

New Research and Documentation Relating to Kwets'ootł'àà



Prepared for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Protected Areas Strategy

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Dedication

To All Tahgagot'ıı,
whose regional home is the shore of North Arm of Great Slave Lake.

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Executive Summary

This report documents some important Tłıchǫ cultural values of the proposed protected area Kwets'ootł'ää. This information supports the initiative of the Tłıchǫ Government to use the NWT Protected Areas Strategy to protect this area. The research team consisted of Allice Legat, and Tłıchǫ Government traditional knowledge researchers, Georgina Chocolate, Rita Wetrade, and Albertine Eyakfwo. They used recognized, community-based methods that respect the ways elders share information.

Researchers facilitated two initial workshops with the elders and carried out a three-day field trip. The elders on the field trip discussed and chose the places to visit each day, and shared their knowledge. Researchers used research guidelines for direction and follow up; they listened to and recorded oral narratives, took notes and photos, and recorded information for mapping. They held a verification meeting with elders after information was compiled from the workshops and fieldtrip.

During the field trip it became clear that the place name Tıdeèk'è more accurately describes the proposed protected area. This report uses that name and recommends this name change. It is also clear that researchers were able to document cultural values of only a small, though representative sample, of places within the area.

Significant Tłıchǫ oral narratives reside within Tıdeèk'è. These narratives tell where and how many Tłıchǫ lived before moving into communities. These narratives include information on where several Tłıchǫ continue to have seasonal homes and how throughout the area, Tłıchǫ harvest resources and visit ancestral graves. Oral narratives and archaeological studies show evidence of thousands of years of occupation. Tłıchǫ cultural values within Tıdeèk'è include an integral mix, through time and space.

- Place names within Tıdeèk'è are important mental maps of locales where oral narratives dwell and where activities take place - continuity from the past.
- The Tłıchǫ remember events that continue to influence the way in which they live today. The oral narratives of these occurrences dwell in places, creating and recreating a land that reads like a book.
- Knowing trails and place names are essential to passing on Tłıchǫ values; they hold information and experiences that people need to live life as a Tłıchǫ person.
- Delicious clean water and healthy habitat for fish, berries, medicinal plants, and small and large mammals provide Tłıchǫ people with the natural resources they need for food, furs, and cultural survival.
- Tıdeèk'è contains many significant sites, including numerous burials and gravesites.

The elders made recommendations to provide funding to expand the current information on cultural values.

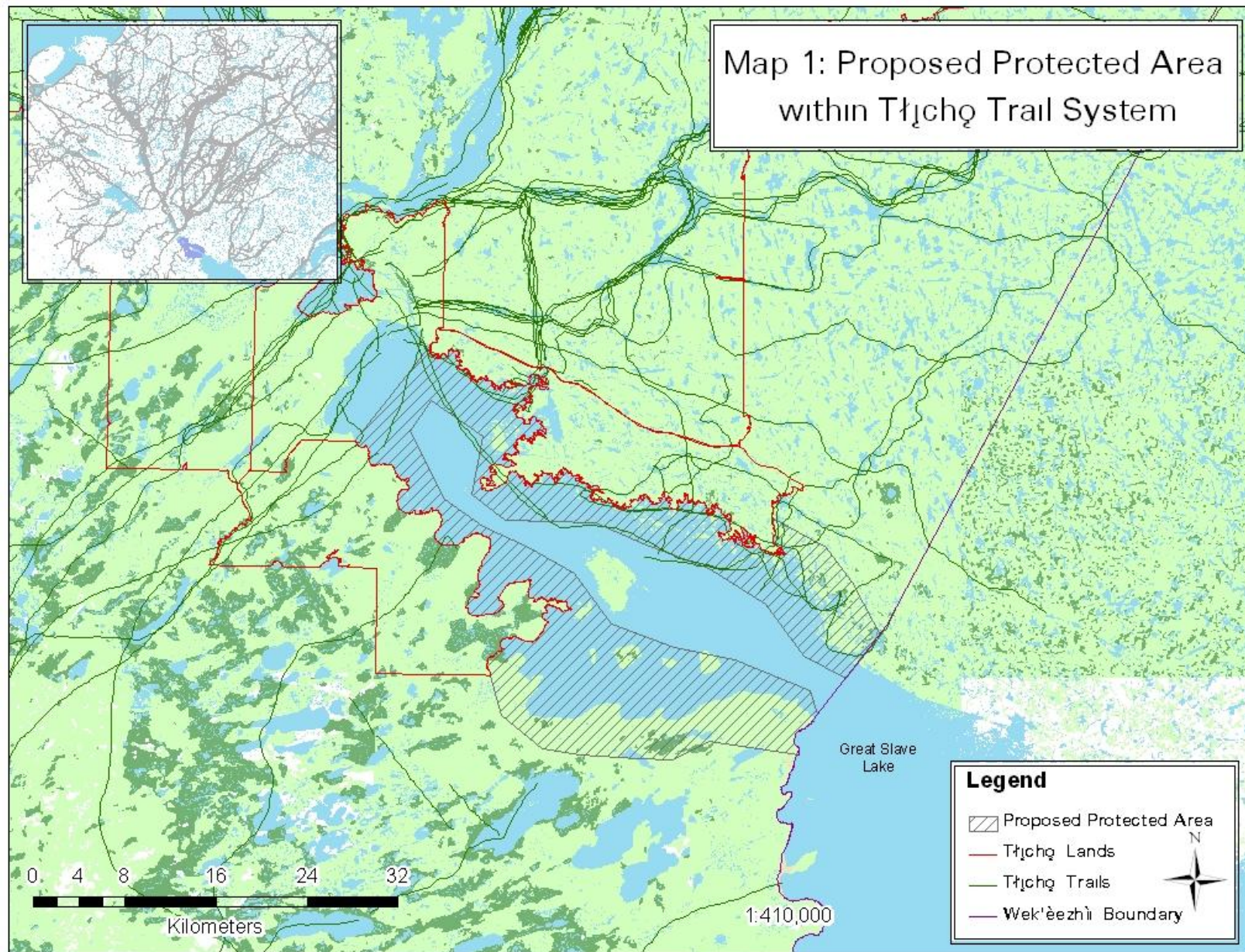
- Locate and document the numerous burials and gravesites in the area with the elders and current harvesters who know the area.
- Complete cultural documentation of the remaining significant places and associated oral narratives.

In addition to changing the name to Tìdeèk'è, the elders also recommended the following:

- Expand the boundary to include boreal and barren ground caribou habitat, and the ancestral trails that lead into the area.
- Discuss how to protect significant places, and how to encourage others, such as tourism operators and the public, to show proper respect.



View from camp at Xomìk'è. (Photograph by Aalice Legat)



Introduction: ‘Cultural Values’ and Interconnectedness

For the Tłıchǫ “the land” is sacred and fundamental to the transmission of their cultural values and perspective. The land provides all that is necessary to survive- emotionally, spiritually, and physically- and is where all beings dwell and form interconnected relationships. This perspective is consistent with the views of other Dene (See for example, Basso 1996). The land consists of places where oral narratives originate, which Tłıchǫ experience while doing tasks that create and re-create the landscape known as Mq̄whì Gogha Dè Nı̀tłèè of which Kwets'ootł'àà (‘rock-muskeg-bay’) is a part.

The proposed protected area, called Kwets'ootł'àà, is about 590 km² of the northern portion of the North Arm of Great Slave Lake. The Tłıchǫ dictionary calls the North Arm Tahga. Kwets'ootł'àà includes the mainland shoreline and the water of the lake, but not all of the islands. It was identified as an ‘important bird area’ by Bird Studies Canada and as a ‘key migratory bird habitat site’ by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), Environment Canada.

In 2009 the Tłıchǫ Government asked the CWS to sponsor the area as a candidate National Wildlife Area through the NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS). In June 2010, the CWS agreed to this. Shortly after, a candidate area working group was established. The working group is responsible for looking at all of the values of the area and making recommendations on the final designation, boundaries, and management considerations for a candidate area.

In September 2011, Environment Canada applied for a five-year interim surface and subsurface land withdrawal within the proposed protected area. This ensures that no new third-party interests are established during the protected area planning process. The withdrawal excludes existing leases.

The elders refer to the proposed protected area as Tideèk'è and we use that term throughout this report. The area has very significant cultural and natural value for the Tłıchǫ. It is important for tasks associated with trading, trapping, hunting, fishing, and harvesting plants. These activities bring humans and other-than-human entities (animals; plants; spirits) together with significant places and events, such as those associated with key leaders: Yamq̄zaa, Edzo, Mq̄whì, and Bruneau. Through time and space, these activities re-create a cultural landscape or ‘taskscape’ through the constant exchange of inhabitants –animate and inanimate- that dwell within dè or ‘land’ (Ingold 2000, 154). The taskscape is the result of the giving and taking through established relations involved in living.

This report has information that contributes to the important work required by the PAS to identify the cultural values of the candidate-protected area.

Methodology

To document the cultural values of Kwets'ootł'àà, the research team followed accepted social science interviewing practises, and the manner in which elders and harvesters exchange information. The methodology consisted of several activities.

1. Organize a research team consisting of Tłıchǫ researchers: Georgina Chocolate (Senior TK Researcher), Albertine Eyakfwo (TK Assistant from Lands Protections Department, Tłıchǫ Government), and Rita Wetrade (TK Research Coordinator Trainee, Tłıchǫ Knowledge Research and Monitoring Division, Tłıchǫ Government), and a principal investigator, Aalice Legat, (social scientist with Gagos Social Analysts, Inc).
2. Bring research team together to discuss what they know of the area and to develop an initial research guide.
3. Select the most appropriate six elders to accompany the researchers on a field trip.
4. Meet with the elders before the field trip to determine where they wanted to focus on and why, and to review the interview guide with them.
5. Undertake a trip with selected elders and harvesters to the area: interview the elders while visiting various locales; and photograph significant places.
6. Verify the analysis of information with the elders.

Selection of Elders and Camp Staff

On June 29th 2011, Ritalene Gon, Protected Areas Strategy Coordinator, was contacted to set up a meeting with the Kwets'ootł'àà Working Group elders who would assist the Tłıchǫ researchers and the principal investigator with the selection of elders to interview.



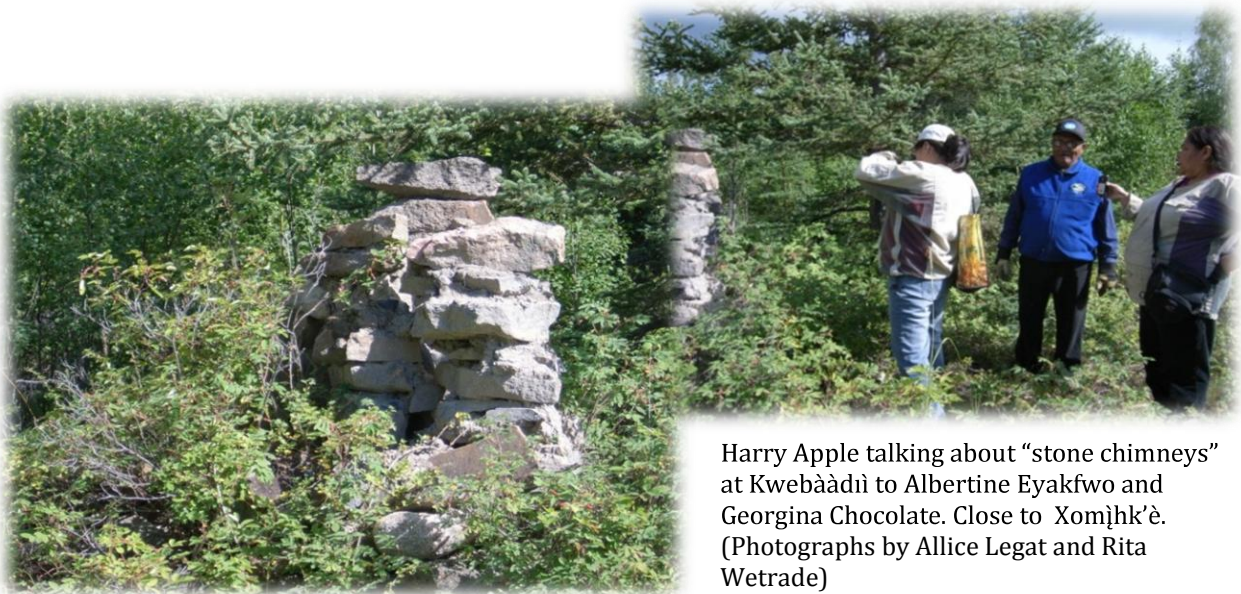
Moise Rabesca, Eddy Camille, Isadore Wellin, Harry Apple, and Melanie Lafferty listening to stories prior to visiting the places where they dwell. (Photograph by Aalice Legat)

The selection of elders took place at a meeting in the Tłıchq Government's LPD office July 12th to 14th 2011. The research team met with elders Robert Mackenzie, Isadore Wellin, and Francis Williah from the Kwets'ootł'àà Working Group. Harry Apple joined us on the third day, having previous commitments the first two days. The North Slave Métis elders did not join us as their organization elected to do their own research on cultural values.

This three-day meeting was designed to ensure the Working Group elders understood the research purpose and process, enabling them to select the most knowledgeable elders to participate in research on the land. During the meeting we: i) explained and discussed the research purpose and process; and ii) encouraged the elders themselves to select the elders to accompany the researchers on the field trip.

We explained that during our three to four day on-the-land trip we would be documenting the most important cultural values of the proposed protected area, to ensure their reasons for protection were included. We explained that the area was first identified as an important migratory bird habitat and that the PAS staff people want to ensure the cultural significance for the Tłıchq is also considered. The elders expressed their concern that this would lead to more hunting and land use bans. We explained their concern about banning should be discussed at the Working Group, and the Working Group's staff would examine the Tłıchq Agreement and clarify rules associated when there are conservation issues.

Once we were assured the Working Group elders understood the research to be undertaken, and they had told us several oral narratives expressing their understanding of why protection was important, we asked them to name three women and three men who should accompany us.



Harry Apple talking about "stone chimneys" at Kwebàadii to Albertine Eyakfwo and Georgina Chocolate. Close to Xomjkh'è. (Photographs by Allice Legat and Rita Wetrade)

Robert and Francis both suggested that those elders with in-depth knowledge of Kwets'oot'aa travel with the researchers. They decided Harry and Annie Apple, Isadore Wellin, Dora Migwi, Melanie Lafferty, and Eddy Camille are the most knowledgeable and skilled to assist the researchers with cultural documentation. In addition, they chose Moise Rabesca as camp leader because he has the most recent knowledge of the location of current and rocks, water depth, and fish movement throughout the area. Harry Rabesca was chosen to assist Moise with securing country food, and Edith Wellin was selected as camp cook. Everyone selected to be at the camp was raised in the area, and belonged to the socio-territorial region known as Tahgagot'i, or people of North Arm of Great Slave Lake.

Before leaving for the field trip, but after we developed the research guideline, we met with the six elders and asked them "why Kwets'oot'aa should be protected". During this initial group interview the elders spoke rather firmly that they thought the area had already been protected. They stated that in 1921, Mqwhi met and talked with the Federal Commissioner, who verbally agreed that the area within Mqwhi Gogha Dè Nùtèè would remain the same for the Tłıchq as it is the place they belong and call home. Second, the elders felt it had been again protected through the Tłıchq Agreement. In response we referred to Chapter 16: Protected Areas of the Tłıchq Agreement sections 16.3 and 16.4, where the protections of harvesting rights are discussed. Allice Legat stressed that the Working Group staff would clarify how this chapter protects the land and resources. Third, the elders feared that by having the Canadian Wildlife Service oversee the protection of the area, the Tłıchq would be denied access to their food as well as the places they were raised and continue to take their children and grandchildren.¹ We suggested they bring this up with the Working Group elders who would again discuss this with them as it relates to Section 16.3 and 16.4 of the Tłıchq Agreement.

The elders brought this concern up with the Working Group meeting in April 2011, and again in September 2011 when we were presenting the research results in September. In both situations the PAS staff addressed their concern.



Moise Rabesca. (Photograph by Rita Wetrade)

¹ This fear seems to originate with Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 that provides constitutional protection to the aboriginal and treaty rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. However, they themselves know that Aboriginal rights have not been defined, and that if, under the Tłıchq Agreement, conservation issues can be demonstrated, as in the case of the barren ground caribou, hunting restrictions and bans can be enforced.

Research Guideline

On June 29th, we took the initial steps to develop the research guideline. The workshop included Georgina Chocolate, Albertine Eyakfwo, Rita Wetrade, and Ritalene Gon. We finalized the guidelines August 4th and 5th 2011 only after we heard the initial stories from the elders on the Working Group and those selected for the field trip.

Developing the research guideline in this manner ensures the researchers know the information they need to collect, and they know they need to listen and consider further questions based on the information in the oral narratives. The research guideline also reminds researchers if they hear information of cultural significance it should be documented to be used in the report. Direct questions are rarely asked.

Rather researchers listen for information within more complex oral narratives.

1. Why is Kwets'ootl'àà² important to the Tł̨chq̓ people?

- General question to start.

2. What time of year do/did people use Kwets'ootl'àà?

3. What resources do you use and where?

- Fish – names and locations
- Large game, such as moose, boreal caribou, barren ground caribou, bison
- Fur bearing animals – what did you trap
- Waterfowl – names and locations
- Birds – name and locations of nests



Annie Apple and Dora Migwi telling stories to Georgina Chocolate while at Whq̓siwek̓q̓'e (Blackduck Camp). (Photograph by Rita Wetrade)

² As stated above we initially used the term Kwets'ootl'àà when discussing the proposed protected area with the elders, later the elders we were working with directed us to use, Tìdèek'è

- Plants – berries and culturally important medicine.
 - Any important denning areas?
4. Are there significant sites in the area?
 - Burials
 - Graves with fences
 - Sites where oral narratives dwell or originated
 - Yamqòzaa , Mqwhì, Edzo, Bruneau, or those associated with any other leaders
 - Rare animals
 - Places that are not visited due to events that occurred in the past
 - Tell us about Dinàgà (Waite Island)?
 5. Anything significant about the water?
 6. Anything significant about the landscape?
 7. Trails and place names
 - What trails are significant in and out of the area and tied to what places within the proposed protected area?
 - Are any of the place names indicators of bio-geographical knowledge?

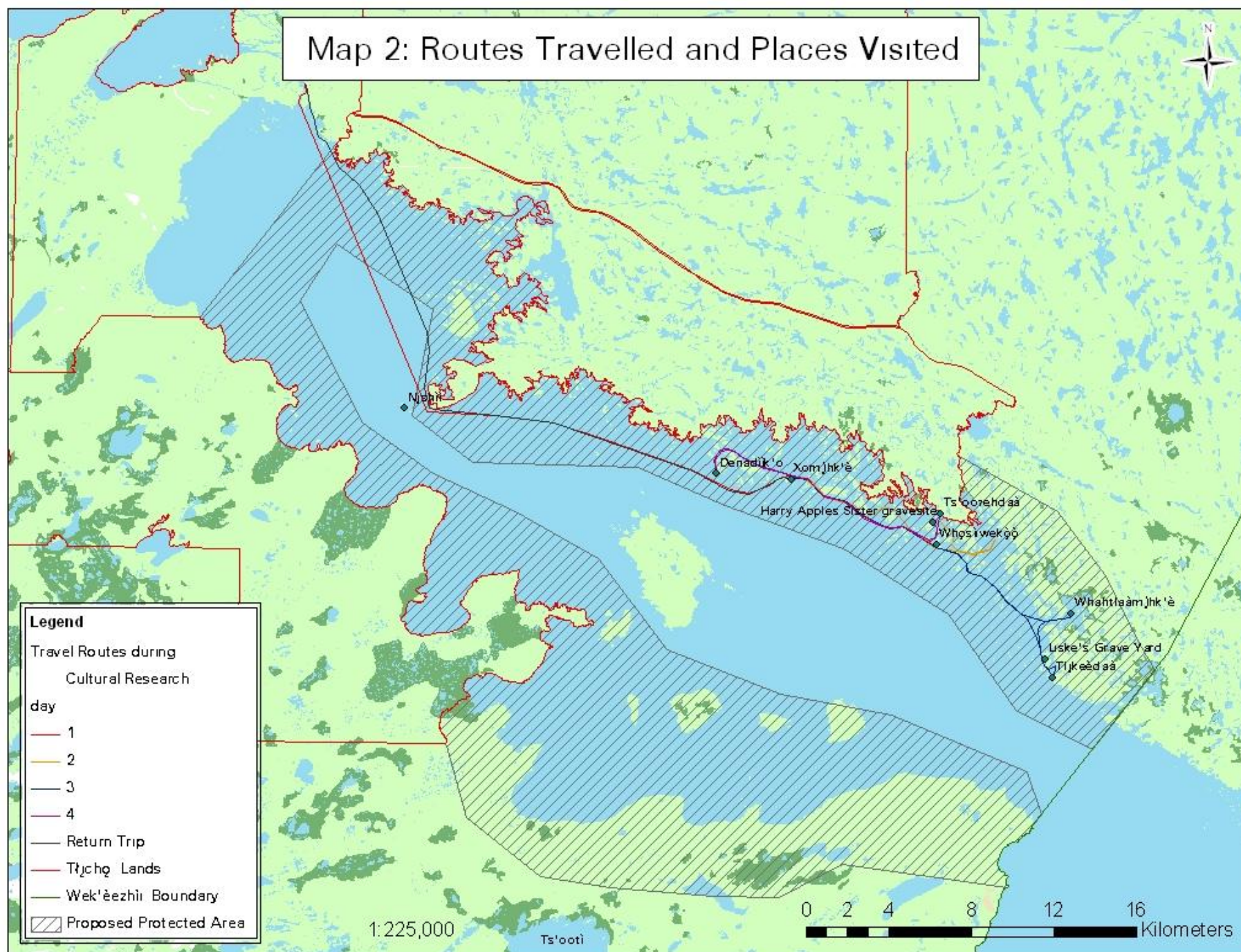
The research guidelines provide direction for the researchers, nevertheless it is imperative that the researchers come together each evening while in the field to discuss what each of them has heard and documented during the day. In this way, we can follow up on unanswered questions and unexpected information.

Before going into the field, we reviewed appropriate procedures for documenting information.



View from Whqsiwekòò. (Photograph by Aalice Legat)

This included using a GPS and camera, labelling and using paper maps, 'getting the best sound' from digital recording, taking relevant field notes, and using the research guidelines.



Field Trip

The field trip took place between August 8th and 11th 2011. We camped within Xom̓hk'è at the site where Harry Apple and Moise Rabesca were raised for a period of time, and where their families continue to fish and camp.

Each morning we met and listened to oral narratives of the places we were going to visit that day. Before our meeting the elders discussed with Harry Apple which location they would like to visit. Moise Rabesca and Harry Apple then discussed the travel route, taking into consideration the wind direction and velocity to ensure each trip away from our camp was safe and comfortable for the elders. Harry Apple gave the final decision on which place/s we would visit and document.



Moise Rabesca at Xom̓hk'è camp.
(Photograph by Alice Legat)

It was only after the final decision was made about which places to visit that the principal investigator and researchers met with the elders. The oral narratives provided an initial overview of places that we were to visit. We then travelled to specific places and documented information there. In the evening the research team met and discussed what additional information we needed to ask the elders; and had further discussion with the elders. This process reflects the manner in which Tł̓chq̓ traditionally shared information before and after travelling, which always included current and past occurrences within the larger context. See Map 2, for clarity on routes travelled and places visited with elders between August 8th to 11th 2011.

Verification Meeting

A verification meeting to confirm the information gathered was held on September 7th and 8th 2011 to prepare for the Working Group meeting on September 12th. The final verification meeting was held on September 20th. The elders who participated in the field trip attended the verification meetings. During the first meeting we verified the bigger picture on such issues as the names for areas within Tideèk'è, as well as resources, to ensure we were prepared for the Working Group meeting.

As expected, new information came to light; for example, information on past occurrences of barren ground caribou in the area. During the second verification meeting, we included the elders from the Working Group. During this meeting, we focused on

specific places and burials. Verification is always a lengthy process as more occurrences and associated oral narratives come to light. In this case a number of places were in the wrong location, and some others were misspelled, leading to a misunderstanding of their bio-geographical significance. Additionally, we clarified the cultural value of sacred sites.

Maps and Mapping

Mark Fenwick, Acting Director of LPD, produced maps for the fieldwork, for the Working Group meeting on September 12th 2011, and before and after the verification meeting with the elders.

Maps within this document

Map 1: *Proposed Protected Area within T̥ich̥q Trail System*

Map 2: *Routes Travelled and Places Visited*

Map 3: *Tideèk'è Protected Area as Proposed by Elders*

Map 4: *T̥ich̥q Regions within Current Proposed Protected Area*

Map 5: *Yamqòz̥aa and his Wife, Beaver*

Map 6: *Nasadea' s Burial site*

Map 7: *Barren Ground Caribou in Tideèk'è*

Map 8: *Waterfowl, Muskrat, and Fish in Tideèk'è*

Map 9: *Moose and Woodland Caribou in Tideèk'è*

Map 10: *Places whose Stories are Significant within the Context of a Three Day Trip*



Melanie Lafferty, Ritalene Gon, Dora Migwi, Georgina Chocolate, and Allice Legat listening to oral narratives before visiting places. (Photograph by Rita Wetrade)

Cultural Significances of Place Names

The name Tahgagot'ì³ was the original name the Working Group gave for the proposed protected area. That is the name for the people that belong to and use the shore of the North Arm and from where they travel inland. Their region is expansive; it reaches to the tundra and includes the area well past Yellowknife Bay. Trails take them throughout their region including inland to trap and hunt (see Map 3 on page 13, and Helm 1981; Legat 2012).

In 2009, questions were asked about an appropriate name for the area submitted as the candidate National Wildlife Area. Kwets'ootł'àà, meaning 'rock-muskeg-bay' came up.



View of Kwets'ootł'àà. (Photograph by Aalice Legat)

But the name Kwets'ootł'àà came about through a misunderstanding. During research on the 'Place Names as Indicators of Bio-geographical Knowledge' (Legat et al 2001) a researcher thought they were asking an elder what the North Arm is called in Tłıchǫ. The elder asked for clarification. Since they were standing at a picnic area on the North Arm, the researcher asked "What is the name of the bay this picnic area is on?" The elder replied, "Kwetso'ootł'àà". In 2009, Aalice Legat asked, "What is the name of the bay Moise Rabesca lives on?" Again the response was, "Kwets'ootł'àà". Both answers are true. But the name Kwets'ootł'àà is only the name for the bay at the north end of the North Arm.

During field research from August 8th to 11th 2011 it became clear that Kwets'ootł'àà was only one bay within the proposed protected area. When asked what they called the area being proposed for protection, the elders consistently responded Tıdeè. We explained that it would be confusing if we used Tıdeè for both the North Arm and Great Slave Lake. They explained that the Tahgagot'ì (Follow the Shore People) always said, "We are travelling to Tıdeè to live".⁴ After much discussion between the elders and with the Tłıchǫ researchers, the elders settled on Tideèk'è (water-big-place on) or a place on Great Slave Lake that

³Originally spelled by the Working Group 'Taaga weke hodi', a name that included the people as they belong to this area.

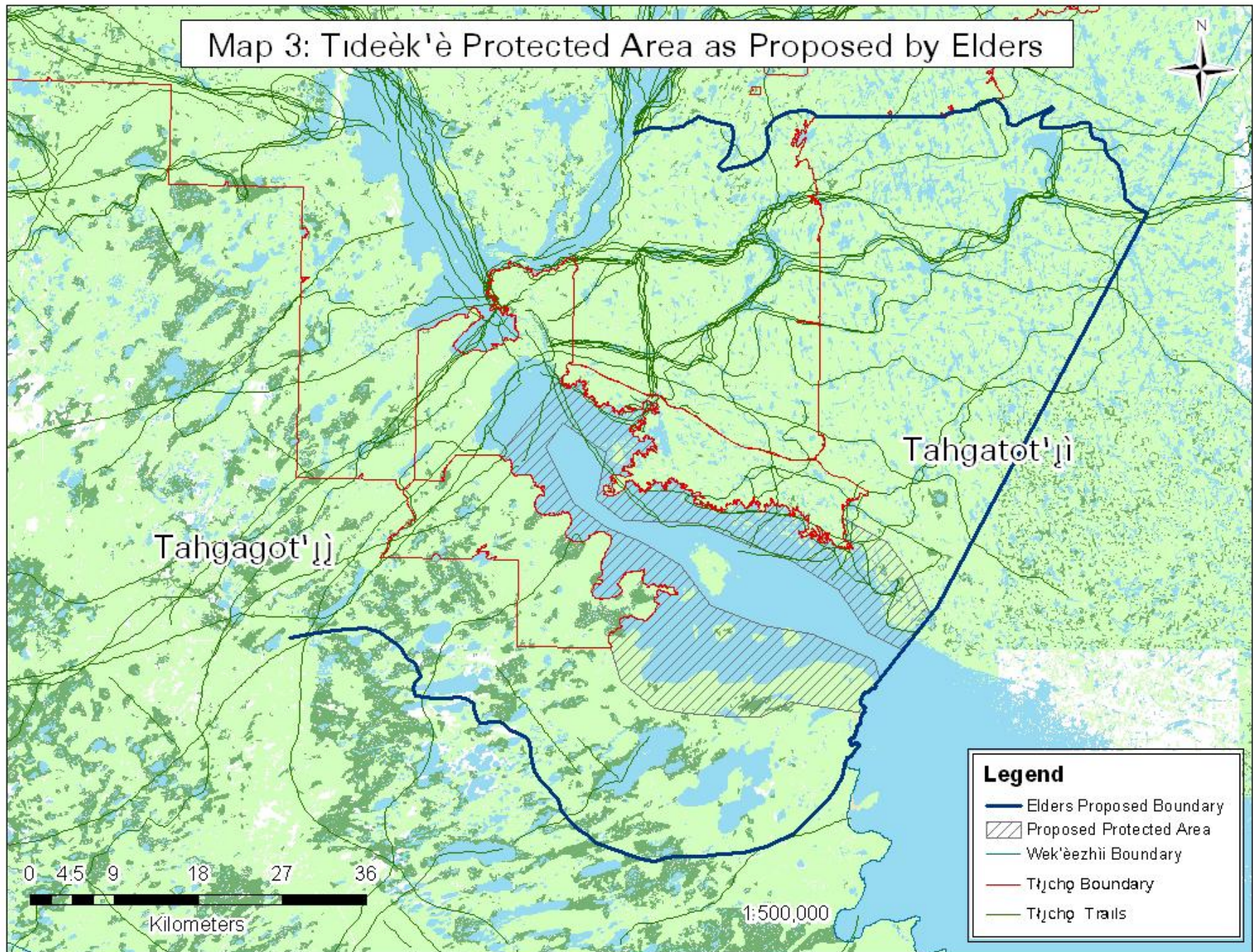
⁴ Usually a period of time was implied.

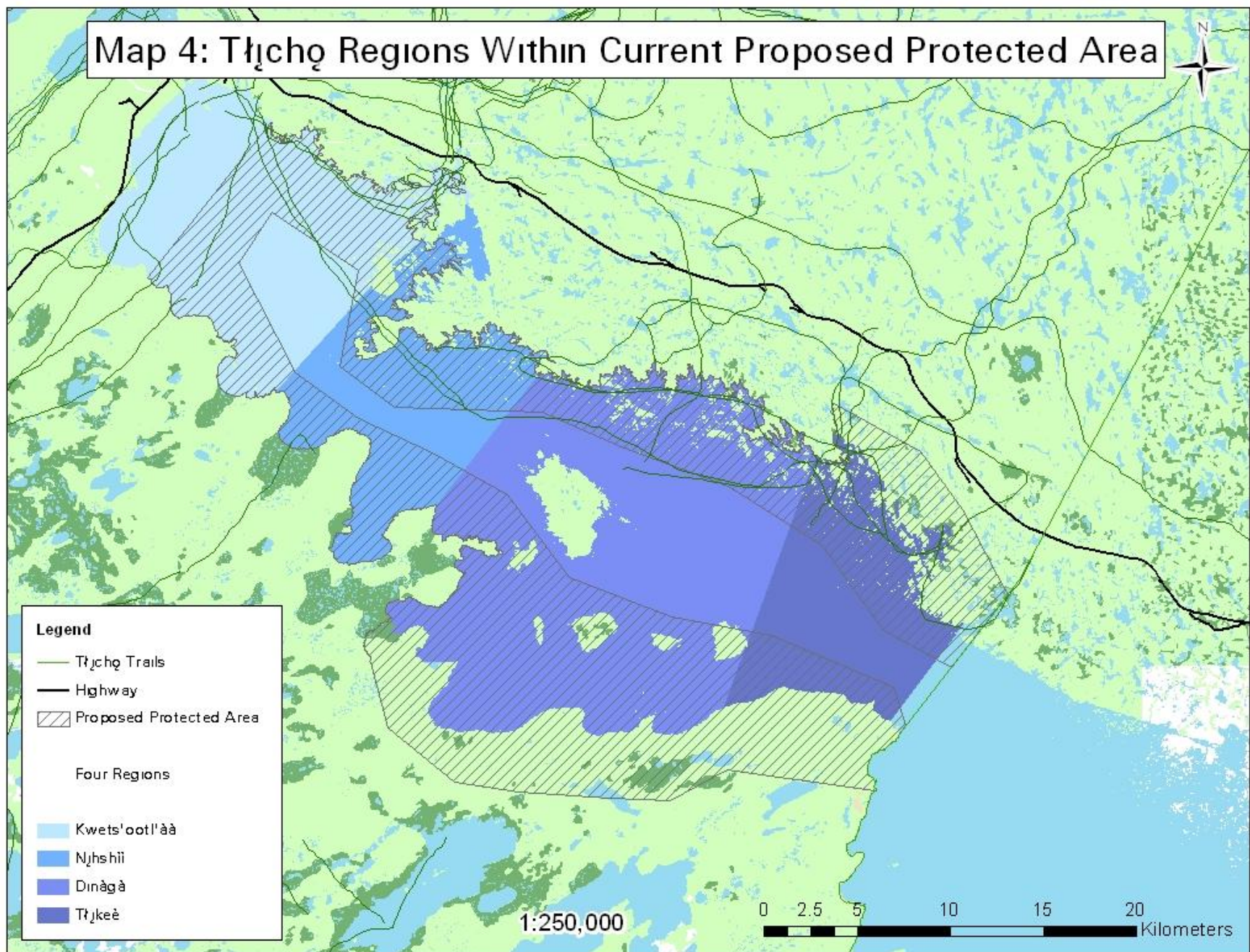
includes the area away from the shoreline. For this reason they want the boundary extended to more clearly show the area used by the Tahgagot'ì (Follow the Shore People) as indicated on Map 3 titled, *Tideèk'è Protected Area as Proposed by Elders*.

Map 4, *Ṭḥcḥ Regions within Current Proposed Protected Area*, shows associated locales: Kwets'oot''àà, the large bay at the north end; Ṇḥsḥḥ a point, Ḍṇàgà, a large island, and Ṭḥkeè, an important area on the eastern shore for muskrats and waterfowl.



Listening to narratives about Ṇḥsḥḥ. (Photograph by Rita Wetrade)





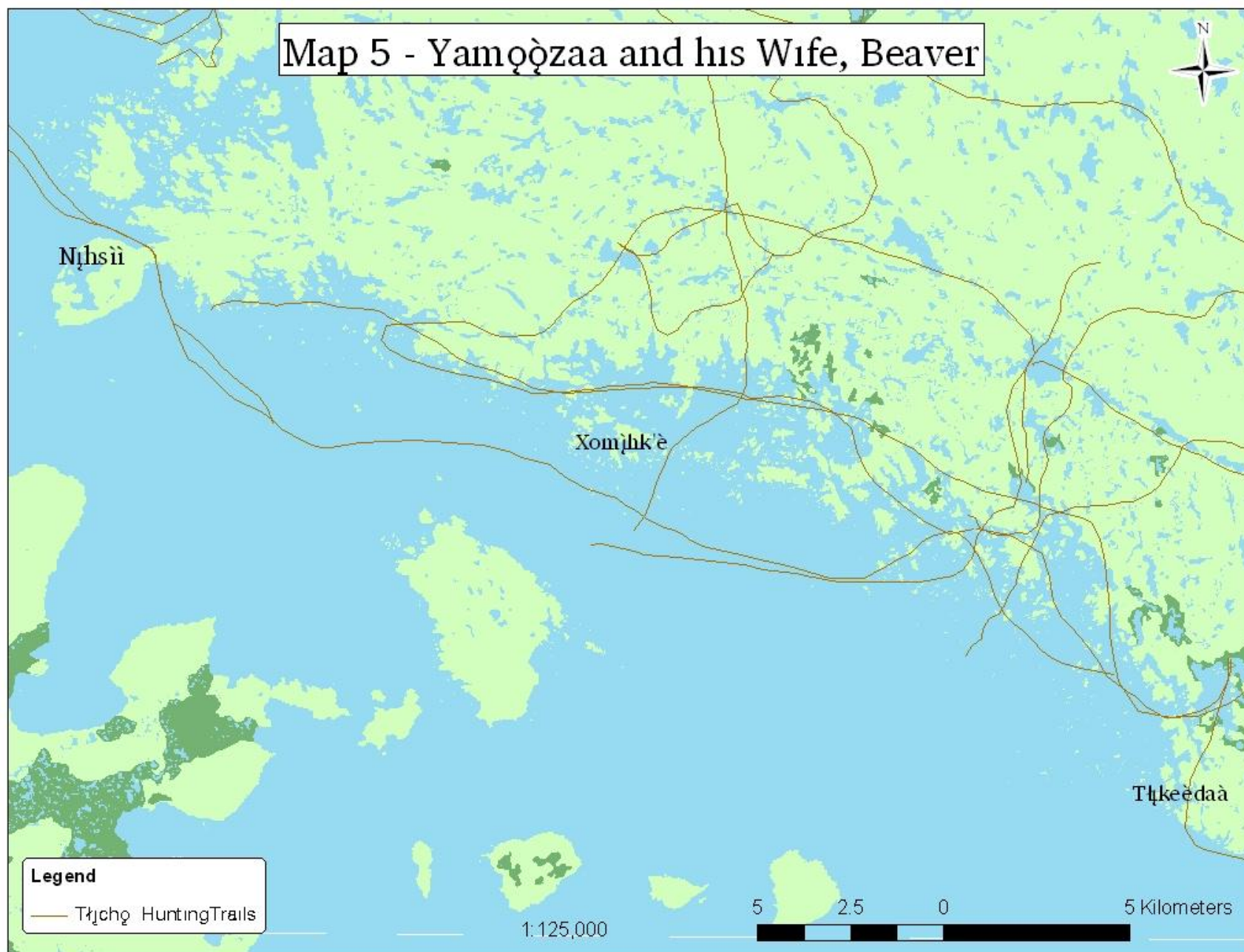
Cultural History

During the time when the world was new, a powerful man came along and asked Yamqòzaa's wife to run away with him. She said 'no', so with his power he took her, believing that his power was stronger than that of Yamqòzaa.

She warned him. They travelled south when they realised that Yamqòzaa was behind them. With his power the man tried to stretch the land across Tideèk'e to the land across the water creating Nìhshìì. Yamqòzaa arrived but he could not find them searching the landscape, pulling the land apart creating the islands south of Nìhshìì. Islands between Xomìhk'è and Tìkeèdaà. Yamqòzaa continued to follow them up the Dehcho (Mackenzie River). (As told by Eddie Camille and retold later the same day by Harry Apple, July 9th 2011)



Harry Rabesca, Melanie Lafferty, Georgina Chocolate, Albertine Eyakfwo, and Dora Migwi following routes of their ancestors. (Photograph by Rita Wetrade)



The Tłıchǫ remember events from the past that continue to impact the way in which they live today. The oral narratives of these occurrences dwell in places creating and recreating a land that reads like a book (Andrews 2004; Basso 1996; Cruikshank 1998).

This view is not unique, as most native circumpolar peoples see the land as alive with stories blending the entities with power together with themselves. Most archaeologists and anthropologists working in northern Canada accept that Dene oral narratives have considerable time depth (Cruikshank 2001; Hanks 1996, 1997; Helm 2000). The Tłıchǫ themselves tell how when the world was new people feared the large unpredictable birds until Yamq̕z̕aa taught human and non-human beings the importance of living in harmony by knowing and showing respect for others, and their place within the landscape.

The story of Yamq̕z̕aa, his wife, and the man who stole her continues to live there, and the power of the entities that dwell there and its significance as a sacred place to the Tłıchǫ continue to be vital to defining the Tłıchǫ.

Each time Yamq̕z̕aa's rules were disregarded chaos and fighting erupted, followed by a knowledgeable leader who used his power to settle differences. Edzo is said to be responsible for re-establishing peace between Akaitcho and his followers and the Tłıchǫ. M̕whì talked to the Federal Treaty Commissioner until the Commissioner agreed that the area now known as M̕whì Gogha Dè N̕łłèè would remain the same for the Tłıchǫ. M̕whì was advised by his uncle and other elders, who had heard stories from First Nations' people further south, that M̕whì was to be very careful or they would forfeit the right to make decisions about their land.

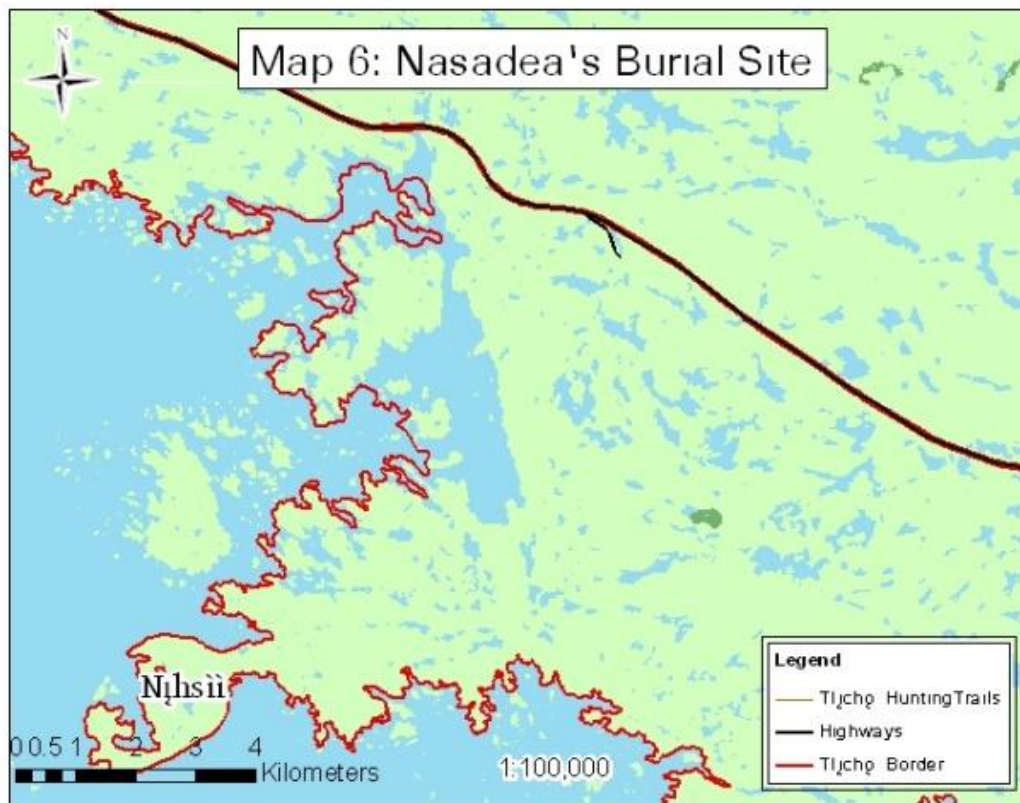
Places associated with events that occurred during the times of these leaders are significant and evident within Tideèk'è. To recognize Tideèk'è as sacred is fundamental to the transmission of Tłıchǫ culture, and provides both the Tłıchǫ and non-Dene opportunities to better understand the origins of Tłıchǫ perspective. Tłıchǫ narratives describe locales where Yamq̕z̕aa travelled and where he created landforms through his actions, and places with enhanced spiritual power that require a demonstration of respect that appeases the entities that dwell there. N̕łshìì and the scattering of islands south of N̕łshìì are such places. (See Map 5, *Yamq̕z̕aa and His Wife, Beaver*). The narrative of Yamq̕z̕aa's actions and the task of finding his wife, and the man who stole his wife, created a cultural landscape that is significant to the Tłıchǫ, and needs protecting from development and abuse by tourists who may inadvertently disrespect a place and the people who know it.

N̕łshìì became known as Old Fort Rae in 1852 when the Hudson's Bay Company built their trading post and named it for Dr. John Rae, one of their chief factors. This created a site with some historic significance for Tłıchǫ, Métis, and non-Dene alike. Historically, the trading post is of later cultural importance; the original being when Yamq̕z̕aa created N̕łshìì and the islands south of it.

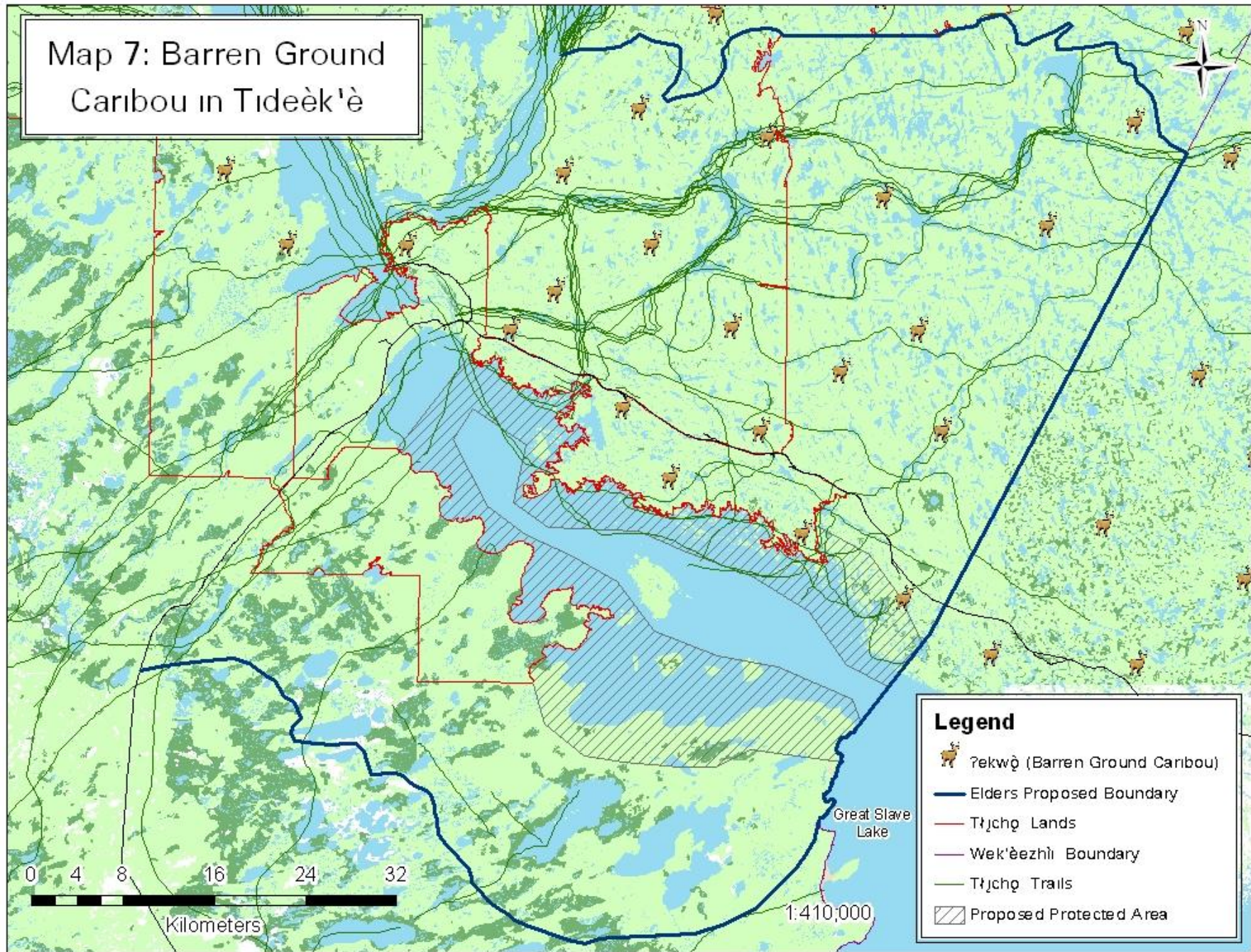
In the early 1800s Edzo became an important leader among the Tłıchǫ when he brought harmony to Tłıchǫ nekèè (the place where Tłıchǫ belong) by creating peace with the Yellowknives' leader Akaitcho. Another powerful man from that period was Nasadea, who had the ability to help those in need. He is buried in Tideèk'è on an island north of N̕łshìì, where his power remains at the site. His ability to continue helping people is

evident in the following narrative that tells of an experience Rita Wetrade had as a young girl.

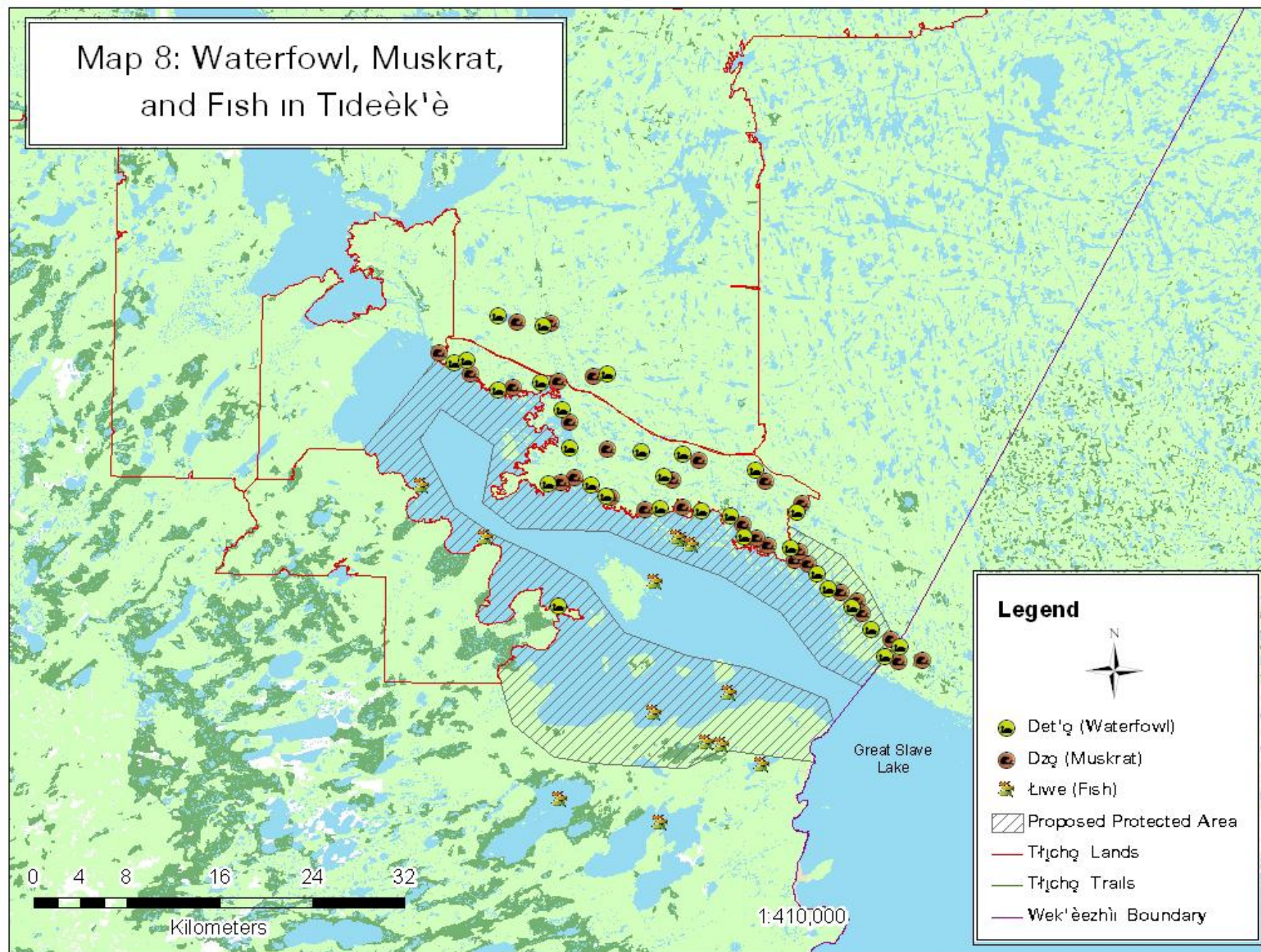
Our whole family-my mom, dad, and sisters-travelled to the place called Whq̄s̄iwēk̄q̄. It's a very special place for us to go to. It has lots of fish, waterfowl, and small game to hunt all year. Whq̄s̄iwēk̄q̄ was always amazing because it was so clean. You could drink the lake water with your hands. When we travelled from Behchok̄q̄ to Whq̄s̄iwēk̄q̄ we always stop on the same place to spend the night or just to make a camp to eat. While on the island, we used to play and run and laugh. My dad told us that we should be quiet and feed the fire because Nasadea's grave is on the island.⁵ So we stopped playing, we fed the fire, and we asked grandpa-Nasadea for a moose. Grandpa-Nasadea gave us a big moose on the same day. My father shot it and we enjoyed the change of diet from tea, bannock, and fish. (September 15th 2011)



⁵ The exact island-north of Nł̄hs̄ī-on which Nasadea's grave is located was not documented, therefore only the general area is shown here.



Map 8: Waterfowl, Muskrat,
and Fish in Tideèk'è



The “land” is valued as it provides all that is required to live; the *dè* (land) is sacred as a whole, with interconnected locales and trails, not just distinct areas divided off to be honoured when the need arises. Places and trails within the *dè* are valued because at these locales stories originate and dwell. As discussed by elders it is places that teach. (Andrews 2004; Basso 1984a, 1996). Places and trails hold the information that is required to live life as a Tłıchǫ person. Tasks are performed along trails and at places that provide resources to the camp, the community, and the family. Trails are significant as they take those who know the land from the shoreline to inland places so all can be observed, used, and experienced.

As indicated on Map 7, *Barren Ground Caribou in Tıdeèk’è*, in the past barren ground caribou came as far as the northeast of Tıdeèk’è where along the shore there are several good fishing spots, and waterfowl can be harvested in the spring and fall. The Tłıchǫ travelled along trails inland to harvest caribou and trap, and to the shore to harvest fish, muskrats, and waterfowl as shown on Map 8, *Waterfowl, Muskrats and Fish in Tıdeèk’è*. Both Agnes Apple and Dora Migwi explained that the area between Tłıkeèdaà and Nłhshìi has always had a lot of people living around it because it was such a good area.

In addition to the fish that fed both their families and their dogs, waterfowl are plentiful, and trapping was and continues to be excellent, especially for muskrats. Tıdeèk’è is also known for *dedìi* (moose) and *tǫdzì* (woodland caribou), as is shown on Map 9, *Moose and Woodland Caribou in Tıdeèk’è*

As is so often said by the elders, the land is like a book (Andrew 2004) as all places have oral narratives attached to them. Place names are important mental maps of locales where oral narratives dwell (Andrew 1990; Basso 1984 a, b, 1988; Legat 2012); they are culturally significant and often are indicators of bio-geographical knowledge. Map 10, *Places Whose Stories are Significant Within the Context of a Three-Day Trip*.

Places with Stories

In addition to the story of Nłhshìi and the forming of the islands between Nłhshìi and Xomłhk’è, the following are places whose stories were told during the field trip to document the cultural importance of the proposed protected area (see Map 10 for locations). We consider these stories and places as only a start in documenting the cultural significance of Tıdeèk’è. This is a vast area, with large Tłıchǫ presence through time and space.

Dınàgà (Waite Island)

Dınàgà was once an important place to camp, especially in the spring when both *dedìi* (moose) and *tǫdzì* (woodland caribou) appear in this area. The original boundary for Kwets'ootł'àà proposed by the Tłıchǫ Government did not include Dınàgà. So we asked the elders during a morning session if they wanted Dınàgà protected. The elders agreed they did want this island protected.

They said that Dınàgà is a significant site as someone experienced a violent death there. The elders do not visit Dınàgà; they want other people to not visit the place. Harry

Apple explained that once he walked around the island and saw something that looked like a bear den, but it also looked like someone or something had lived there. He became afraid, and walked away never to return there again. Harry went on to tell the following story:

In the past there was one white man who lived on this island. He built a house but one day his house burn down. It is said that there were huge flames coming from the island. It is believed that he died but no one found his body, and since that time no one goes out there anymore. (as told on August 9th 2011)

There are other islands, such as one located on a lake south of Gamètì, where people have died violent deaths and the elders say not to visit or walk on the island so as to not cause further anguish to the spirits that dwell there. In listening to the narratives, these places are being protected from human activity, suggesting it would be relevant to protect Dinàgà.

ʔenòòda (known in English as Trout Rock)

This has always been an important resting and camping stop when travelling into Akaitcho Territory. Since the establishment of Yellowknife in the 1930's, when Mqowhì was Grand Chief, it became an important stop-over when travelling to Yellowknife.

Kwebààdìi (translates as “rock by island”)

This island has stone chimneys and evidence of house foundations as well as household items.⁶

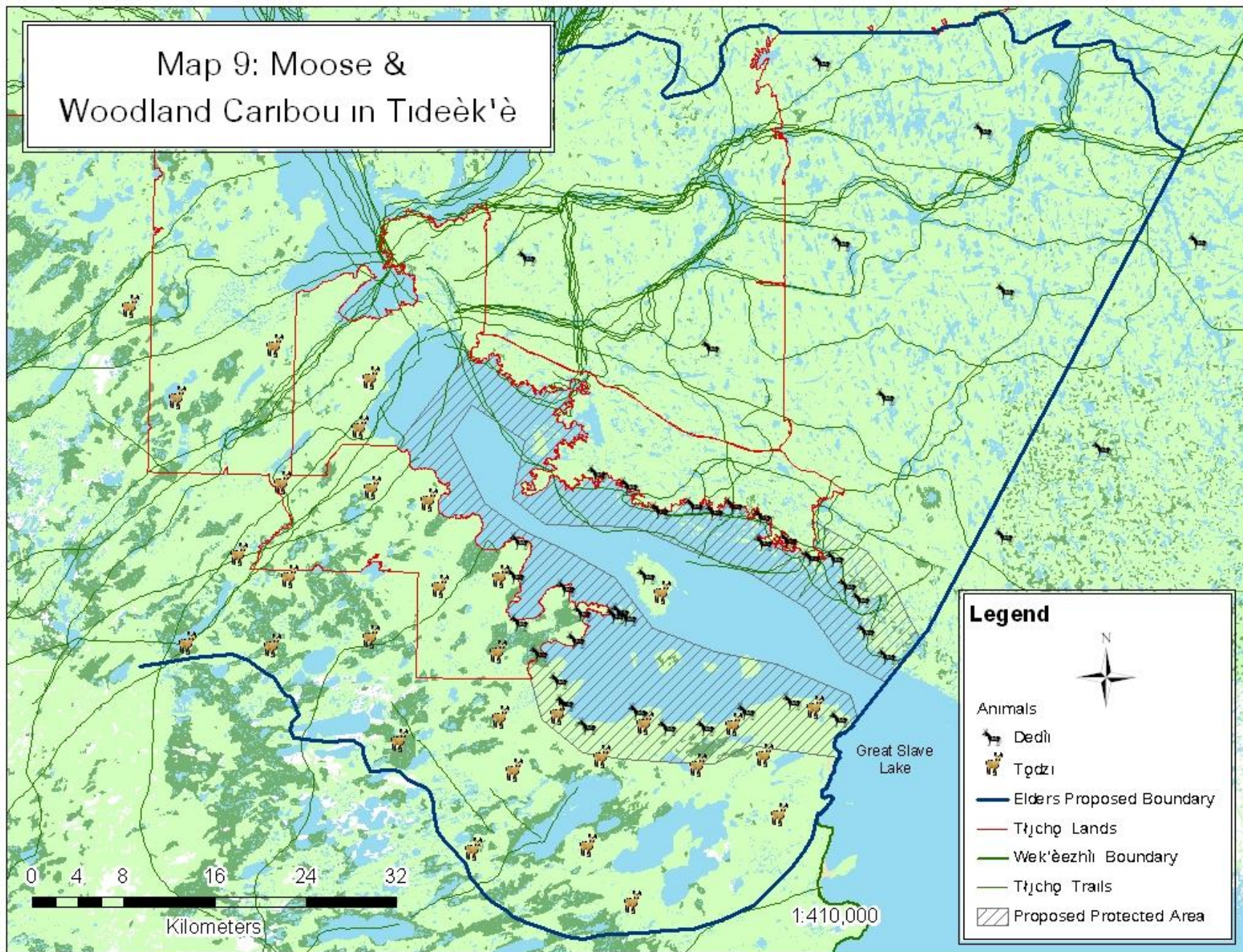
Kwekàatenaedèa (translates as “flat rock, repeatedly they fly”)

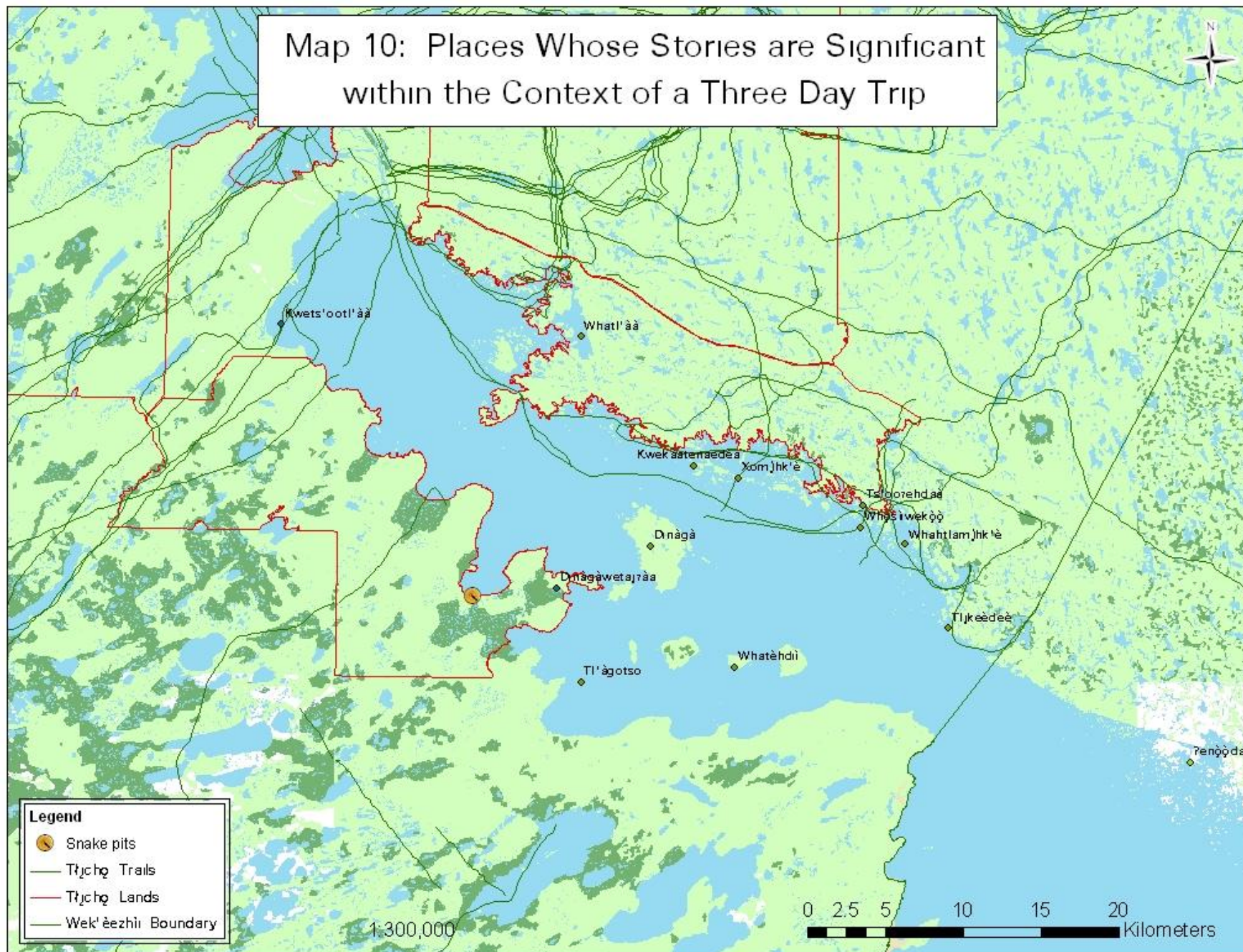
This is a very small island where various species of waterfowl rest during spring migration. Species such as: àawaqà (old squaw duck); *dehga* (ring-necked duck); det'qtso (swan); yàzqa (black duck); kw'ihmbèe (red-throated loon); tèecho (Arctic loon); chihcho (green-winged mallard); and waatiàsaà (pintail)⁷.

⁶ Kwebààdìi is very close to Xomìhk'è and is not marked on the map.

⁷ Translations are given therefore not all are the accepted English term.

Map 9: Moose &
Woodland Caribou in Tideèk'è





Tlàgotso (translates as “big bay”)

Tlàgotso is located southwest of Dìnàgà. The elders we worked with agree that this bay should be protected as the habitat along the shore is ideal for fish and moose, and attracts both. In the summer a variety of fish are caught. In the autumn and until the ice is thick, which is more or less from the end of October until the first week of November, only *lih* (whitefish) are caught. The full name for this place is Dìnàgà Godoo T’làgotso showing its relationship to the island Dìnàgà, and the significance of this island to this bay.

Tłkeèdee (translates as “dog footprints river”)

The graves of Mìshezemìì’s father and mother are near Tłkeèdee. There are a couple of unknown graves there, and also the grave of the old-timer Pierre Liske.

Ts’oozehdaà (“muskeg point”)

Ts’oozehdaà is an important camping locale with easy access to various locations both inland for trapping and hunting, and along the shore for fishing and hunting waterfowl.

Harry Apple and his extended family continue to use this place as their home base because it has access to fish and various berries: dahkàà (raspberry), ʔedaghoò (gooseberry), ɹłtł’q (cranberry), k’èłdzìe (saskatoon berry), and tsqht’è (crowberry). Harry explained how he would walk to Ts’ootì (muskeg lake) for trapping such animals as muskrat, adjoining a trail that leads to Whqsiwekòò. It is also known to be a very good moose area. The area outlined on Map 8 is important for waterfowl and muskrats.

Harry Apple’s baby sister, who died suddenly, is buried across from Ts’oozehdaà.



Harry Apple at sister’s grave. (Photograph by Allice Legat)

Whahtlaàmìhk'è (translates as bay net site")

Like Xomìhk'è, Whahtlaàmìhk'è is associated with Mìshèzemì (Michel Noel), a step-father to Jimmy Martin, whose mother was Mqwhì's⁸ eldest daughter. Georgina Chocolate explained that her uncle, Jimmy Martin told her that he had heard that Mìshèzemì's parents were buried near Whahtlaàmìhk'è but he had never seen the burials even though he travelled there often.

This bay is near Tìkeèdeè, and is called Whatlaàmìhk'è after Whàtlaa who had a store on the bay, where he sold supplies from the barge. Moise Rabesca grew up in the area and is recognized as knowing the best fishing spots and places for gathering plants for medicine. He said,

I grew up here in this area. People built the houses here so they could go hunting from here. I learn that this is the best fishing spot, and there is a good medicine of the plants around here too. Whadaa is not far and is a good moose area, and I remember seeing Whq̄sìi building a house at Whq̄sìiwèkq̄. So many of us lived around this area. That is the reason why we keep on saying this area is very important place for protection. My aunties and uncles. Harry lived out here. It gives us a lot of happy memories out here, even Joe Migwi used to travel here for fish. This used to be his good fishing spot. We always gave out some fish to other family; it is good to share our tradition food. We had to pay respect to the land, wildlife, and water when out on the land. (August 9th 2011)

Whatèhdiì (translates as "sand mat island")

Whatèhdiì consists of four islands in a windy spot in the southern portion of Tideèk'è. Harry Apple explained that at one time he killed a moose at a place across from Whatèhdiì, in the bay called Whatèdìt'aa. As Harry said,

I have seen some old cave; there are so many out there. I even saw a bear too, every time we see an island there is a bay called by the island across from the bay. For example if the island is called Whatèhdiì, the bay across from that island would be call Whatèhdiìt'aa. (August 9th 2011)

Whq̄sìiwèkq̄'e (translates as "Whq̄sìi house")

Whq̄sìiwèkq̄ is known in English as Blackduck Camp. Isadore Wellin continues to spend time here, as do his children and grandchildren. This place is named after Whq̄sìi, Isadore Wellin's uncle, who placed his house near the creek and used to fish there and in the lake.

⁸ Mqwhì signed Treaty 11 in 1921 as a friendship treaty.

Both Moise Rabesca and Rita Wetrade were raised here as were Harry Apple and his nieces and nephews.



Georgina Chocolate and Rita Wetrade (nee Blackduck) sitting in Rita's childhood home at Whq̓s̓iwek̓òò. (Photograph by Allice Legat)

Harry Apple explained,

From here we used to walk all the way to Ts'ootì in winter-just for trapping.

Back then we can hear the sound from all the animals, like grouse that danced. They would not stop even though you walked near them; they kept dancing. The noise and sound of the animals was so beautiful, we can hear gagoo (swan) fly by. We can hear the flap of their wings, the sound is spectacular.

I am standing here and talking to you from Whq̓s̓iwek̓òò (Blackduck Camp) where some houses are rundown but are still standing.

This is where we raised our children, and our parents raised us too. There used to be a lot of àqwaq̓ (old squaw duck) and ɛhtòò (grouse) dancing, the sound of which was beautiful, at dawn.

One time the ɛhtòò dance around the open-fire, and we were all amazed at that, but now-a-days we can hardly hear any sound or noise of any animals. But before-day and night-we used to hear all the sound of all kinds of animals like det'q̓ (ducks), ts'ali (frog), tèecho (loon), k'àmbaà (chicken), àawq̓ (old squaw duck), goh̓à (robins) – everything. (July 9 2011)

Isadore added,

Some of the old houses were built using only an axe and handsaw, and mud for paste. They continue to stand. Our elder whose name is Yatehzoo used to live here with his family too. A lot of people have used this place in the past. People used to stop by our place when they travel on. That why this place is so important. So we want this locale to be protected.



Edith Wellin with father Isadore Wellin. (Photograph by Alice Legat)

The place is significant as it was a good place to build a community, and the Tłıchq who resided, and continue to reside here had access to many resources without travelling dangerous water. Resources such as àawaqà (old squaw duck), ɬetòò (grouse that dance), łih (whitefish), ɬłhdaa (jackfish), dehdo (sucker), nqhkweq (loche), wiile (coney), as well as dedii (moose), tsà (beaver), and dzq (muskrat). (July 9th 2011)

Xomłhk'è (translates as “year round net place”)

All the elders involved in this project spoke of Xomłhk'è as being named because there are fish there throughout the year. Harry Apple explained that Mqwhi's grandson Mishèremii's father had a house at Xomłhk'e. One of the other houses belonged to Jimłrezhłł. Isadore Wellin added,

I come here to Xomłhk'è with my family, all my children were raised out Blackduck. Xomłhk'è is very important place for all Tłıchq even today. When we decide to go to the bush my children get very excited about it, they are happy when they come out here.

That is why this place is very important for protection. Even as far to trapping area and Whqsiwekqòq (Blackduck camp) there is all types of fish, caribou, moose, trapping beaver, muskrat. And Xomłhk'è people said it is a living place that is very true. (July 11th 2011)

Tideèk'è: Cultural Resources⁹

When travelling towards and speaking of Tideèk'è, the name evokes thoughts of campsites that people have used since the time of Yamqòzaa. Archaeological studies show evidence of thousands of years of occupation. Tideèk'è is where many people lived before moving into communities, so children could remain at home to go to school. The name also evokes the vision of many burials and gravesites, rich habitat for waterfowl, delicious clean water, healthy fish, multiple berries, and beautiful land on which to dwell.

As Harry Apple said to Georgina Chocolate on August 8th 2011, “It is our livelihood. We want this land to be protected always for the future.” The idea of travelling towards and spending time on Tideèk'è evokes knowledge and discussion of the traditional foods and other entities that can be harvested and observed for information in the area. They watch how all that is part of Tideèk'è interacts.

Tideèk'è continues to be important to the Tłıchq, and they want it protected as it has its roots from the time of Yamqòzaa and continues to be used today. Each elder stated that they do not want any damage or destruction to this land that is so important to them. As Tłıchq talked about the cultural value of Tideèk'è they included:

- Fish: *lih* (whitefish); *ıhdaa* (jackfish); *nqkwèe* (loche); *kwiezì* (sucker); *woòle* (coney); and *zehs'èq* (pickerel).
- Plants: *ıtt'ò* (cranberry); *dahkàà* (raspberry); *dahghoò* (gooseberry); *daht'ıı* (high bush cranberry); *gots'òkà* (cloudberry); *jiewà* (blueberry); *k'èqdzìe* (saskatoon berry); *tsqht'è* (crowberry), as well as numerous medicines.
- Small mammals: *dlòo* (squirrels); *dzq* (muskrats); *dıga* wolves; *nqgèe* foxes; and *tsà* (beaver).
- Large mammals: *dedı* (moose); *hozırekwò* (barren ground caribou); *tqdzı* (boreal caribou); and *sah* (bears).



Edith Wellin at Xomıhk'è. (Photograph by Alices Legat)

⁹ This list includes translations. It should be noted that not all are accepted English terms.

- Waterfowl and other birds: àawaà (old squaw duck); *behk'ò* (seagull) –especially their eggs; *rehtòo* (grouse); *dehga* (ring-necked duck); *det'òtso* (eagles); *gagoo* (swan); *yàzqa* (black duck); *det'qyè* (duck eggs); *gohà* (robins); *kw'ihmbèe* (red-throated loon); *tèecho* (Arctic loon); *chihcho* (green-winged mallard); and *waatiàsaà* (pintail)
- Frogs and Snakes:¹⁰ *ts'ali* (frogs), and the location of *gòotso* (snakes) pits. (See Map 10).



Harvesting àawaà. (Photograph by Alice Legat)

Medicine: Plants

The female elders focused on the culturally valued traditional medicine within this rich bio-diverse area of Tideèk'è. They did not provide specific locales where medicine is found, but did emphasize several islands around the shoreline are important, and that Nìhshìì and Whòsìwekqòq continue to be visited to harvest important medicines. They explained the importance of these plants and how the plants benefit people.

They explained, ideally, plants used for medicine should be collected in the spring when the plants are fresh and juicy, and once collected they should be stored in cloth and hung to dry so the medicine is available when needed. Also important is the harvesting in the autumn to ensure the right selection of medicine for the winter. In the winter, plants used for medicine continue to be frozen and prepared when needed.

The following plants continue to be used.

- Dowe (tamarack): This is chewed until it is soft and placed on the sore. If covered and wrapped properly the sore will heal quickly.
- Dzèhkw'ò (sticky spruce gum or soft spruce gum): Continues to be used for a variety of ailments, including sores.
- Detsìdzèh (spruce gum): Excellent medicine known to all Dene. The people in Deline use it to clean their system. It is hard to find it now.

¹⁰ During discussions, both frogs and snakes were mentioned. Stories were not recorded at this time.

- Dzòdì (muskrat root): Very strong medicine that should never be mixed with or near pharmacy medication as the mixture can be dangerous. Even if they are kept in the same place. Once an elder was out on the land and had a stomach ache. He crushed and boiled the roots. He then drank the broth and he felt better.
 - Goòk'aa:¹¹ The top skin of the branches are boiled and strained, and the broth is used for eye drops two or three times a day.
 - Gots'agoò (Labrador tea): The leaves are brewed for tea, and consumed for colds and coughs.
 - Gots'òqhdzì (pine cones): Boiling creates a broth, and consumed as it is good for sores.
 - K'àk'oo (red willow): Looks like willow but redder with white spots on it. This plant is boiled.
- K'iwet'ì* (birch, birch bark): The inner bark is good for many sicknesses. It is boiled and consumed.



Elder Melanie Lafferty explaining - to Albertine Eyakfwo - how to use several culturally valued plants. (Photograph by Alice Legat)

¹¹ Several plants were not identified as we were unable to get to the place where they grow due to weather.



Ritalene Gon, Dora Migwi, Rita Wetrade, Albertine Eyakfwo, and Annie Apple picking K'òògots'òdzì at Whatlaàmìhk'è. (Photograph by Alice Legat)

- K'òògots'òdzì (willow buds): This is very good to the heart. The elders were excited to see it as they have never seen it in this area before.
- Tèehgòò (unknown): Chew it or boil it, and drink the broth as it is good for sores in the mouth.
- Tèeht'aa (water lily): This big leaf is found in the water and if put on a sore, it will heal faster.
- Daàghoq (tree lichen): It is round and sticky, you find it on trees. You boil it and drink the broth for stomach aches.
- Ts'iwà (white spruce): The spruce gum and the branches are boiled, and women drink it when sick and in pain during pregnancy and when giving birth. This plant helps women heal faster after the birth.

Wildlife and Fish

As is evident under the section ‘Significant Locales’, the elders described the importance of areas for fish, waterfowl, and small fur-bearing animals, particularly muskrat (Map 8). They also noted areas where snake pits are located as shown on Map 10. Barren ground caribou migrate into the eastern side of the proposed protected area (Map 7), while boreal caribou are usually noted on the western side and on islands including Dinàgà (Map 9). Moose are found along the shore in several locales (Map 9). The importance of small fur-bearing animals was mentioned, with Maps 1, 3, and 4 showing trap-lines, and trails leading inland on both sides.¹²

Based on in-depth traditional knowledge research during the ‘caribou migration and the state of their habitat project’ that took place from 1996 to 2001, the elders noted that barren ground caribou were harvested on the northeast side of the proposed protected area in 1931, 1938, 1941, 1944, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1963, 1973, 1974, 1983, and 1987 (Dogrib Treaty 11 Council 2001).¹³

Elders noted the rich habitat for caribou in several locations, including where we were camped. They asked that the boundary of the protected area be extended to include the caribou habitat for past and current distribution of caribou – both barren ground and boreal caribou.



Vegetation within caribou habitat. (Photograph by Alice Legat)

¹² There was no mention of bison.

¹³ The study did not take into consideration satellite data. For years after 1991 that caribou migrated into area, please see scientific studies.

Recommendations

The elders emphasized that “the land is who we are” and that the protection of the area the elders call Tìdeèk’è should reflect the intimate relationship the Tłıchǫ have with all that is encompassed within Tìdeèk’è. The trails, locales, and activities that took place there in the past, and continue today, are significant to the ongoing, overall well-being of Tłıchǫ people, their culture, language, and their perspective. They emphasized that they love this land “as it is like a mother and father to us and all the animals and plants that are on it; it is our livelihood, and that is how we still use the trails of our ancestors.”

The elders made several recommendations during the research process. These are:

- Change the name of the proposed protected area to Tìdeèk’è. This more accurately represents and shows respect for Tłıchǫ place names.
- Expand the protected area boundary to include both boreal and barren ground caribou.
- Expand the boundary of the proposed protected area to include the ancestral (heritage) trails leading into the area.
- Give the Land Protection Department, Tłıchǫ Government sufficient funding for Harry Apple and Moise Rabesca to go out for at least five days to document, using GPS, the numerous burials and grave sites in the area, located within Tìdeèk’è.
- Have a workshop with Tłıchǫ elders and harvesters, and staff from the Tłıchǫ and federal governments and Wek’eezhii Renewable Resources Board to explain the protection of harvesting rights under sections 16.3 and 16.4, Chapter 16 ‘Protected Areas’.
- Have further discussion with Working Group elders to determine how each place should be respected. Use a process that allows the elders to attend one meeting, leave to discuss the issues with their peers, and return for further discussion. Issues may include things such as how to inform tourist operators and the public; if plaques or other public information is needed or effective.
- Expand field research to document stories of additional significant places.
- Define and carry out similar research to determine what species of waterfowl were used in the past and what waterfowl are currently being harvested. This should be done during spring or fall migration of waterfowl.

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