will go within the "machine free zone" of the riparian area up to 7m from the high-water mark as indicated in Environmental Assessment Report Figure 8-2: Riparian buffers and machine free zones.
13.	8.4.3.3 Summary of residual effects Table 8-7 Project residual effects on fish and fish habitat	The MMF disagrees with the values placed for the project phases construction and operation as they relate to change in fish habitat. The Proponent suggests that the duration of change is medium-term and that the reversibility of those changes are reversible. The MMF believes that the duration of those phases are long term, changes to fish habitat such as riparian vegetation clearing or disruptive construction activity could result in impacts to fish utilizing that habitat to be long term. With on going vegetation maintenance in the ROW the ability for Red River Métis Citizens to exercise their Rights to fish in these areas they way they are now could be lost for a generation or more. Similarly, the reversibility of those changes are only partially reversible since the regrowth of natural riparian vegetation including large trees	The MMF requests that the valued in the table be amended to read "Long-term" and "Irreversible" for the Construction and Operational phases.

		will take a long time and will be prevented over the lifetime of this project.	
Terrestrial Ecology and the Physical Environment			
14.	2.0 – Project Description; Table 4-2; Figure 4-1; 6.0 – Vegetation; 7.0 – Wildlife and wildlife habitat (General comment)	42km of new 230kV transmission line (the Project) will be located within an existing transmission right of way (paralleling existing transmission lines in a right of way that span 400m-450m across) resulting in approximately 18% additional linear disturbance in the assessment area. Access for the Project also necessitates a frozen/packed trail within the ROW easement adjacent to the Project. While considering alternatives, Manitoba Hydro determined that the preferred option is to pursue both the proposed Project and take remedial actions to modernize the Bipole I line, as separate projects. Further, maintenance clearing for the existing transmission lines in the Projects' shared right of way is expected to occur during construction. Following construction, maintenance activities will sustain Project effects on vegetation intactness, community and species diversity, and retain vegetation growth in a different state than prior to construction within the ROW, with additional effects on wildlife. With mitigation and environmental protection measures, residual effects on vegetation/wildlife and cumulative effects on vegetation/wildlife are predicted to be not significant with moderate or high confidence (vegetation or wildlife, respectively); however, this is assuming there are no other projects or activities whose residual effects are likely to interact cumulatively with Project residual effects, as presented in the Environmental Assessment Report. This assessment does not	Red River Métis Citizens are generally concerned with the increase in linear disturbance traversed by Manitoba Hydro transmission projects, resulting in significant fragmentation of habitat for wildlife and vegetation (including species at risk and -of concern; SAR/SOCC, and traditional use species), increased access to harvesting traditional use species by non-Indigenous land users, and long-term changes in habitats, among other effects. The cumulative effects assessment for vegetation and wildlife and wildlife habitat resources does not consider the residual effects of other simultaneous operations along the right of way for the Project (e.g., vegetation management for the other transmission lines in the right of way), or remedial actions planned to upgrade the existing Bipole I line. As such, significance determination and confidence levels for the characterization of residual and cumulative effects on terrestrial resources should be updated for a fulsome assessment of planned or future foreseeable projects/activities that include those in the Project description.

		consider the remedial actions planned for the Bipole I project, nor ROW maintenance in the shared Project right of way.	
15.	2.2 – Schedule; 2.3.2 – Pre-construction; Appendix E – CEnvPP (Appendix F: Reptile and amphibian protection document)	The Environmental Assessment Report assumes the Project licensing will be received by December 2024. As part of the planning and to inform tower foundation design/locations for the Project, geotechnical test drilling is planned for February-March 2024 along the proposed route. Clearing for the Project ROW is anticipated to occur during the first winter. The CEnvPP assumes amphibians are present in all wetland/shallow water areas supporting emergent vegetation during amphibian emergence and breeding period (April 1 to August 15); associated mitigations include amphibian capture and relocation efforts, which may require additional wildlife handling permits and associated relocation plans, physical isolations, etc. However, there is also no trigger/criteria provided for an assessment of potential salvage/relocation efforts. As this proposed schedule may not be feasible, the Project scheduling will be pushed back and potentially impact work on localized construction activities and the in-service date (anticipated summer 2026), and the timing of construction activities may be more likely to extend into sensitive timeframes for wildlife (fall/spring), to retain the in-service date schedule.	Please provide a fulsome list of potential implications of projected delays in scheduling related to license acquisition, pre-construction, other potential permitting (e.g., wildlife salvage/relocation, installation of compensation habitat features), and construction activities (e.g., if clearing cannot be completed in the first winter). Please also provide criteria or triggers for the assessment of amphibian breeding sites for potential salvage/relocation efforts. It is unclear if geotechnical testing must occur during frozen conditions. Please provide further information.
16.	2.3.1.5 – Transmission line right of way (ROW) requirements; 2.3.3 – Transmission line construction; Appendix E – CenvPP (Appendix P – Clearing Management Plan)	Typical ROW widths for the guyed lattice structures are approximately 60m (to be modified in environmentally sensitive areas), which is also the smallest tower structure anticipated to be used by the Project. The minimum 60m ROW was used to assess project impacts on valued components (VCs). Clearing for the Project requires between 60m-70m of clearing to prepare the ROW for Project construction.	By using the smallest ROW area impacted by the Project to assess potential effects of the Project on VCs, this may minimize potential observed effects of construction activities and draw in to question the conclusions and validity of the impact assessment. The MMF requests the opportunity and capacity funding to review the Clearing Management Plan once developed.

		"Final clearing methods to be used will be determined based on a detailed survey of the transmission line routes, and site-specific identification of environmentally sensitive features." A Clearing Management Plan has not yet been prepared for the Project. Disposal of cleared vegetation will be determined by the method of clearing used, and conditions of the licence (if granted). The Project anticipates burning cleared vegetation, mulching, or salvage if feasible, but it is not anticipated there is any merchantable timber on the ROW. Rehabilitation of disturbed sites will be undertaken as required.	MMF also requests that cleared vegetation not be disposed of or burned, but rather donated to Red River Métis Citizens for use or mulched/chipped for use in progressive/final rehabilitation measures.
17.	2.3.3 – Transmission line construction	Mobile construction camps may be used for the mobilized workforce during construction. The locations of camps and areas of associated "temporary" disturbance will be determined after the planning and design stages are completed for the Project.	Manitoba Métis Federation requests the opportunity and capacity funding for future further engagement regarding the location(s) of proposed mobile construction camps for the Project. There are already access limitations proposed to traditional use/cultural heritage areas along the ROW during construction, and the locations of camps may increase edge effects, sensory effects, and other disturbances associated with the Project workforce (e.g., waste, sewage), impacting rights-based activities.
18.	2.3.4 – Transmission line operation and maintenance; 4.7 – Follow-up and monitoring; 7.0 – Wildlife and wildlife habitat; 17.8 – Follow-up and monitoring (General comment)	Regular inspections and maintenance of the ROW and infrastructure are required for the operation phase of the Project. Inspections are routine examinations or evaluations to compare against requirements and standards to ensure the activity conforms to requirements. "Inspection provides an essential function in environmental protection and implementation of mitigation measures. Much of the success in environmental protection will be attributable to how well environmental inspections are carried out during the construction phase of a project." Air patrols and ground patrols for unscheduled maintenance or unexpected repairs typically occur once/year by	"Follow-up and monitoring are intended to verify the accuracy of the environmental assessment, assess the implementation and effectiveness of mitigation and the nature of the residual effects, and to manage adaptively if required. Follow-up and monitoring will be implemented through inspection, management, and auditing actions." Per the Environmental Assessment Report , inspection is anticipated to occur one to two times annually, outside of critical life stages for wildlife. This schedule is insufficient to determine appropriate management actions should mitigation measures be inadequate for vegetation, and wildlife and wildlife habitat. As such, the scheduled

		ground and up to three times/year by air. The timing for annual patrols has not been specified. "Monitoring determines if environmental effects occur as predicted, residual effects remain within acceptable limits, regulatory limits, criteria, or objectives are not exceeded, and mitigation measures are as effective as predicted. Monitoring also allows for adaptive management where monitoring results show there is a need for additional environmental protection or enhancement." "Due to understood effects to natural habitat traversed by the project, and confidence in predictions based on monitoring results learned from recently completed projects in Manitoba, an environmental monitoring plan has not been prepared for this project." "Based on the routing process, and the measures developed to mitigate and manage any potential adverse effects, the residual effects of the project are predicted to be not significant." The residual and cumulative effects for the project have not considered all potential maintenance activities in the shared ROW, or upgrades to the Bipole I line, planned as separate projects.	inspections should increase in frequency during the operations and maintenance periods to ensure all mitigation and protection measures are functioning as required, and adaptive management actions are successful. Management plans are prepared to address important management issues, regulatory requirements and corporate commitments identified in the Environmental Assessment Report ; however, there are currently no management plans prepared for clearing (to be developed) or comprehensive protection documents for wildlife (outside of birds and amphibians/reptiles) at the Project (only general mitigation measures are presented for wildlife, but this does not capture all potential wildlife features that may be present along the preferred route or sensitive timeframes as noted in other comments). The MMF requests opportunity and capacity funding to review future management plans for clearing. We further request a management plan or protection document be prepared in advance of construction, specifically for mammals. The MMF recommends that Manitoba Hydro adopt a conservative approach for the timing of air and ground patrols (unless an emergency arises), to avoid sensitive timeframes for birds and wildlife (e.g., rutting/calving/migration seasons for ungulates). It is unacceptable that Manitoba Hydro has not prepared a monitoring plan for vegetation or wildlife and wildlife habitat; based on the protection and mitigation measures presented for these VCs, and the predictions presented in the Environmental Assessment Report , Manitoba Hydro is obligated to ensure the adequacy of protection measures utilized for SAR/SOCC/traditional use species, and the effectiveness of mitigation measures, at minimum. The

			MMF requests Manitoba Hydro prepare monitoring plans for vegetation and wildlife that consider: - SOCC, SAR, and traditional use species that have potential to occur at the Project - Measures to determine the effectiveness of mitigation and management measures - Adaptive management measures and triggers/criteria that establish various actions
19.	2.3.3 – Transmission line construction; 2.3.4.1 – Vegetation management; Appendix E – CenvPP (Appendix N – Rehabilitation and Invasive Species Management Plan)	The ROW will be maintained on an ongoing basis throughout the operational phase using an integrated vegetation management approach to address undesirable or non-compatible vegetation issues. The integrated vegetation management approach includes mechanical, chemical or biological controls or a combination of these. Vegetation management during operations will be repeated over longer cycles (every five to seven years throughout the life of the Project). Mechanical methods include grubbing at tower structure sites where foundations are required, or access necessitates. Danger trees will be selectively removed. Hand cutting, mechanical cutting, and winter shearing will be used for ROW clearing based on time of year and local vegetation growth/existing conditions. Chemical herbicide treatments will target stumps for trees under 2.5m tall, with broadcast treatments targeting other vegetation less than 2.5m tall or used as a follow-up action to previous vegetation management work throughout operations. Tree injection methods may also be used selectively for trees over	While the MMF understands safe and reliable operation of the Project necessitates the ROW vegetation management proposed, the MMF prefers the use of manual/mechanical and biological methods over chemical controls. The MMF requests Manitoba Hydro install wildlife linkages/crossings across the existing ROW, in areas of frequent use by mammals (as identified by wildlife surveys) to offset residual Project and legacy Manitoba Hydro impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat. The linkages, at minimum, should provide security coverage (e.g., for line-of-sight issues that contribute to predation), forage/mast species compatible with the requirements of the ROW for operations (e.g., traditional use species, small shrubs, berries, etc.), and areas that provide relief from deep snow (significant barrier for select wildlife in winter). Vegetation species should be locally sourced from pre-construction seed collections (e.g., for use in seeding efforts, or for propagation in nurseries for future use), cuttings, or transplanting. Linkages may target species (e.g., caribou) or species' groups (e.g., small mammals) to enhance aesthetics, wildlife habitat and biodiversity along the right of way, while reducing the potential for invasive species establishment, and

		2.5m tall. Fertilizers may also be used to promote vegetation growth in rehabilitation areas. Biological controls encourage competing native and desirable vegetation growth that encourage wildlife use and control unwanted vegetation species (e.g., invasive or noxious species). This may also include seed collection, seeding, cuttings, and transplanting activities during rehabilitation efforts. "As there has already been a large amount of habitat degradation and increasing pressures on the surrounding areas, Manitoba Hydro seeks to enhance habitat and biodiversity on the ROW through the implementation of rehabilitation measures that consider traditional resource use along with wildlife habitat."	potentially contributing information to the recovery strategies for SAR/SOCC or harvesting opportunities for Indigenous communities exercising rights-based activities. These linkages should be considered ESSs in the CEnvPP and throughout the Project duration. The MMF has determined through yearly Caribou Workshops in northern Manitoba that there is a concern for diminishing caribou populations across the province as well as a need for support for immediate conservation efforts to ensure species survival. In the winter of 2020, in response to these concerns, the MMF began work on Project Caribou, a caribou monitoring and research project using motion-activated monitoring cameras installed throughout critical caribou wintering habitat in northern Manitoba. For linkages targeting caribou, the MMF requests the opportunity and capacity funding to expand Project Caribou and assist monitoring the rehabilitation efforts and use by caribou.
20.	2.4.1 – Existing infrastructure	Oils and gases used by the Project for connections are anticipated to be managed by the existing oil containment system and deluge system within the Radisson converter station infrastructure. The connections at the existing deluge building are still being assessed, and there is potential need for the deluge building to be relocated within the station site to accommodate the new transformer required for operation of the Project. The existing infrastructure summary does not provide information into the volume of oils and gases contained in the Project equipment.	Please provide updated information regarding the assessment of connections to the existing deluge building, and confirm if there is a need to relocate the system within the Radisson converter station site. The MMF further requests a breakdown of equipment and volumes of oils/gasses associated with Project equipment.
21.	4.1 – Scope of the assessment	Temporal boundaries used to determine the effects of the Project on VCs are based on the timing of Project activities. Construction is anticipated to last two years (with line operations on the ROW restricted to frozen ground conditions that may extend into fall	In absence of targeted information (e.g., mammals, amphibians), the MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro incorporates pre-construction surveys or sweeps for protected wildlife and features along the ROW, to efficiently search for and provide adequate mitigation (i.e.,

		and/or spring), operations and maintenance activities will occur for the serviceable life of the Project (approximately 75 years), and decommissioning activities are anticipated to span two years at the end of the Project life. Based on the timelines presented for Project activities, mitigation measures presented, and the associated progressive and final rehabilitation measures described: - Construction activities that extend into fall or spring will require additional monitoring and/or follow-up actions that also may require permitting (e.g., wildlife salvage/relocations), and/or rehabilitation activities to correct localized disturbance (e.g., rutting/compaction). This may impact the construction progress in select locations and potentially affect the in-service date (anticipated summer 2026). As construction will not commence in December 2024 as intended, test drilling/pitting for centerline investigations will be delayed, and ROW construction will be further delayed. - Operations and maintenance activities will maintain low growing vegetation (and thereby changing habitat/local diversity conditions for vegetation and wildlife) in the ROW for approximately 75-years, resulting in long-term and residual impacts to vegetation and wildlife resources. - Two years may be an insufficient period for decommissioning activities that restore land use and habitat function. Rehabilitation of wetland and forested habitats may take decades to properly function or	in the form of setbacks/buffers, temporal limitations on Project activities, transplanting, etc.) as determined by a Qualified Environmental Professional. In advance of any proposed clearing identified for the Project, the MMF further recommends at least one year of pre-construction surveys targeting SAR/SOCC that were omitted from the original investigations (e.g., caribou, pileated woodpecker). This information should be shared with the MMF and may be used to apply for permitting associated with any environmental constraints identified. The MMF further recommends that Manitoba Hydro adopt a chance-find procedure during operations and maintenance phases of the proposed Project to ensure adequate protections and mitigations are afforded to incidentally encountered wildlife species (e.g., SAR, SOCC, species of traditional or cultural importance). While the MMF appreciates the comprehensive Environmental Assessment Report provided for review, scoping of the Project's effects on terrestrial resources uses an inappropriate temporal boundary for residual and cumulative effects in the decommissioning period. The MMF requests the opportunity and funding to collaborate and execute post-decommissioning follow-up investigations and monitoring efforts to determine if mitigation measures and rehabilitation efforts are successful.

		provide species/community diversity at the existing level of the current conditions.	
22.	4.2 – Existing conditions; 5.5 – Historical and cultural setting	The Environmental Assessment Report acknowledges existing conditions including environmental effects that may have been caused by other past or present projects and activities. The Project will result in disruptions to traditional lands and cultural activities over time.	As the characterization of the existing conditions at the Project area uses a shifting baseline due to effects from other projects/activities, and there are data limitations and information gaps associated with construction activities (e.g., timing, permitting, etc.), the MMF requests Manitoba Hydro complete pre-construction wildlife sweeps immediately ahead of construction efforts, that ensure no occupied mammal dens/hibernacula or bird nests (e.g., cavities) will be disturbed and appropriate protections are in place to minimize human-wildlife interactions.
23.	5.1 – Climate	Baseline climate information was characterized using climate normals available for the 1981-2010 period. Updated climate normals are available for the same station for the 1991-2020 period. Both the analysis of the sensitivity to future climate change scenarios for all VCs, and the effects of the environment on the Project, use this outdated information for comparison in the Environmental Assessment Report .	The MMF requests Manitoba Hydro review the current climate normals available for the 1991-2020 period and adjust baseline information related to climate or future climate change scenarios. This will ensure the most current available information is presented and compared to existing conditions at the Project, and enhance the validity of the predictions proposed in the Environmental Assessment Report .
24.	5.4 – Soils; 6.4.4 – Mitigation measures	Many soils in the Project region are associated with widespread and discontinuous permafrost. Construction and decommissioning activities will disturb soils in select areas (e.g., tower footprints, use of vehicles/equipment, watercourse crossings, station modifications), and mitigation measures presented claim to re-establish soils, contours and drainage immediately following construction. Disturbed sites are to be rehabilitated in accordance with the Rehabilitation and Invasive Species Management Plan, that	Linear disturbances in areas of discontinuous permafrost may contribute to severely altered hydrology, ecology, and ground temperatures, that result in permafrost thaw and associated changes to terrain and ground cover. “The degree of initial disturbance is an important control on the extent of permafrost thaw and thus the overall potential recovery of the linear

		includes objectives for restoration of natural conditions, promoting wildlife habitat and aesthetic values, enhancing erosion protection, sediment control, and invasive species management. The plan does not incorporate the rehabilitation of permafrost soils.	disturbance".[5] Please provide additional information on the extent of potential permafrost areas along the preferred route ROW, and the implications for the Project if rehabilitation measures cannot restore permafrost soils to pre-construction conditions. The MMF requests Manitoba Hydro incorporate the re-establishment of permafrost soils into the Rehabilitation and Invasive Species Management Plan for the Project.
25.	6.0 – Vegetation (General comment); Appendix B – Vegetation Technical Report	Project construction, operations, and decommissioning will result in disruption of existing intact forest resources, wetlands, and plants used for traditional purposes with notable residual effects on vegetation. During operations, low vegetation will be allowed to recover, and regenerating trees or tall shrubs will be periodically managed Existing baseline conditions for vegetation were characterized using detailed desktop review, engagement feedback, and field surveys completed on developed and undeveloped portions of the existing right of way in 2022 and 2023. The dates of these surveys were not provided in the Environmental Assessment Report or appended technical report. Documented species from vegetation surveys include SOCC, non-native invasive species/noxious weeds, and traditional use plants. Many trees sampled during vegetation surveys averaged over 100 years old. "A reduction in growth or viability of certain plant	The dates of vegetation surveys were not provided for review and consideration. As various species will flower at different times throughout the growing season (e.g., early-, mid-, and late-flowering species), it is important that baseline surveys span multiple dates between approximately May and August to capture potential traditional use, rare, or invasive species at the Project. Please provide the dates of the vegetation surveys completed in 2022 and 2023. As permanent sampling areas were staked and recorded for future use during the vegetation surveys, the MMF requests Manitoba Hydro adopt an annual monitoring program to assess permanent plot sites for changes in community/species diversity over time. Please also refer to recommendations from Comments #9 and 10 (regarding vegetation monitoring, and potential accommodations).

[5] Williams, T.J., Quinton, W.L., and Baltzer, J.L. 2013. Linear disturbances on discontinuous permafrost: implications for thaw-induced changes to land cover and drainage patterns. https://www.scottycreek.com/media/documents/publications/61_Williams%20et%20al.%2C%202013.pdf

		species adjacent to transmission rights-of-way has been found in past studies." "…[E]ffects conclusions for traditional use plants may be underestimated because we did not receive any current feedback through engagement about specific traditional use plants or locations of concern through engagement…. Other limitations with data include imperfect detection of species of conservation and traditional use plants in the field, survey timing, and seasonal changes experienced by different species. There is also uncertainty related to unsurveyed areas, where additional occurrences of species of conservation concern, traditional use plants, and non-native invasive plants may be present." Due to limited Project interactions and well-established vegetation protections and mitigation measures, natural vegetation monitoring is not proposed for the Project. "Permanently located sampling areas can be used to record the change in vegetation that can be systematically monitored through time."	
26.	6.4.2 – Change in vegetation community diversity; 6.4.5 – Characterization of residual effects	"Any proposed loss of wetland benefits in Class 3 wetlands require offset under *The Water Rights Act* (Manitoba)." As presented, the Environmental Assessment Report did not provide wetland classes impacted by the Project within the PDA. It is unclear if a wetland assessment was completed to support the impacts/mitigations presented for the Project interactions with wetlands. Based on a qualitative assessment of potential effects on wetland vegetation, the Project is not anticipated to affect wetland	Please provide further information regarding wetland classes identified along the preferred route and confirm if the ROW was assessed for wetland class. Despite the qualitative evaluation that asserts potential effects on wetland vegetation are not anticipated to affect wetland benefits (due to construction taking place under frozen conditions), there are potential construction delays identified that may extend construction into fall or spring, which will ultimately change existing ground conditions in construction areas, including wetlands. The MMF requests an additional qualitative evaluation to be presented

		benefits due to the care taken to avoid impact on wetlands and riparian habitat through the application of mitigation measures; however, this assumes all construction work on the ROW in wetland habitat will be completed under frozen conditions, and this may not be possible with schedule delays already presented above.	for the potential effects on wetland vegetation/benefits if construction activities expanded into fall or spring seasons.
27.	6.4.4 – Mitigation measures	Only water or approved dust suppression products will be used to control dust on ROW access.	The MMF agree with the use of water for dust suppression on ROW access roads/trails. If other products are utilized for dust suppression at the Project, the MMF requests further details about the products proposed for use (e.g., application rates, time of year for use, duration and frequency of use, ingredients, safety/hazard information, etc.).
28.	7.0 – Wildlife and wildlife habitat (General comment)	Information shared from engagement feedback included that the area supports habitat used by important wildlife including caribou, small/large furbearers, and birds. The Project will result in altered wildlife behaviours (e.g., avoidance, attraction, changes in migratory pathways), use (e.g., forage/mast species and habitat impacts due to clearing and vegetation maintenance on 252ha of habitat), and therefore long-term changes in diversity. There were no targeted (e.g., wildlife species- or group-specific) surveys completed for mammals (e.g., large/small furbearers, carnivores, ungulates, bats), amphibians, crepuscular species or woodpeckers (that may breed outside of the migratory breeding bird window), and terrestrial invertebrates that are present in the Project area (including SOCC and traditional use species). Environmentally sensitive sites (ESSs), features or areas, are to be identified and mapped prior to clearing efforts; however, it is	As no targeted surveys were completed in support of the Environmental Assessment Report for several species/species groups, the MMF request Manitoba Hydro are respectful of sensitive timing windows for moose and caribou (e.g., migration, calving, wintering, rutting) and mammal maternal den sites (e.g., wolf), that are not captured in the CEnvPP Reduced Risk Timing Windows. The MMF further requests the Reduced Risk Timing Windows incorporate bird species that may breed outside of the migratory breeding and nesting time period (e.g., raptors, woodpeckers), and additional wildlife features used by birds (e.g., lekking sites for sharp-tailed grouse). Please provide further information on how pre-clearing surveys will take place (timing, duration, frequency), and summarize how these contribute to identifying ESSs prior to construction efforts.

		unclear how pre-clearing surveys will take place (timing, duration, frequency), and what these pre-construction surveys entail. Despite the regional wildlife manager noting no specific wildlife concerns in the Project area, there are notable residual effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat based on the assessment (including SOCC and traditional use species; e.g., wider right of way for wildlife crossing between cover areas), and unaddressed concerns remain around the timing of progressive/final rehabilitation efforts (to provide adequate and functioning habitat) as well as a fulsome assessment of cumulative effects on vegetation resources (that directly impact wildlife and wildlife habitat). With mitigation and environmental protection measures, cumulative effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat are predicted to be not significant, with a high level of confidence. "Due to limited project interactions, well-established wildlife and wildlife habitat protections and mitigations, and outcomes from similar projects, wildlife monitoring is not proposed for the project."	Please also refer to recommendations from Comments #9 and 10 (regarding wildlife and wildlife habitat monitoring, and potential accommodations).
29.	7.3.6 – Species of Conservation Concern	Barn swallow has been recently downlisted (2023) from Threatened to Special Concern.	Please update the SOCC information to reflect the updated status for barn swallow.
30.	17.0 – Environmental Protection Program (EPP; General comment)	"Manitoba Hydro will use the information gathered during follow-up and monitoring activities to verify the accuracy of the environmental assessment effects predictions and the effectiveness of implemented mitigation measures." "There will be opportunities for additional sensitive sites to be identified in the EPP should any be discovered during construction or operation of the project."	Please refer to recommendations from Comments #9 and 10 (regarding wildlife and wildlife habitat monitoring, and potential accommodations). Regardless of mitigation measures applied during operations, a specific plan to manage/coordinate schedules (timing, duration, frequency) and requirements for vegetation maintenance, planned inspections, monitoring or follow-up, rehabilitation efforts, and

		During construction, general and specific environmental protection and mitigation measures are provided for ESSs identified during the engagement and Environmental Assessment Report process in the Construction Environmental Protection Plan (CEnvPP). Standard mitigation measures will apply during operations; as such, a specific plan is not anticipated.	adaptive management actions, would be useful to ensure fulsome understanding of all Project requirements by contractors and staff.
31.	17.7.5.7 – Clearing Management; Appendix E – CenvPP (Appendix P – Clearing Management Plan)	A Clearing Management Plan will be developed before clearing, including guidance for vegetation removal during construction, and clearing prescriptions. The Clearing Management Plan is not available for review.	Tree-clearing areas will be identified in advance of construction activities. As such, the MMF requests advanced notification and access to these areas at appropriate times of year, to exercise our Harvesting and Gathering Rights. The MMF requests opportunity and capacity funding to review the Clearing Management Plan, once available.
32.	Appendix C – Avian Technical Report; Appendix E – CenvPP (Appendix C – Timing windows; and Appendix E-6 – Manitoba Hydro Breeding Bird Buffer Guidelines)	Breeding bird surveys were completed by placing clustered arrays of ARUs at 13 locations in 2022, and 7 locations in 2023. Locations of survey arrays are separated by approximately 3km. No data was retrieved from one ROW site and one reference site each year of surveys. A relatively high number of bird-wire collisions were observed in surveys completed in May 2023, compared to other bird-wire collision surveys done in the province. The bird-wire collision study was completed at four locations along approximately 2.8km of the ROW; however, several other water crossing locations could be suitable for this study along the preferred route. Site 1 near the Kettle River, identified three sharp-tailed grouse mortalities during the survey and had previously recorded a trumpeter swan pair with cygnets in a separate survey from 2020.	Please confirm breeding bird ARU studies were completed in all habitat types along the preferred route, and if the locations surveyed in 2023 were repeated sites from the initial survey in 2022. Please clarify which sites had no data retrieved for analysis. Knowing this information will provide an additional understanding of existing conditions for breeding birds along the preferred route. The MMF agree with the recommendations from the Avian Technical Report, such that parallel transmission lines within the ESSs identified, should be outfitted with bird diverters to mitigate potential collisions. Sharp-tailed grouse (in early spring) gather in annual dancing grounds (lek sites) used year after year for males to demonstrate courtship behaviours before breeding and nesting. Lek sites have not been identified as a wildlife feature that requires a least-risk timing window for construction or Project activities, although Appendix E-6 (Manitoba Hydro Breeding Bird Buffer Guidelines) note a 1000m

			buffer is required for lek sites based on Provincial requirements. Please also update the Least Risk Timing Windows to include lek sites.
33.	Appendix E – CenvPP (General comment)	EI-1: Aircraft use (if applicable) does not incorporate timing restrictions (e.g., time of year, time of day) for use. EC-9: Removal of beaver dams/muskrat houses must be undertaken by a licensed trapper/person with valid permits. PA-12: Directional drilling has not been discussed as a Project activity, yet there are general mitigation measures associated with this activity in the CEnvPP.	The MMF requests Manitoba Hydro adopt conservative timing for helicopter use that remains respectful of ungulate (e.g., caribou, moose) sensitive timeframes (e.g., calving, migration, rutting, wintering). Transport Canada visual flight restrictions for helicopters will likely limit operations to daytime use; however, avoidance of early morning (dawn) and sunset (dusk) should be avoided to the extent possible, in order to limit sensory disturbance during the most active daytime periods for ungulates. Many Red River Métis citizens are registered trappers. As beaver and muskrat are traditionally harvested species, The MMF requests the opportunity to work with Manitoba Hydro under an economic development agreement to manage muskrat/beaver along the ROW preferred route. Please clarify if directional drilling will be completed as a Project activity during construction.
34.	Appendix E – CenvPP (Appendix D – Buffers and Setbacks)	Occupied mammal dens do not include all large mammals and small mammals assessed as VCs in the Environmental Assessment Report (e.g., lynx omitted).	Please update the Buffers and Setbacks requirements to include all species assessed in the Environmental Assessment Report .
35.	General	There are several references throughout the Environmental Assessment Report for a Biosecurity Management Plan prepared for the Project, that has implications on rehabilitation and invasive species management, forest diseases and pests, waste management, equipment and materials management, etc. There	The MMF requests Manitoba Hydro provide opportunity and funding to collaborate and execute the Biosecurity Management Plan.

		is no Biosecurity Management Plan provided in the Environmental Assessment Report for review and consideration.	
Harvesting and Important Sites			
36.	9.4.1 Change to Harvested Resources	Manitoba Hydro notes that through engagement caribou were identified as a key species of interest. “Manitoba Hydro understands that engaged First Nations visit the area to hunt caribou.” Red River Métis Citizens also hunt caribou within the RAA, and as a result engagement solely with First Nations on issues as they relate to caribou and caribou harvest is not appropriate.	The MMF would like to remind Manitoba Hydro that they must meaningfully engage with the MMF and make improved efforts to understand how Red River Métis Citizens use the lands throughout the PDA/LAA/RAA and the impacts that the project will have on Red River Métis harvest.
37.	9.4.1 Change to Harvested Resources	Herbicides, while they are not applied indiscriminately, are allowed to enter the uncontrolled environment, and as a result of overspray, runoff, or direct transfer to other plants or the soil from the decay of target species, present a significant concern for Red River Métis Citizens, as these herbicides could: a) adversely impact and kill or damage non-target medicines and plants for consumption, reducing productivity b) be uptaken or reside on non-target medicines and plants for consumption, which may then be uptaken by Red River Métis Citizens who ingest or otherwise interact with impacted medicines and plants, or c) be perceived to have harmful adverse effects, resulting in Red River Métis Citizens avoiding harvest from the project area	The MMF requests that herbicides only be used as a last resort against invasive species which may otherwise have more adverse effects on native plants or medicines than herbicides. In all other instances, mechanical, biological, or other non-chemical forms of vegetation management (e.g. controlled burning) should be used in place of herbicides. The MMF requests that following clearing and revegetation activities, Manitoba Hydro works with the MMF to map plants of cultural importance and/or which are harvested as medicines or for sustenance. Once mapped, the MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro establishes exclusion zones in which it will not use herbicides or other chemical pesticides within 100 m of these exclusionary zones Additionally, the MMF requests that if herbicides must be used, Manitoba Hydro post information prior to, during, and after use to notify Citizens of herbicide use.

38.	9.4.2 Change in Access to Harvesting and Recreational Areas	Manitoba Hydro notes that the increased access by new harvesters and recreationists is anticipated to be small given that the project is proposed in an existing developed right of way, however, Manitoba Hydro does not consider the temporary increase in harvest pressure associated with the increased presence of workers to the area.	The MMF requests that workers from outside of the Gillam area or who do not hold section 35 rights be restricted from harvesting (hunting, fishing, gathering) within the RAA. This will curb increased harvest pressure from workers on the project during construction.
39.	9.4.3 Change to Harvesting and Recreational Experiences	As noted in the submission provided by the Manitoba Métis Federation 2017, some Red River Métis Citizens prefer to harvest "where it is quiet...where there is no development". While this issue is inherent to the nature of the project, the MMF is concerned regarding both the additive effects of the R44H project as well as overall the immense amount of development, especially that related to hydropower development along the Nelson River, and how matters of aesthetic or experience, and other non-tangible impacts to way of life for Red River Métis Citizens is being contemplated within the scope of this assessment. Red River Métis Citizens rely on access to undisturbed public lands/waters to harvest, conduct other traditional practices, and maintain the Red River Métis way of life. As the Red River Métis in other parts of the National Homeland has seen, development and erosion of these lands/waters do not happen all at once, rather it is the result of continued and progressive development and the resultant cumulative and interactive effects. The Red River Métis in being forced to respond to these effects have progressively been forced to adjust behaviours, timing, locations, and activities based on lands/waters which are available for activities. Pulling from the experience felt in other parts of the National Homeland, when considering the implications of R44H, the MMF views this not simply as another transmission line, but rather yet	The MMF believe strongly in sustainable development along with the opportunities if brings to Red River Métis Citizens, however, it is essential to balance this with responsible stewardship of the land and waters which ensures that the conditions needed to allow the Red River Métis way-of-life to flourish are sustained for future generations.

		further progressive erosion of areas of pristine and natural environment, which results in the need to further adapt, adjust, or avoid in considering how to maintain way of life. Therefore, in looking at the potential aesthetic or experiential effects of this project, the quote presented by Manitoba Hydro though correct where some may prefer to harvest where it is quiet...where there is no development", this only reveals half of the story, in which Manitoba Hydro is imposing a decision on Red River Métis Citizens on harvesting (or other activities), in a degraded experiential environment or elsewhere. Ultimately, where the MMF maintain the biggest concerns is that for some, a third option may be contemplated which is to avoid or abandon and activity altogether, as adapting or moving locations to do so is just not possible. All too frequently this is the decision which has been imposed on Red River Métis Citizens in more developed areas of the National Homeland, but with continued development of hydro resources and other activities, the RAA has been placed on a similar trajectory.	
40.	9.4.7 Determination of Significance	The MMF does not fully agree with Manitoba Hydro's assessment of significance as it relates to cumulative effects on changes to harvester resources, changes in access to harvesting and recreational areas, and changes to harvesting and recreational experience. With transmission lines requiring linear disturbance, the MMF agrees that new greenfield disturbance represents the single greatest source of additive or cumulative effects, however, subsequent transmission lines along an existing right of way act to cement the linear disturbance, effectively extending the life of the disturbance, rather than limiting it to simply the life of a single line (for example R44H has an anticipated life of 75 years, presumably the existing four transmission lines which run parallel with R44H would also have similar life spans). In an instance where only one transmission	The MMF therefore disagrees with the characterization that cumulative effects will be limited, as this highlights the need for Manitoba Hydro to work with the MMF to minimize the overall extent of disturbance limiting concerns related to fragmentation both spatially as well as temporally.

		line existed, the likelihood that after 75 years the line would be decommissioned and revegetated would be greater than an instance where five lines run parallel. As a result, while the additive impacts as represented by linear distance or area disturbed may be relatively small when considering cumulative effects, the temporal aspect for maintaining the disturbance beyond the initial proposed life span is significant.	
41.	10.1.3 Consideration of Feedback Shared During Engagement	The MMF has shared that the Nelson River corridor would have been a major travel area for Red River Métis Citizens, and there are potential cultural heritage resources in the area. The MMF further expressed interest in learning from the work of the archaeologists and requested to be informed about what the archaeologists find. At this juncture, the MMF is unaware of any archaeological assessment which has been conducted for this project to date. The MMF is therefore concerned that a) the potential impacts to archaeological or cultural heritage resources may not be considered within the scope of this Environment Act review, and b) as there has yet to be meaningful engagement with Manitoba Hydro or their archaeologist regarding the assessment of cultural heritage resources, an archaeological impact assessment may be performed without full and complete understanding of how Red River Métis Citizens would have used the Nelson River corridor historically, and therefore archaeological potential may go overlooked.	The MMF again restates its request to be fully involved in the archaeological assessment of this this project, which includes ensure appropriate consideration for how Red River Métis Citizens may have used the LAA historically. If elevated cultural heritage potential is identified within the LAA, the MMF requests to be an active participant in any Stage 2+ archaeological assessment work necessary to understand cultural resources in the LAA. Additionally, the MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to develop an appropriate change finds protocol that is sensitive to the unique and distinct needs of the Red River Métis.
42.	10.3.4 Cultural Sites, Features, and Contemporary Cultural Land Use	In reflecting on the potential lack of information regarding culturally important sites, which may include harvest areas for the Red River Métis, the MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF and Red River Métis Citizens to engage in mapping exercises along the proposed right of way to identified	This work should occur before construction, and where construction activities may disturb harvest sites for plant-based medicines or foods, afterwards to determine areas that should be protected from both construction and ongoing maintenance.

		any yet unknown areas which should be protected as areas of cultural interest.	
43.	10.4.2 Disturbance of Cultural Sites or Features Important to Indigenous Peoples	The noise associated with corona discharge although generally quite low, cannot be overlooked as it may not be well understood by land users, and may be perceived as a threat to health and safety, resulting in Red River Métis Citizens avoiding the area.	The MMF recommends that as a measure to minimize perceived impacts from corona discharge, Manitoba Hydro places signs at access points and towers describing the phenomena and that is poses no risk to human health.
44.	10.4.3.1 Mitigation Measures Related to Heritage Resources in Their In-Situ Context	The MMF supports the implementation of a Cultural and Heritage Resource Protection Plan for this project.	The MMF recommends that beyond the steps listed in Section 10.4.3.1, Manitoba Hydro will also work with MMF staff to ensure that archaeological monitoring will be used and that they have a firm understanding of the potential differences in what constitutes heritage resources and where they may be found for the Red River Métis, which may differ from those which exist for local First Nations. It is essential that Manitoba Hydro take a distinctions-based approach to understanding and communicating cultural heritable resources for this project.
45.	10.4.3.1 Mitigation Measures Related to Heritage Resources in Their In-Situ Context	Heritage Resources Impact Assessments are a good tool for conducting a preliminary evaluation of cultural resource potential, however, they are simply a tool and are not without their limitations. Most notably, in the MMF's experience areas identified as having low archaeological potential may still yield important cultural resources, and as a result, require elevated vigilance similar to areas of higher cultural resource potential.	The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro apply the CHRPP including active chance finds protocols for the entirety of the project right of way not simply areas where high archaeological potential is identified.
46.	10.4.3.2 Mitigation measures related to cultural sites or features important to Indigenous peoples	The MMF is concerned that by focusing solely on Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training co-presented by Fox Lake Cree Nation, workers may not be exposed to the unique and distinct cultural differences of the Red River Métis.	The MMF requests that in presenting Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training, Manitoba Hydro make efforts to ensure that it's workforce understand the nuance of the Red River Métis presence in the Nelson River area and how the project and workforce may impact the rights, interests, and values of Red River Métis Citizens.
47.	10.4.4 Characterization of residual effects	Manitoba Hydro concludes that the project may result in low-magnitude irreversible residual effects. The MMF accepts this assessment, however, is concerned that Manitoba Hydro has not	The MMF would like to reiterate the need to ensure that cultural resource monitors are employed as part of this project and that they are competent in identifying cultural resources and non-

		proposed any meaningful mitigations to actively attempt to eliminate these effects on cultural resources.	tangible cultural resources as they relate to locations or items of specific value to Red River Métis Citizens. Additionally, the MMF notes there remain opportunities for Manitoba Hydro to fill knowledge gaps to map out areas of specific cultural importance along the proposed project right of way. The MMF therefore recommend that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF and Red River Métis Citizens to develop those maps such that the Environmental Protection Plan and other management documents can appropriately reflect the need for site-specific mitigations or avoidance measures.
Socio-economics			
48.	11.4.2.1 Mitigation for Reduced Availability of Short-Term Accommodations	Manitoba Hydro states that local workers will be hired whenever possible but fails to outline any specific measures that will ensure that they follow through on that commitment.	The MMF is seeking more detail on efforts Manitoba Hydro will make to hire locally or regionally, specifically concerning the prioritization of hiring Red River Métis Citizens. Acknowledging potential barriers to realizing meaningful employment, the MMF further is interested in working with Manitoba Hydro to develop targeted training and skill development opportunities for Red River Métis Citizens to ensure that benefits stay within the community affected by the project.
49.	12.4.2 Mitigation Measures	The MMF finds Manitoba Hydro's overall approach for ensuring local and Indigenous (specifically Red River Métis) employment and business opportunities to be lacking and unstructured.	The MMF believes strongly that for Manitoba Hydro to realize the benefits of hiring local staff and procuring from local businesses, Manitoba Hydro must position itself, Red River Métis Citizens, and Red River Métis-owned businesses to realize the benefits of this work, which may include identifying local opportunities for labour and procurement, proactively working with the MMF local and other local programming to identify potential candidates, developing training and skills development, and establishing employment/procurement targets and set asides.
50.	Table 12-5 Labour Force Characterization for	Manitoba Hydro has not made any efforts to understand workforce characteristics for Red River Métis Citizens living	Manitoba Hydro must make specific efforts to ensure that Red River Métis Citizens are not overlooked in economic development

	Communities in the LAA/RAA for 2021	within the LAA/RAA for the project. As a result of this, the MMF are greatly concerned that Red River Métis Citizens may not be meaningfully targeted for employment or procurement opportunities as part of the R44H, resulting in no benefits being realized by Red River Métis Citizens.	opportunities. The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to understand information gaps as it relates to employment demographics of Red River Métis Citizens in the LAA/RAA as a first step in ensuring that Red River Métis Citizens are not disadvantaged or adversely impacted by economic development associated with R44H. From this baseline characterization. The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro continue to work with the MMF in identifying meaningful opportunities for Red River Métis Citizens to realize meaningful benefits from this project.
51.	13.0 Health and Safety	The MMF is strongly concerned by Manitoba Hydro's lack of consideration for the potential distinct impacts on Red River Métis Citizens' Health and Safety as a result of this project. Specifically, Manitoba Hydro makes no effort to distinguish Red River Métis Citizens from the general population of the RAA, and as a result, assessment and mitigation measures which may be proposed as a result may fail to consider the distinct circumstances associated with Red River Métis Citizens living within the RAA.	The MMF requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF in establishing a meaningful health, safety and wellness baseline for Red River Métis Citizens living within the RAA or using the area for harvest and cultural practice. Based on this characterization, the MMF specifically requests that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to identify programming targeting the mitigation or elimination of health, safety, and wellness of Red River Métis Citizens, ensuring that health, safety, and wellness is monitored through the life of the project and that appropriate adaptive management measures be employed to address issues as they are identified. Without this baseline characterization, this project may lead to adverse impacts to the health, safety, and wellness of Red River Métis Citizens without it being detected with the result being adverse impacts which could have otherwise been addressed.
52.	Table 13-5: Project Residual Effects on Health and Safety	The MMF has concerns about how Manitoba Hydro has characterized the decline in the sense of community safety for the R44H line, which ranges between No Measurable Change and Moderate. As acknowledged by Manitoba Hydro throughout Section 13, there is a well-established link between construction camps and the risk to public and personal safety as a result of an increase in a transient male-dominated population and a	The MMF challenges Manitoba Hydro's approach to mitigating these factors, as they appear to implement very little in the way of preventative programming, monitoring, or corrective actions to deal with social wellness issues which may arise from this project. The MMF strongly recommends that Manitoba Hydro work with the MMF to identify culturally appropriate programming both for the project workforce as well as those Red River Métis Citizens living

		resultant increase in consumption of alcohol, drugs or other substances, gender-based violence, and crime.	within the RAA aimed at curbing possible impacts to health, safety, and wellness.