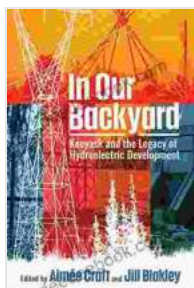


Keeyask: A Legacy of Hydroelectric Development in Manitoba

Nestled amidst the vast wilderness of northern Manitoba, Keeyask is a colossal hydroelectric project that has left an indelible mark on the region's landscape, economy, and indigenous communities. This article delves into the history of Keeyask, its far-reaching impacts, and its significance in the context of renewable energy development and the ongoing reconciliation between Canada and its First Nations peoples.



In Our Backyard: Keeyask and the Legacy of Hydroelectric Development by Aimée Craft

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
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The Genesis of Keeyask

The seeds of the Keeyask project were sown in the early 1970s, when the Manitoba government embarked on a comprehensive review of its hydroelectric potential. Amidst the search for new energy sources to meet

the province's growing demand and support industrialization, the Nelson River emerged as a promising candidate.

The Nelson River, with its mighty flow and numerous waterfalls, offered an abundance of hydroelectricity generation opportunities. After extensive feasibility studies and consultations with indigenous groups, the Keeyask site was selected in 1990 as the optimal location for a major hydroelectric development.

Construction and Completion

Construction on Keeyask commenced in 2014 and spanned several years, employing thousands of workers and engaging with multiple contractors. The project involved the construction of a massive concrete-faced rockfill dam, a powerhouse containing six turbines, and ancillary infrastructure such as transmission lines and a reservoir.

The dam itself, standing approximately 25 meters tall and stretching over 1,000 meters long, created a reservoir that extends over 1,500 square kilometers, flooding vast tracts of boreal forest and altering the flow of the Nelson River.

In 2022, the Keeyask project was officially completed, becoming one of the largest hydroelectric developments in Canada and a significant contributor to Manitoba's renewable energy portfolio.

Indigenous Partnerships and Impacts

The development of Keeyask has had profound impacts on the indigenous communities of the region, particularly the Wuskwatim and Keeyask Cree Nations. These communities have a deep connection to the land and

waters of the Nelson River and have been affected by the project in diverse ways.

Consultation and negotiation processes between the First Nations and the provincial government were complex and protracted. Indigenous concerns centered on the potential environmental, social, and cultural impacts of the project, including the displacement of traditional hunting and fishing grounds, disruption of cultural practices, and effects on water quality.

To address these concerns, Manitoba Hydro, the Crown corporation responsible for Keeyask, implemented mitigation measures and established benefit-sharing agreements with the affected First Nations. These agreements included the provision of funding for education, training, and economic development initiatives, as well as the creation of new employment opportunities.

Environmental Considerations

The construction of Keeyask has not been without environmental trade-offs. The flooding of vast areas of forest has resulted in the loss of wildlife habitat and the displacement of numerous species. The altered flow of the Nelson River has also had downstream effects, including changes in fish populations and water temperature.

Manitoba Hydro conducted extensive environmental impact assessments and developed mitigation plans to minimize these impacts, such as fish passageways and habitat restoration programs. Nonetheless, the ecological legacy of Keeyask is still being studied and understood by scientists and conservationists.

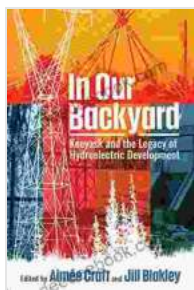
Economic Development and Renewable Energy

Keeyask has been a significant economic driver for Manitoba, creating thousands of jobs during construction and providing a reliable source of clean energy for the province. The project has also contributed to the growth of indigenous businesses and communities in the region.

Hydroelectric power is a renewable and sustainable source of energy, and Keeyask is a major contributor to Manitoba's transition away from fossil fuels. The project is expected to generate enough electricity to power approximately 400,000 homes and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 4.5 million tonnes annually.

The Keeyask hydroelectric project is a complex and multifaceted undertaking that has left a lasting legacy on the landscape, economy, and indigenous communities of northern Manitoba. While its construction has brought both benefits and challenges, it has also highlighted the importance of responsible resource development, renewable energy, and reconciliation between Canada and its First Nations peoples.

As society continues to grapple with the need for sustainable energy solutions, the legacy of Keeyask serves as a valuable reminder that large-scale infrastructure projects must be approached with careful consideration for their environmental, social, and cultural implications.

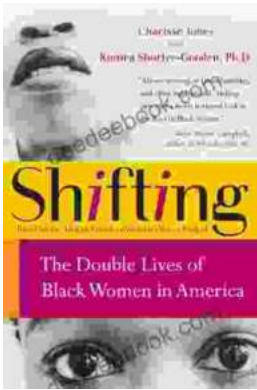


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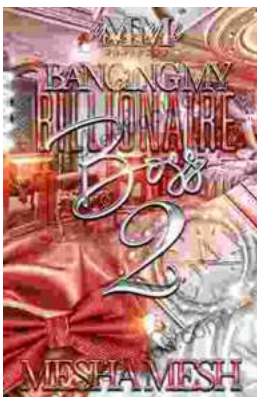
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