2020

Summary of Traditional Land-Use by the Indigenous Métis People in the Yellowknife Bay Area

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Contents

Executive Summary

This traditional land-use report is a review of previous studies and interviews to answer two research questions:

1. What traditional land-use by North Slave Métis Alliance members have been recorded within the Yellowknife Bay area; and
2. Approximately when and where were those land-uses?

Based on available records primarily left by European settlers who began arriving in the Yellowknife Bay area in the late 18th century, the evidence establishes that by the early 1820s, there was a population of Métis people who were living and working in the Yellowknife Bay area. These people were well-versed to live on the land, and frequently employed by European explorers as guides and interpreters.

With the discovery of gold in Yellowknife in the 1930s, a new influx of people came into the Yellowknife Bay area. During this period, regionally dispersed Métis people also started arriving in Yellowknife in search of employment opportunities, while smaller Métis settlements such as Old Fort Rae succumbed to the passage of time and change in the economy.

Métis people, including the NSMA members, continue to use the land in the Yellowknife Bay area, including the Giant Mine site and its vicinity, for traditional harvesting and spiritual pursuit.

About the Author

Shin Shiga is a self-employed consultant, whose previous roles include Traditional Knowledge Research Director for the North Slave Métis Alliance. His publication includes the research paper on Métis traditional knowledge on climate change in the Northwest Territories, titled “A Continual Change and Gradual Warming: A summary of the North Slave Métis Alliance’s recorded cultural knowledge on climate and environmental change.” He holds a Master’s degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Victoria.

Background

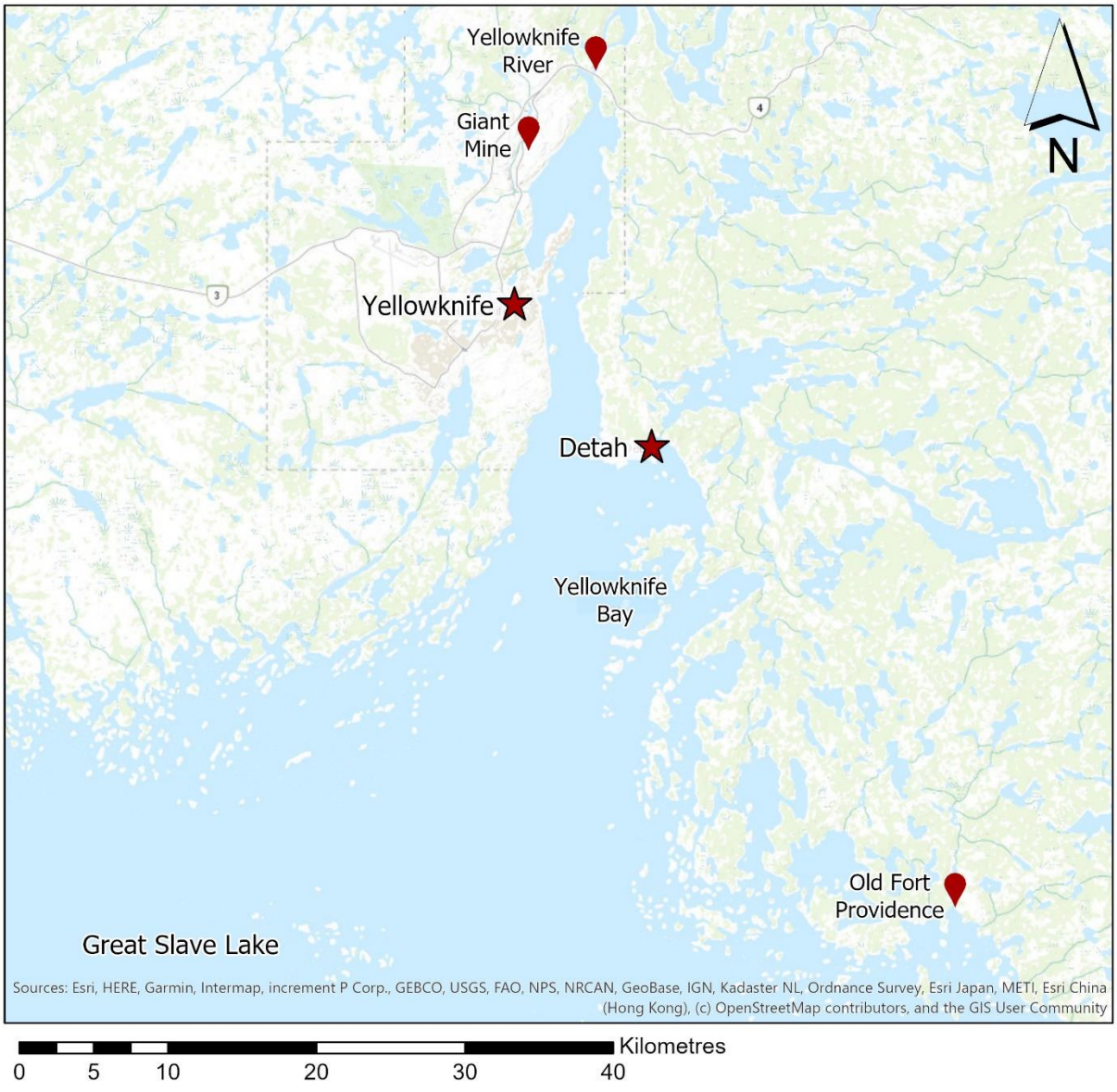
The North Slave Métis Alliance (“NSMA”) asked me to “conduct the Traditional Land-use Study for Giant Mine” as a part of the Alliance’s ongoing engagement with the Giant Mine Remediation Project (“GMRP” or “the Project”). The study describes traditional land-use by the Métis people of the Great Slave Lake area in Yellowknife Bay and its general vicinity (the “study area”), including the Giant Mine site.

This report is a review of previously conducted studies and interviews. The research questions are limited to land-use and do not intend to address NSMA members’ traditional knowledge, beliefs, values, concerns, or preferences. The two research questions used here are:

1. What traditional land-use by NSMA members have been recorded within the study area; and
2. Approximately when and where were those land-uses?

As the scope and budget of this study are limited compared to other similar projects often by a factor of ten or more, this study may be considered a preliminary study of the subject matter.

Map 1: Map of the study area ("Yellowknife Bay Area")



Methodology and Limitations

The main sources of this report are previous studies conducted by other researchers, either for the NSMA or otherwise. Key documents reviewed for this study include reports by Jones (2005, 2014), McCormack (2011), and Stevenson (1999), among others.

This report included a review of interview transcripts with NSMA members, as primary reference to older NSMA members' experience in and around Giant Mine. Although Giant Mine was not the focus of these interviews, analysis of the transcripts provided accounts of traditional land-use in the vicinity.

My analysis included a limited amount of interpretation to draw out the knowledge being revealed by the interviewees. As much as practicable, interview quotes are presented in full to contextualize the words of the interviewees.

In analyzing the document sources, it is important to carry forward the limitations the original authors noted. That is, no studies provide complete information about the people, events, and regions under study. For example, in Jones' report (2005) she writes:

> "The primary sources reviewed were created by people of solely European ancestry who were relative newcomers to the area and were not privy to the internal workings of the Indian, Inuit or mixed-ancestry societies there. Each document was created to meet the needs of the writer and his prospective audience, whether it was for an entertaining travel narrative, an account of financial transactions, a chronology of the business of a fur trade post or a mission, or a Mounted Police report. Indian, Inuit, or mixed-ancestry people of the nineteenth century in this region did not create their own documents to record what was important to them. As most document authors were of British descent, even the cultures and activities of those of French-Canadian ancestry are reported from an outsider's perspective."

While analysis of recent and contemporary interviews provides some relief to this limitation, much information is unquestionably missing, particularly with regards to land-

use information prior to the twentieth century and in areas outside of the immediate vicinity of the trading posts or out of ways of British explorers' travel routes.

Métis People of the Great Slave Lake Area

Before describing the Metis people's traditional land-use in the area, it is prudent to establish who those people are. Historian Gwynneth Jones (2014), as well as two court declarations[1] [2], agree that there is one Métis ethnic community in the Northwest Territories whose traditional territory encompassed the entirety of the Northwest Territories and the northern portion of the provinces that abut the Northwest Territories. This community of Métis people "developed independently in the Mackenzie Basin, including the Great Slave Lake area, albeit with close and [ongoing] relationships of kinship and economic and political cooperation with their First Nations Dene and Cree neighbors." (McCormack, 2011, p.52). Those who lived in the Great Slave Lake area, including the Métis, subsisted on wildlife harvesting and the fur trade, and this population frequently traveled throughout this larger area. Marriage networks were created between Métis families and demonstrate that these families extended to all parts of the Great Slave Lake and into nearby areas, including Fort Simpson and Great Bear Lake (Jones, 2014). These Métis people were highly mobile and traveled over a wide area in the vicinity of Great Slave Lake from season to season or year to year. In that sense, the Métis people of the Great Slave Lake area formed a regionally-based, rather than a settlement-based community.

The (regional) community that developed was a distinct community with shared customs, traditions, and had a collective identity. As stated in Jones (2014), "mixed-ancestry people were prized as fur-trade employees for their language ability, skills in living on the land, and influence with the Indian population… mixed-ancestry people relied to a greater or lesser degree on waged employment, from full-time lifelong fur trade employment at one extreme to leader of 'Indian' fur-hunting groups on the other" (Jones, 2014, p.128).

[1] Enge v Mandeville, 2013 NWTSC 33
[2] Enge v Canada, 2017 FC 932

Today, the North Slave Métis Alliance represents “a sizeable and identifiable constituency within the Métis community of the Northwest Territories” (Enge v Canada, 2017, para 197). It is also recognized by the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories that, based on their Métis ethnicity, NSMA members have a good *prima facie* claim to Aboriginal right to harvest caribou in the Great Slave Lake area (Enge v Mandeville, 2013, para 231).

To summarize, this historic rights-bearing Métis community of the Great Slave Lake area was ethnically distinct from the Dene, Chipewyan, Slavey, Cree, and European people who also resided in, used, and occupied the Great Slave Lake area of the NWT. This group of people continues to exist today, a constituent of which is represented by the North Slave Métis Alliance.

The historic Métis community of the Great Slave Lake area harvested wildlife, plants, trees, and other natural resources in the Great Slave Lake area, including in the Yellowknife Bay area, according to their traditional practices, and such traditions and practices were integral to that historic Métis community. There is a continuity between the hunting for food according to their traditional practices by the Métis of Great Slave Lake area, including the North Slave region and Yellowknife Bay area, and the present-day harvesting practices of NSMA members. In other words, it is these people, NSMA members and their Métis ancestors, of whose land-use I report below.

Métis Land-use Before the Gold Rush

There is a sparse documented record of Métis land-use in the study area prior to the inflow of gold prospectors in the twentieth century. The 1790s was the decade when people of European ancestry had begun to establish a sufficiently persistent presence in the Great Slave Lake area that the first signs of local mixed-ancestry family formation appear (Jones, 2004). One of the earliest records of clear Métis presence in the study area is the establishment of the temporary post, Old Fort Providence, near Yellowknife Bay in the fall of 1789 by Laurent Leroux of the North West Company (“NWC”) (Jones 2004). Old Fort Providence served as a trading post for First Nations. However, with access to large numbers of caribou, which wintered near the north shore of Great Slave

Lake, its main function was that of a supplier of meat to other posts in the Great Slave-Mackenzie district.

With the arrival of the North West Company, a significant influx of French-Cree Métis arrived in the Great Slave-Mackenzie district. Later (when the Hudson's Bay Company took over the North West Company), the Hudson's Bay Company ("HBC") described these men as "a superior class of men, stout, active fellows, in every aspect qualified for the laborious duties they have to perform"(Stevenson, 1999, p.22). The emergence of these Métis middlemen stabilized Métis trader-Dene trapper relationships through kinship ties and associated reciprocal obligations. Anthropologist Richard Slobodin wrote on the kinship relations of the Métis of Great Slave Lake area (Jones, 2005, p.ix):

> "There is another widespread feature of kinship and social life among Mackenzie Métis that is not easy to characterize. This is the patronymic connection. The bearers of not many more than a dozen family names constitute a majority of Mackenzie Métis, with about as many other names slightly less common. A few of these names were borne by ancestors of real historical distinction; all of them are names well-known and repeatedly encountered in the history of the northwest and of the fur trade. The student of northern and fur trade history feels as though he is encountering the living past as he hobnobs with people named Beaulieu, Mercredi, Mandeville, Lafferty, Bouvier, Fabien, Isbister, Jones, Flett, Hardisty, Fraser, Camsell, Hodgson, Firth, Stewart and McKay."

Many of these family names appear in the North Slave Métis Alliance membership list.

Fierce competition between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company resulted in the establishments of a number trading posts from the 1790s to the 1820s, with the North West Company having the upper hand in the Great Slave-Mackenzie district. However, by 1820, the competition between the NWC and the HBC

had become so hostile and debilitating for both that in 1821 the two companies merged (and became the HBC). As a resulting rationalization of resources, the Old Fort Providence post was closed in 1823.

During this and subsequent periods of the Old Fort Providence post, prominent Métis individuals emerged in the historical records. For example, anthropologist June Helm analyzed fragments of oral and documentary history to identify Castooclthil/Le Camarade de Mandeville (a Métis person) as an intermediary between the Dogrib and the Yellowknife people, with “friends” on both sides, in the course of their warfare in the territory between Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake in the mid-1820s. The eventual outcome of this tribal war, which may have been provoked by changes in trade patterns caused by the closing of the fur posts at Lac la Martre and Old Fort Providence, was the dispersal of the Yellowknives into the Chipewyan and Dogrib population (Jones, 2004).

In another example, Franklin hired a French Métis interpreter, Jean Baptiste Adam, in the community of Old Fort Providence for his voyage 1821, where Franklin travelled up Yellowknife River towards the arctic coast. Adam, along with St. Germain, was hired primarily as an interpreter, his bush skills were put to use in the expedition as well. “The chief and all the Indians went off to hunt, accompanied by Pierre St. Germain (and Adam), the interpreter. They returned at night bringing some meat, and reported that they had put the carcasses of several rein-deer en cache.” (Franklin, 1823, p.219) This is one of many excerpts where Franklin mentions St. Germain and Adam joining or leading hunting parties. Franklin considered St. Germain and Adam to be among the better hunters in the party, and he praised each of them for their resourcefulness and bravery. Both men came to the very brink of death by starvation at Franklin’s side. Several other Métis on this expedition were not so lucky. Solomon Boulanger and Dit Credit both starved to death somewhere to the southwest of Contwoyto Lake, the latter sharing his last morsel of meat with the rest of the party days before he died (Franklin, 1823).

Map 2: Métis Land Use Around Old Fort Providence and Franklin's Travel Route of 1821

A note that this map is for reference purposes only and is not a complete document of all traditional and historic land use by the Métis people of the Great Slave Lake area. This map was created for the sole purpose of this document and should not be shared out of context or reproduced.

Franklin's 1821 Exploration Route

Historic Métis Settlement

0 3 6 12 18 24 Kilometres

N

Based on the limited available records, the evidence establishes that by the early 1820s, there was a population of Métis people who were living and working in the Yellowknife Bay area. With their knowledge of local and European languages as well as of the land, Métis men like Jean Baptiste Adam was able to guide European expeditions through Yellowknife River up into the Barrenland. Given the role of Old Fort Providence as a supply post, it is reasonable to conclude that the resident Métis people would have extensively used the nearby areas, such as Yellowknife Bay and Yellowknife River, for harvesting and traveling purposes.

Métis Land-use Between 1930-2018

Because documented records of historical Métis community were produced by European travelers and clerks of the trading post, there is little record of Métis community in the Yellowknife Bay area after the closure of the Old Fort Providence. Instead, the (recorded) site of main activities shifted to the North Arm area of Great Slave Lake at Old Fort Rae, which was established by the HBC in 1852. It must be emphasized again that the absence of documented records does not equate to the absence of the people. After all, America was not actually "discovered" by Columbus. He was merely the first European to record it. Similarly, it is likely that some Métis people remained in the Yellowknife Bay area in the period after the closure of the Old Fort Providence post. One example that backs up the case is Castooclthil/Le Camarade de Mandeville, who remained influential in the Yellowknife Bay area in the period after the closure of Old Fort Providence.

The next period where the record exists for Métis people in the study area is the period following the discovery of gold in Yellowknife. This information was mostly drawn from Stevenson's work in 1999, titled "Can't Live Without Work" unless otherwise cited. In 1934, geologists heading down the Yellowknife River found gold on Yellowknife Bay, triggering a gold rush influx of prospectors and entrepreneurs. Interestingly, Stevenson observes that "the Métis of the North Slave region never really felt the economic and socially debilitating effects of the Great Depression as they either relied more extensively on hunting and trapping -- fur prices remained high during the 1930s -- or found work in the mining industry." The quote below gives an interesting snapshot of land-use by Métis during this period:

> “They [father and uncles] had only dog teams and canoe, and they go trapping. They put everything in one toboggan. They go trapping, and they go, they don't come back for two, three weeks, and we stay with our mother, my mother fix the hide, she make sinew, moose sinew, caribou sinew and they kill rabbit. They keep that hide, rabbit hide, they dry it and they sell that. Squirrel. We do everything with Mom. Rabbit, fish, what is good, my Mom make dry fish out of. What is good to boil, clean it, take all the scales and you put outside in the warehouse. Everything we do...we don't think about going someplace. We got little radio, that's all. We got old gramophone... My Dad comes back with furs. Now we have new mitts, gloves, moccasins, everything is there for them. When they come back they put all that for the people of Fort Rae. They get flour, baking powder, something like that, with dog team.” (Alice Lafferty in Stevenson, 1999, p.198)

By 1936, Yellowknife had become a boomtown, and a new influx of Métis people began to move to the Yellowknife area from elsewhere in the Great Slave Lake area. People initially settled in areas including Duck Lake, Prosperous Lake, and Burwash, in the pursuit of new economic opportunities. In Yellowknife, Métis families began to settle on the islands and shorelines of Yellowknife Bay or acquired homes alongside other Métis people near present-day School Draw Avenue and the Willow Flats area. Late NSMA elder Ed Jones’ father, Eduard Jones Senior, built his trading post on Latham Island and his house on Joliffe Island in this period:

Interviewer: And you also said, your father was on Latham Island in 1937.

Ed Jones: The store was there on Latham Island. And we had a, also a house on Jolliffe, the north end of Jolliffe Island.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ed Jones: There was two big houses. McPhillamy [sp?] had one, and we had the other.

The new work in town included hauling freight, fishing for the mine, and cutting wood. By 1940, the population of Yellowknife swelled to 1,000, mostly newcomers who

overwhelmed the Métis population of 50 or so people. After the Second World War, Yellowknife, with three operating gold mines, boomed once again and the Métis continued to come to Yellowknife:

> "In 1945 I came here with the boat. My dad said, 'we go to Yellowknife. Maybe they get good medicine there," he said. 'Hudson Bay, we look, I buy lots of medicine.' We come here. We stay in the tent. That time we put the tent any place we want in Yellowknife. Now we went to Wildcat Café, and the old man, Chinese, he said, 'oh you got girls here. I need somebody to wash dishes for me.' My dad said, 'we're gonna stay here for awhile.' He said. 'maybe you work for awhile.' A dollar a day [laughs]. The first time I worked. 'I'll give you a dollar a day.' I said, 'okay.' And now I worked, do the tubs outside, boys they carry water… before we leave, we wash dishtowels on the washer board and we hang them on the line outside." (Alice Lafferty, Stevenson, 1999, p.58)

By 1947, Yellowknife's permanent population approached 3,000. In the late 1940s, the government ordered the Métis at Duck Lake and other outlying areas to move to Yellowknife and enroll their children in the local school. These families joined Métis families already living at School Draw and the "Flats," and quickly, these enclaves began to evoke the social values and adaptive economy of a distinctive Métis community. Métis families modified existing dwellings by adding warehouses beside their homes for the processing of country foods. Nets were set in the bay, ducks were hunted in the nearby swamp, and rabbits and foxes were snared at every opportunity. Near School Draw, people harvested berries from one of the best berry-picking grounds in the region. These traditional modes of sustenance were blended with wage income in a manner unique to the Métis. Most families were related and fairly large, though not as large as in the past, with a minimum of six children. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Métis community living in the School Draw and the "Flats" was composed of 12-15 families forming a population of 80-100 people.

In the burgeoning city of Yellowknife, the government sought to dispossess Dene and Métis of their landholdings as part of their grand scheme for the city. The new non-Aboriginal workforce had designs for the shoreline, islands, and lands where the Métis

and Dene had settled. The methods by which the government attempted to acquire these lands were heavy-handed, and the Métis were left dislocated and up-rooted.

The government disempowered the Métis by refusing to survey the lands upon which they had settled. Because it was unsurveyed land, the government labelled them as squatters. Several Métis families eventually gave in and moved to the low-cost housing, while other Métis families moved elsewhere in the city. Without a defined land base or bounded community over which the Métis had some control, a scattered Métis population faced the hardships of systemic racism and discrimination in the expanding city without the advantages of a physical buffer provided by a fixed community. The families also lost their chosen homesteads proximal to fishing grounds and other natural resources important to their survival. To this day, the community is without a land base in Yellowknife.

Despite challenges, the Métis people continued to maintain their community integrity through shared practices and customs. Adrian D'hont, a member of the NSMA, recounts:

> "Certainly, in the past, sharing was necessary for survival. And these days, well it's not absolutely essential for day-to-day survival; I mean it's essential for like cultural survival and to maintain links between families and friends, and just to sort of knit the community together. Without sharing, I mean, we would probably be just a bunch of scattered individuals living in the larger setting of Yellowknife and the north slave region. You have to know who, sort of who, your people are, I guess to be part of that. Well, I guess there's always the success of the hunts, fishing, or that type of thing; it's just kind of a cooperative spirit, I guess. If somebody needs help with something and you know that, whatever it is, I mean you extend a hand in some fashion or other in order to help out. Like I know with our organization here, we've got kind of bereavement. We're sort of a larger group that shares…when a member has lost one of their family members, so we try to help out that way. That's a more formalized kind of thing. There are still a lot of informal things that happen in those cases, especially where it's a family that…well, everybody knows they're well respected….you know they need assistance in that time." (Adrian D'hont in Stevenson, 1999, p.68)

At the same time, for the thriving Métis community in Old Fort Rae, the discovery of gold and the opening of Con and Giant Mine spelled an end of an era. The North Arm of Great Slave Lake was once a critical habitat for wintering caribou. In fact, Old Fort Rae ("OFR") was built and operated largely to take advantage of this resource. Caribou meat from OFR until the arrival of the steamboat was the fuel on which the fur trade ran. However, the discovery of gold around Yellowknife in the mid-1930s soon changed things:

> "[T]he caribou before used to come here a long time ago. Out on the lake, there were lots of caribou. Since they've put the mine in not very many caribou come around because the smell of you know… the working and I guess the smoke. When caribou they smell that for them it's very poisonous for caribou. That's why no more caribou come on the ice. They go to Gordon Lake, that far, and they go some place, Lac la Martre or Snare Lake. We don't see caribou, not really often. They go hunting but very far with skidoo. They don't see nothing. Caribou get scared of everything. The mines. You can hear that, when they're going, the machine. You can hear from far. Giant and Con, that's why the caribou don't come around here no more. Before it was lots. 1940. (Alice Lafferty, in Stevenson, 1999, p.104)

Nonetheless, Métis people who live in Yellowknife today continue to use the surrounding land for harvesting and traveling the way their ancestors had done since the 18th century. A preliminary scan of interview transcripts in NSMA's possession reveals contemporary Métis use of Yellowknife River, Back Bay, Yellowknife Bay, and the land and trails surrounding the Giant Mine property.

Yellowknife River, since Jean Baptiste Adam guided John Franklin up into the Barrenland, continues to serve as a key travel route for Métis people. Ed Jones, who traveled extensively with his father in a canoe in search of gold veins, has the following memories:

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a couple canoe trips?

Ed Jones: Well, I enjoyed them. I didn't know anything about minerals or rocks at that time. But nevertheless, I enjoyed camping, fishing, stuff like that. You more or less, in those days, prospectors lived off the land because when you traveled, you pretty well had to pack everything, eh. And ah, usually we didn't have a very big canoe either. You had to have one you could transport over portages. We didn't have freighter canoes or anything like they did in the very olden days because they're too heavy, and we traveled as light as we could.

Interviewer: So, when you were traveling with your dad, do you remember a particular trip up Yellowknife River…?

Ed Jones: Well, one that stood out was Allan Lake because, ah, he was chipping some gold and it's probably still there, I mean the, ah, the vein, ah– haven't heard anybody developing that property.

Interviewer: So, you went north of Yellowknife River, yeah?

Ed Jones: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you were out for how long?

Ed Jones: Well, as long as we could stay out and we were searching for gold, good gold showings–

Al Harman Jr. grew up by the mouth of Yellowknife River, adjacent to the Giant Mine site. He considers Yellowknife River as one of his main harvesting sites, from waterfowls in the spring to whitefish and cranberries in the fall:

Al Harman Jr.: A special spot is actually Yellowknife River. In the springtime, when the first bay is still frozen, I actually haul a canoe across two km of ice. It's slick right. So, you can drag it. Then it opens up right to the rapids, and it's full of swans, geese, all kinds of ducks. It's the first open water. And we're the first ones out there,

and we get quite a good bounty. But it's quite the workout because you've got to haul it over that two-km bay, back and forth. But it's so worth it.

…

Interviewer: Do you ever collect berries?

Al Harman Jr.: Yeah. Every fall time.

Interviewer: Can you give us some locations?

Al Harman Jr.: Hot spot is the Yellowknife River, Tartan Rapids.

…

Al Harman Jr.: ...The Yellowknife River here, that's kind of been my main staple fishing spot since I was, I remember. My parents lived at the mouth of the river when I was first born. We harvest whitefish every fall time, we actually set a net, throw it right up there when the fish are running.

Interviewer: So, in the spring?

Al Harman Jr.: That's in the fall time. Whitefish harvesting.

Yellowknife's Back Bay is not a choice harvesting site for the contemporary Métis, but it is an important travel route. A Métis elder Lawrence Mercredi grew up dog-sledding from Back Bay, through the Giant Mine property northwards to Martin Lake for winter fishing:

Lawrence Mercredi: Yeah, it was on this side of the Back Bay cemetery, [we would] get on the lake on the west side, and we would travel all the way up to Giant Mine, not to where the residential area is but beyond that on their property close to Vee Lake Road. Then we would get off that road to head into Martin Lake and west and north to Duck Fish

> Lake and there's another lake in there, Chan Lake, I think. But up in that area… and we checked the nets in the wintertime there…whitefish for the dogs.

Many others, including non-Aboriginal Yellowknife residents, continue to use Back Bay as their winter travel route today.

The area surrounding Giant Mine is often used for trapping or hunting small games, such as hares and grouse. Adrian D'hont, for example, took his son and daughter when they were younger to Vee Lake road to go grouse hunting. Lawrence Mercredi used to hunt and trap rabbits around Giant Mine, including by Jack Fish Lake, Niven Lake, and the Back Bay cemetery. He recounts, "the cemetery was always good for rabbits." Across the bay, Kathy Arden remembers visiting Burwash as a child:

> Kathy Arden: "Everybody used to go over there, there used to be oh, maybe five old shacks and cabins out there. People always used to go over there and have picnics and remember who used to live there and pick berries there and go walking around. And there's a place over there that they talk about, there's a baby's footprint in the rock. There's two, sort of like a full one and a partial one, probably when the rock was still soft something had walked there, looks like a baby's footprint. Yeah, we always used to talk about that and wonder about it…there s spirits [t]here, eh.".

Ed Jones also recalls going on overnight hiking/hunting trips with his friend in his teenage years. One such hike he would take was out of the Giant Mine property:

> Interviewer: …how far outside of Yellowknife would you walk? You said last time you could walk as far as the–
>
> Ed Jones: Well –
>
> Interviewer: –the north, 14 miles north of Giant Mine?

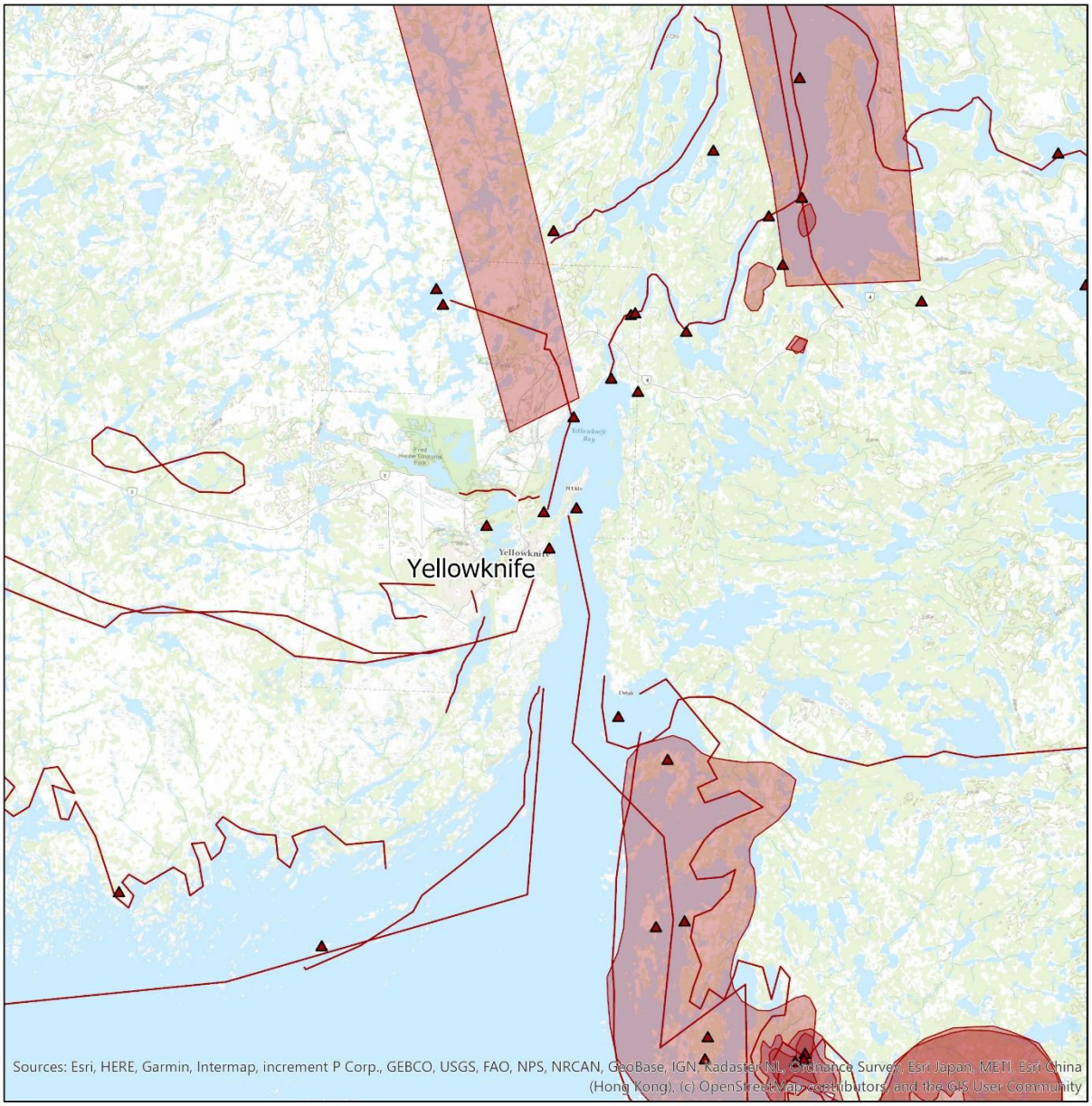
Ed Jones: Yeah, well, that was a short, ah, jaunt for us at that time because we were young and we, ah, liked hiking.

Interviewer: How long would you go out for?

Ed Jones: Well, two days on weekends. Sometimes only one night. Depending on the weather. It was, it was too cold and one night would be all you could take.

The period following the discovery of gold in Yellowknife brought unprecedented wealth and immigration into the study area. Many Métis people moved to Yellowknife in pursuit of economic opportunities. The other side of the story is that this new discovery spelled an end to smaller settlements, such as Old Fort Rae, whose population was uprooted into the larger economic centers. Since the beginning of their ethnogenesis, Métis people have always participated in wage work, as fur traders, laborers, carpenters, or guides. What set them apart was their ability to also live on the land. This strength, the ability to take advantage of the new economy while still being able to live on the land, continued to be useful in the 20th century Yellowknife – many Métis thrived as gold prospectors who traveled deep into the bush in search of precious minerals.

Map 3: Map of documented Métis land use between 1930 and 2015



A note that this map is for reference purposes only and is not a complete document of all traditional and current land use by the Métis people of the Great Slave Lake area. This map was created for the sole purpose of this document and should not be shared out of context or reproduced.

▲ Traditional and Current Significant Sites

Traditional and Current Trails and Traplines

Traditional and Current Significant Areas

0 3.5 7 14 21 28 Kilometres

N

Conclusion

Weaving together sparse but revealing available records, this report shows that the Métis people of the Great Slave Lake area have used the study area continuously since the late 18th century. The first wave of European settlers arrived in the late 18th century, and Old Fort Providence was one of the earliest, albeit temporary, European settlements in the Great Slave Lake area. There is a gap in the record of Métis activities between 1823 and 1930. However, there is some indication that Métis remained in the area during this period. After the discovery of gold in Yellowknife, regionally dispersed Métis people started gathering there in pursuit of economic opportunities. Throughout these periods, Métis people have variously used the land for work, shelter, sustenance, travel, and sometimes leisure and spiritual enrichment. Although caribou no longer winter in this area, some of the most productive harvesting sites continue to be within the study area. Some of the species being harvested in the Yellowknife Bay area include; whitefish, jackfish, cisco, inconnu, trout, walleye, duck, goose, swans, hare, muskrat, grouse, moose, and cranberries. Métis people have traveled through the Giant Mine property on foot or dog sled in the past and continue to frequent Back Bay and Yellowknife River. Today, the majority of NSMA members are born, raised, and buried in Yellowknife.

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