

NORTHERN OJIBWA LAND TENURE

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La recherche cartographique dans le nord de l'Ontario, au Canada, a montré qu'il est possible de distinguer deux modèles radicalement différents de territoires d'exploitation pour deux communautés voisines d'Indiens Cris. Ces deux communautés ne reproduisent pas les facteurs historiques de l'exploitation territoriale de la façon dont cela est présenté dans les écrits relatifs au régime foncier pour l'est subarctique depuis les cinquante dernières années. Cet article propose que ces facteurs (tels la structure et l'organisation sociales) peuvent être plus significatifs dans la détermination des modèles d'utilisation de la terre que dans ceux indiqués par les écrits.

Research on mapping in northern Ontario, Canada has revealed two critically different patterns of land use for two adjacent Cree Indian communities with roughly equal populations but dramatically different histories. These two communities do not replicate historical correlates of land use in the manner projected in the land tenure literature for the eastern Subarctic over the past fifty years. It is suggested that factors such as social structure and organization may be more significant in determining land use patterns than those indicated in the literature.

This essay is an exploration of the dialectical relationship between the requirements of organizing a hunting-gathering economy and the internal logic of a kinship system as developed by the Northern Ojibwa of northwestern Ontario, Canada.

The relationship between kinship and economics can be regarded only as dialectical, as kinship is neither autonomous nor entirely determined by productive organization. Nevertheless, the overall form of Northern Ojibwa kinship organization is inextricably linked to a particular economic form. Among the Northern Ojibwa, when economic production is stressed due to ecological/environmental changes, kinship organization is affected by the economic stress and is compressed and altered in response. And, at these and at other times, the requirements of kinship organization may affect the organization of economic endeavor. The effects of ecological/environmental changes on the structure of hunting-gathering groups are well documented (Bishop 1974; Rogers and Black 1976; Feit 1983).

Most research on subarctic land tenure systems has concentrated on ecology. This research has tried to prove either the aboriginality of family hunting territories (Speck 1915a, 1915b, 1923, 1927; Feit 1983), its contemporary legitimacy (Labrador Inuit Association 1977; Nahanni 1977), or its non-aboriginality (Leacock 1954; Knight 1968; see Note 1).

The purpose of this essay is to explain the range of forms of organizing control over land within a particular period—specifically the contemporary one—and region—such as northern Ontario. I suggest here that the multiplicity of land tenure forms found in northern Ontario and throughout the Subarctic is a result of the dialectical relation between kinship and economics and is not due solely to environmentally determined factors. In other words, this range of forms suggests that relatively widespread or common ecological conditions reveal localized social groups at various stages in the development of the dialectical relationship; local group organization is not simply the result of localized environmental conditions. Thus communities using similar ecological niches may emphasize different kinship principles when organizing the exploitation of resources. This selectivity in turn produces different patterns of land tenure. In this essay, I shall contrast the principles structuring different land tenure patterns in two communities: Wunnummin Lake and Kasabonika Lake.

The empirical data were collected during the period 1975-1980. Thus my comments on the dialectical relationship will be restricted to that period, although it is tempting to apply the implications of this relationship to past and present in the eastern Subarctic.

LAND USE PATTERNS: WUNNUMMIN LAKE

Northern Ojibwa social organization provides four land use patterns: community hunting land, or "homeland": the total land area, continuously used by the people resident in the community; patronymic aggregate lands, or patronymic territories: lands used for trapping, fowling, winter fishing, and most hunting by sets of co-residential units (see Map 1); co-residential unit areas: lands within patronymic territories used by specific sets of commensal units; and individual traplines: the specific routes of individuals from within the commensal units, used either alone or with members of one's own commensal unit, patrilineals, affines, or a category known as "dodem" (partner).

All four patterns are present in Wunnummin Lake (settled in 1964, population 315), but there is a definite and clear emphasis on patronymic territories. Most individuals will use two but no more than three separate territories during their lifetime. Each commensal unit has access to one, and at most to two, patronymic

territories through filiation and affinal ties. Thus all trapping and fowling and most hunting and winter fishing of each co-residential group is relegated to specific patronymic territories. Within each patronymic territory, there is a further subdivision of areas/trapping routes to be used by each commensal unit. These land use decisions are made on a seasonal/yearly basis by members of the patronymic unit. There are seven patronymic territories in the Wunnummin Lake homeland.

Kasabonika Lake

Kasabonika Lake (population 435) is an old, well-established community and is different from more recent settlements, such as Wunnummin Lake, which is fifty miles southwest. Its land use pattern is markedly different. Of the four patterns noted for the other Kayahna communities, only one is discernible in Kasabonika: the pattern of the communal hunting band, or "homeland" (Sieciechowicz 1985). In other words, although people carry out their activities in the same way as their neighbors at Wunnummin Lake, and hunt with kinsmen, affines, and household members in specific areas along traplines, they are not associated with specific areas and traplines.

The difference in the pattern of land utilization from that found elsewhere in the Kayahna region arises from two factors. The first is that trapping is organized differently. The second is that a stable population has always been in residence, for at least part of the year, in this location. Trapping arrangements are sorted out late in the summer in order to avoid overlap in the use of areas. Thus, in Kasabonika Lake, there is no exclusivity of territories. Rather, there is a great deal of movement within the homeland.

The particularity of the Kasabonika Lake pattern can be best understood in terms of the particular kinship and affinal arrangements that have developed within this community. The kinship network consists of a set of patrilaterally linked households of the same patronym that constitutes the core of the community. A number of other patronymic groups are intermarried into this core at the fourth and first ascending generations. Individuals who have married core patronym spouses are themselves considered related to the core patronym. Through marriage, they reaffirm their affiliation.

Of the twenty-nine households interviewed at Kasabonika Lake, only two were not related to the core set of families within the first or second degree. Except for two, all trapping households interviewed were linked either as parallel or cross-cousins of the first degree or were exclusively parallel cousins of the second degree. They formed a cooperating and interactive

set of trappers, hunters, and fishermen—in essence, a pool of potential economic partners for one another.

Given the close fraternal core present at Kasabonika Lake, a number of cooperative economic associations are open to individuals. That is, all core trappers, within certain limits of amicability and household preference, have available an array of possible trapping partners. Individual trappers do indeed take advantage of this situation. Every core trapper uses at least two, and on average about six, different areas. Most areas are used in association with different partners.

Individual areas are characteristically circular, cutting across a number of patch types (Winterhalder 1981:68). The sizes of the areas used are within the range found at Wunnummin Lake. In these respects, the trapping pattern of Kasabonika Lake is identical to that found elsewhere in the region.

Strong control over the community's homeland is maintained through the pattern of trapping and other activities. Limited external contact is maintained with four of the Kayahna region communities: Big Trout Lake, Wapakeka Lake, Long Dog Lake, and Wunnummin Lake. Given its highly uniform kinship and affinal network, the Kasabonika Lake homeland is in essence one undifferentiated patronymic territory, in contrast to the heterogeneous kinship and affinal arrangements at Wunnummin Lake, with its seven distinct patronymic territories.

KINSHIP AND LAND TENURE

For a longer-range view of the effect of kinship on land tenure, it is necessary to state two basic and well-documented premises. First, in the early historical period, there existed in the Subarctic large communal hunting groups or bands which used large territories, according to the availability of big game (moose or caribou). When game was lacking, the groups would separate into smaller co-residential units, which would then concentrate on exploiting smaller game (fish and hare) in more localized territories (Rogers and Black 1976). Second, there is an irregular cycle to this extension and compression of social groups (Bishop 1974; Rogers and Black-Rogers 1976; Feit 1983).

Though both tenets were evident in northern Ontario in the past, two questions remain unanswered. First, how did the system work from the point of view of the interacting people? From observations in a number of northern communities, I knew that the decision for a set of households to separate from an extant community did *not* occur suddenly but took years of discussion, argument, ill-feeling, and eventual consensus. When the break finally occurred, it was anti-climactic (Siecichowicz 1982). Second, was there a slower process of reorganization involved in

the transformation from a small to a larger group? If so, how did this process unfold? The communal hunting group seemed very different organizationally from the family or small group.

Semi-Permanent Settlement

The Ojibwa in northern Ontario reside semi-permanently in villages, where principally housing and local health and education facilities are available. There are three types of semi-permanence. In the first and most common form, people are away from the community for much of the year. Individuals who trap, hunt, fish, or harvest wild rice can be away for up to two-thirds of the year. The second type is associated with newly married couples (see Note 2), where one of the partners, usually the husband, is from another settlement. Husband and wife may decide to remain in the wife's village if the local people are receptive to outsiders; if not, within a few years the couple may move to the husband's village.

The third type results from the signing of treaties and sedentarization. At the time of treaty signing, groups of distantly related co-residential units were often determined to be a "band" for administrative purposes and encouraged to settle in a single village. Thus, for example, the Wunnummin Lake people and the Muskrat Dam people went to live at Big Trout Lake village, as did other groups from surrounding lands. In time, people belonging to different "band" segments experienced the strain of close community living, as well as the difficulties associated with residing so far from their lands. Consequently, in the early 1960s, many band segments began to leave their host communities in order to establish their own communities either at the site of their summer meeting places or at other ancestral locations. The breaking-off process continues today. Several of these communities created in the 1960s, such as Wunnummin Lake, are undergoing further fissioning. In certain instances, some co-residential units regroup in new communities while others join kinsmen in established communities.

During the past twenty years, commensal and co-residential units have become associated and identified with fixed places or community sites, unlike the past, when these might be found at different locations within a territory. This process of sedentarization also means that since the signing of Treaty Nine there has been progressively less population movement and community composition has stabilized. Stability was fostered initially by the presence of schools, nursing stations, and cooperative stores, and more recently by the growth of small, local, band-owned businesses.

The Seasonal Cycle of Economic Activities

Even though people today are more bound to the community site, they continue to value the seasonal cycle of economic activities. At both Wunnummin Lake and Kasabonika Lake, trapping, hunting, and fishing are important sources of food and cash as well as familial and individual prestige.

In the early twentieth century, the seasonal round of activities was as follows. In the early fall, pairs of commensal units (the minimally economically-viable units) would move to their trapping grounds. In mid-winter, several commensal units would either gather at the juncture of a couple of trapping grounds or travel to a trading-post community. Late in February, commensal units might regroup to trap, but the activity would be carried out at the minimal economic-unit level. In May, co-residential camps would be established along rivers or lakes where trout or whitefish could be netted. By early summer, many of the commensal units that had been together in mid-winter gathered at one of the larger lakes, such as Wunnummin or Kasabonika.

In the 1920s, a few families from the Wunnummin Lake region traveled south to the Osnaburgh House-Pickle Lake area during the summers. There, the men worked at the newly opened gold mines; their wages provided some financial independence from the Hudson's Bay Company debt-credit system as well as enabling families to outfit more completely for the next trapping season.

The composition of the social group changed, depending on activity and time of year. When large game was plentiful, commensal units would not feel pressed to go out onto their respective traplines until the spring. At these times of abundance, the commensal units remained at the summer encampment. Co-residential units would be camped along a lake shore, relatively near to, but not necessarily in sight of, each other. This arrangement has been maintained to this day in some communities, notably at Pekangekum. In Wunnummin and Kasabonika Lakes, houses of co-residential units tend to be grouped together but, in contrast to the pre-settlement pattern, all houses are situated quite close together.

Kinship and Land Tenure Today

With the increased economic stability afforded by transfer payments (Knight 1968), along with more permanent settlement and the retention of seasonal activities, kinship principles, which structured relations between the commensal units, co-residential units, and bands, became more prominent. In the pre-settlement context, in contrast, the three basic kinship features—bilaterality, same-sex sibling solidarity, and a preference for cross-cousin marriage—were always moderated by strong pragmatic con-

siderations. These features are no longer tempered to the same degree.

Not all three kinship features, however, characterize all Northern Ojibwa communities. For example, at Wunnummin Lake, bilateral kin are crucial as is same-sex sibling solidarity, but there have been few first cross-cousin marriages in the past five generations. Bilateral relatives help one gain access to trapping grounds. Thus one maintains close ties with maternal, paternal, and affinal kin, since one's own lands may not always be productive. Ideally, a spouse's trapping territory should be distant from one's own (see Note 3).

After marriage, women retain secondary rights to the lands their parents had used (Siecichowicz 1982). Thus women may and often do stay on or return to their fathers' trapping grounds with their husbands. This is practicable only if the men have an amiable relationship and the woman's brothers or her male parallel cousins are willing to share the land. The husband may use these lands for his lifetime in partnership with his brothers-in-law. His sons also have the right to use these lands, through their mother's secondary rights and their father's use of them. Nevertheless, sons' rights are never quite secure unless they marry one of their maternal cross-cousins (MoBrDa or MoFaBrSoDa).

Although bilaterality is important in the egalitarian distribution of access to lands, there is a patrilateral emphasis in the *securing* of access to lands. This patrilateral emphasis is further supported by the fact that at Wunnummin Lake there are seven clearly demarcated patronymic territories. Certain families, such as the Mckays or Bigheads (see Map 1), are associated with particular territories. Male members of these families are the principal trappers within the patronymic territory. Their rights to the territories are strong and are based on several generations' use of the same lands. In any single patronymic territory, there are additional trappers who do not have such strong claims to the territory, although the succeeding generation may strengthen its ties to the lands by marrying cross-cousins in the core patronymic group.

In contrast, bilateral kin at Kasabonika Lake secure one's *connection to the community*. These links, in turn, secure access to trapping areas. In Kasabonika, there is just one patronymic territory, the Andersons', which corresponds with the totality of the community's territory, its homeland.

In late summer, elders and trappers discuss and allocate the lands. Thus, at Kasabonika Lake, men may use from five to seven different trapping areas in their lifetime, whereas at Wunnummin Lake, a trapper will have used two or three.

At Kasabonika Lake, first cross-cousin marriage is much more prevalent than at Wunnummin Lake, as is the preference for pairs of sisters to marry pairs of brothers. Apparently, where the tie to specific tracts of land is weaker, as at Kasabonika Lake, there is a perceived need to strengthen social cohesiveness through close intermarriage, thereby securing incontrovertible rights of access to lands. Where the ties to specific tracts of land are strong, as at Wunnummin Lake, marriages are based more on the need for commensal units to have several dependable working relationships than on the need to bind people more closely together.

One possible explanation for the differences between the two communities is that one form may eventually transform into the other. That is, the Wunnummin Lake pattern of land tenure and social organization may transform into the Kasabonika Lake pattern. In fact, there is evidence that this is happening. For instance, intra-band ties are becoming more important than inter-band ties at Wunnummin Lake, and disapproval of band exogamous marriages (especially of women marrying outsiders) is increasing. A number of commensal units peripherally related (see Note 4) to the core patronymic groups have moved to other communities where their kinship ties are stronger. Almost half of the membership of four of the core patronymic groups (Mamakwa, Sainnawap, Gliddy, and Winnepetonga) have expressed a strong interest in relocating. A few commensal units have been discussing a possible move to re-establish the old community of Big Beaver House (the Mamakwas) or to move to Kingfisher Lake (the Sainnawaps). Two other co-residential units have been considering moving to Summer Beaver (the Winnepetongas) and to Long Dog Lake (the Gliddys). The latter move seems most imminent. All these units have more affinal and kinship ties outside Wunnummin Lake than with Wunnummin Lake residents.

Should all these departures take place, there would remain in Wunnummin Lake only one numerically strong patronymic group, the Mckays. The situation, then, would be similar to that of Kasabonika Lake. If, however, these commensal units were to remain in the community, preferential marriage to more distant but locally resident cross-cousins would strengthen the social ties of these families, which would otherwise be peripheral to the core groups. In that case, the community would tend to fold in on itself. One can predict that a Kasabonika-like pattern will emerge, centered around the numerically strong McKay patronym, given several generations of distant cross-cousin marriages. Cohesiveness would be maintained by increasing identification with a specific place, greater social and economic interaction, and multiple marriage ties. The possible transformation is predicated upon two factors: first, that all conditions remain as they are; and, second, that a fairly long period be allowed.

Though a lineal principle of inheritance was not and is not adhered to in Northern Ojibwa kinship organization, with sedentarization this principle may be said to be emerging in both Kasabonika Lake and Wunnummin Lake. At Kasabonika Lake, the inheritance of access to community lands is critical to an individual's economic survival, whereas at Wunnummin Lake access to patronymic lands is crucial; lineality is an important factor in both cases. If territory and community become more exclusively associated with a single patronymic group and are supported by band endogamy together with cross-cousin marriage, bilineal or ambilineal principles may become entrenched.

In sum, at Kasabonika and Wunnummin Lakes, kinship principles formally structure relations between social units and the means for gaining access to land. They thereby determine the two forms of land tenure.

Pre-Settlement Social Organization and Land Tenure

It follows from the above discussion that one can offer some comment on the nature of the composition of various groups and on their forms of land holding prior to sedentarization.

Family hunting territories in northern Ontario developed over a long period through the interplay between the economic changes necessitated by commercial fur-trapping and the requirements of subsistence production. Distinct trapping grounds became established as commensal units became involved in the commercial fur trade. Certain conditions, however, usually restricted the family hunting or trapping ground system from developing any further.

Once the pattern of family hunting grounds became established, it could continue, not because it was particularly suitable for the fur trade, but because small game subsistence required small group structural organization. A co-residential form of organization was never intended to be restricted to a single trapping area, as Leacock (1954) and others seem to imply. It was an effective means of organizing for seasonal small game exploitation, but extensive kinship links provided access to other lands, when necessary. I would speculate that the requirements of the fur trade led to greater exclusivity with respect to trapping, so that access to trapping areas became more jealously guarded and proportionately more time was spent trapping. In addition, during the nineteenth century, fewer but very dependable kinship links were emphasized.

In northern Ontario, in the years just prior to transfer payments, economic activities on family trapping grounds were very precarious, as Knight (1968) has described for Rupert House during the 1920s and 1930s, when there was a severe game short-

age. Essentially, more land was required to meet production needs than was available to any single group (Winterhalder 1980). When family trapping grounds could not meet food requirements, they were abandoned and co-residential groups fragmented into commensal units, which dispersed to look for subsistence. Often this was at the doorstep of the local Hudson's Bay Company post. When near-starvation was followed by a short period of well-being, commensal units would regroup to exploit again the replenished beaver stocks on their traditional lands, thus repeating the cycle. Governor Simpson provides evidence for this type of "feast and famine" economy for the west coast of Hudson Bay in the 1820s (Ray 1974:21). Thus, in most parts of the Subarctic, the combination of commercial fur-trade requirements with economic/environmental conditions precluded full development of the social organizational forms that would have been most appropriate for longer-term economic security. Therefore, on the one hand, the family trapping ground system became associated with commercial fur-trapping, as there was no other way to organize production given the individualizing pressures of the trade; on the other hand, because the family trapping ground pattern was unstable, it could never be maintained for any length of time. Accordingly, the commercial fur-trade period was characterized by a series of "boom and bust" cycles.

In this fairly dismal picture, there were probably pockets of groups that were more isolated and thus not as involved in the fur trade—for example, the Naskapi (Morantz 1980)—and others that maintained themselves on family trapping territories by turning to sturgeon resources when beaver stocks were depleted (Winterhalder 1980). Such factors as isolation and alternate large food resources may account for the development of the Kasabonika Lake pattern of production and land tenure.

A study incorporating a longer time perspective might document that some northern Ontario hunting and trapping groups, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were restructuring into the Kasabonika Lake pattern. The antiquity of the Kasabonika Lake community tends to support this hypothesis. The old community site was the location of an outpost from at least the 1880s (see Note 5).

In Kasabonika Lake, co-residential groups initially established family trapping territories. As other resources were available, when beaver were scarce, social groups did not need to fragment to survive. At these times, the hunting territory system was weakened but not abandoned, as communal access to sturgeon, along the Ashweig River, was favored. Unlike fur pelts, sturgeon meat was shared. Kinship then functioned to support wider integration of the band, which progressively organized itself into a close-knit social unit using a large homeland or band territory. Since a communal and consensual form of organization already existed when furbearers reappeared, commercial trapping was

conducted within this setting. The requirements of commercial fur trading were now accommodated within a communal and consensual framework. Individual access to trapping lands was secured by community fiat. Lands could be managed more effectively, and trappers could trade their furs on an individual basis, without harming the unity of community organization.

Although a singular example, the Kasabonika Lake situation indicates the fallacy of associating a single form of social organization with the commercial fur trade. One might see the individualization of trapping grounds as the only viable solution as a first step in accommodating the commercial fur trade. Furthermore, to this day, the principle of egalitarianism persists among the Northern Ojibwa. Given the high value of this ideal, it was no doubt disjunctive to hold to an egalitarian principle, utilizing exclusive trapping territories. However, if one thinks of the family trapping arrangement as an initial step in a process, then egalitarianism and economic production for the fur trade could be reconciled.

A contributing factor supporting the selection of the individualized trapping ground in northern Ontario was that nineteenth-century traders insisted on dealing with individuals, not with groups or their representatives. This must have created difficulties for communally organized groups that predicated their co-existence on sharing. Another factor was that the sedentary habits of beaver facilitated the fissioning of bands into minimal economic units instead of requiring the restructuring of sharing and cooperative relations within the communal band.

In both the fur-trade and settlement periods, the family trapping ground and band boundaries were and are fluid. In the recent past, the communal band used land as it required, and its territorial boundaries were fluid, shifting and changing for economic and social reasons. Nevertheless, the core area of a band's territory remained constant, so that bands were associated with specific lands over long periods. Accordingly, one can view the transition from family (Wunnummin Lake type) to communal grounds (Kasabonika Lake type) as an attempt to re-establish a band's social boundaries. As social ties within the band become more significant, the band as a whole validates access to hunting lands, in contrast to the family hunting ground system, where rights to specific lands were individualized according to membership in a patronymic group.

In summary, because secure economic conditions now prevail in northern Ontario, it is possible to discern the influence of the kinship system on patterns of land tenure among the Northern Ojibwa. There are two aspects of this influence: first, there is a processual development from individualized to communal trapping grounds; and, second, in the contemporary period, the process

discerned may have existed in the past and is relevant to the aboriginality of the family hunting ground system. Further, in the historic period, the latter form of land tenure may not have been stable, for economic reasons. It is not stable today, for social reasons.

CONCLUSIONS

From a comparison of Wunnummin Lake and Kasabonika Lake, one can conclude that although economic factors such as involvement in the fur trade may influence the initial structure of a community's reorganization, both the commercial fur trade and transfer payments contributed to rather than singularly determined the reorganization of land tenure. Further, kinship configurations ought to be more central in the dialectical analysis of Northern Ojibwa and other subarctic land tenure systems.

NOTES

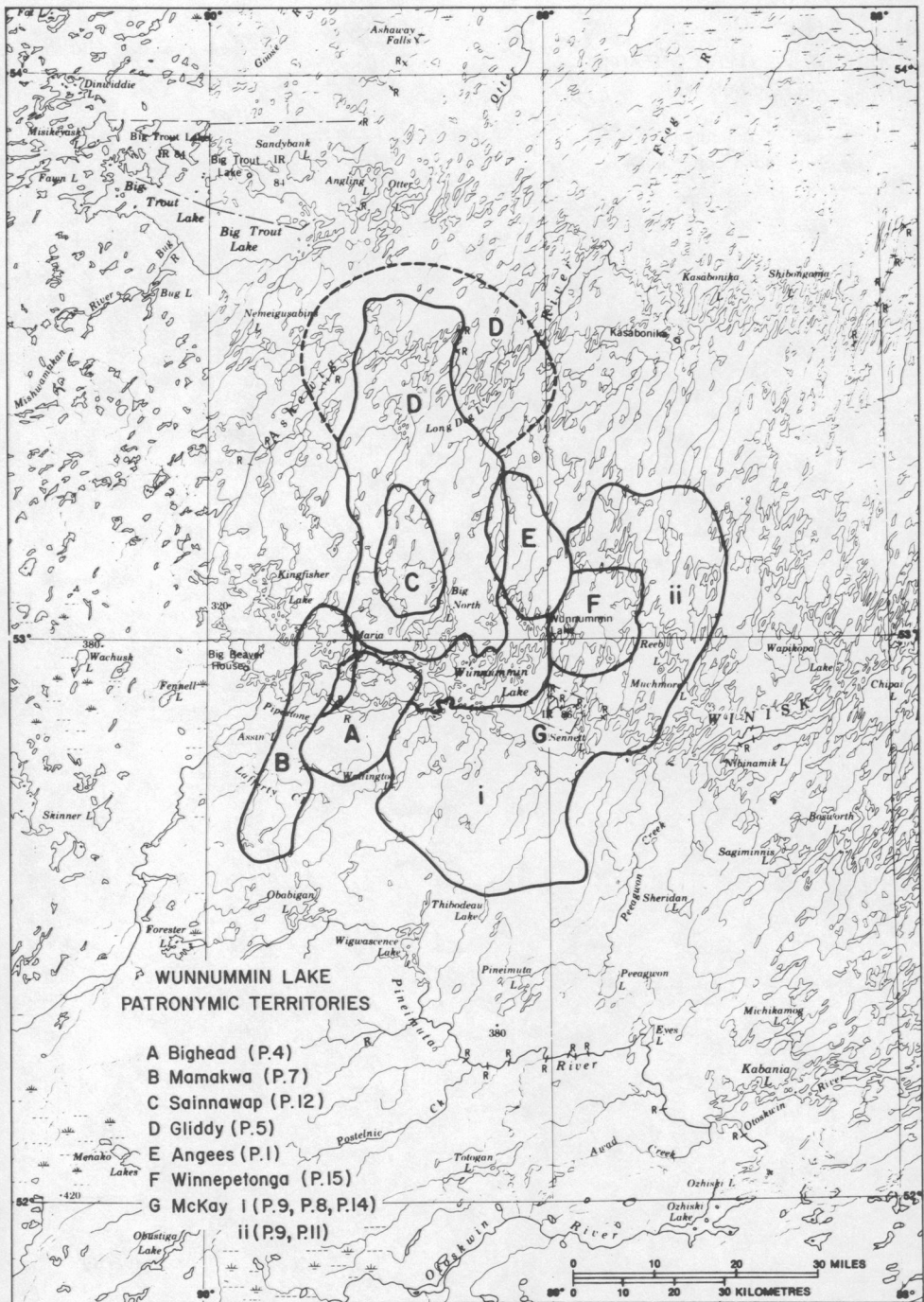
1. These represent only the earliest or best-known proponents of the respective arguments.
2. In many contemporary Ojibwa communities, there is a marked preference for village or community endogamy.
3. Absent in both Wunnummin Lake and Kasabonika Lake is the concept of certain groups being the givers of wives and other groups being the receivers.
4. Peripheral relatedness means fewer than two close affinal links to the core patronymic groups.
5. The community was relocated further west along Kasabonika Lake in 1964.

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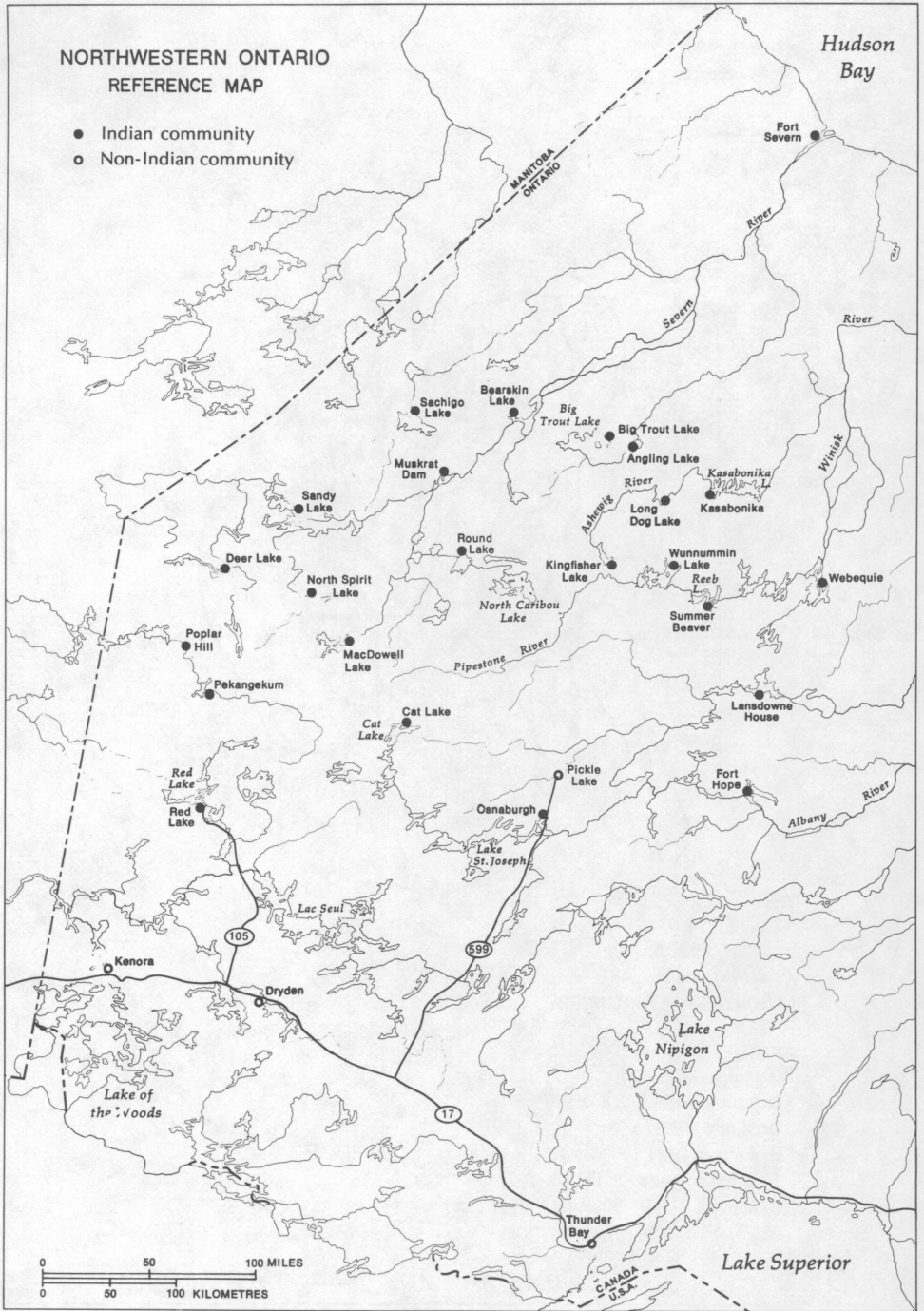
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Map 1

**NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO
REFERENCE MAP**

- Indian community
- Non-Indian community



Map 2