

The Significance of Creating First Nation Traditional Names Maps

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This article will address the importance of creating First Nation Traditional Place Names of communities in Manitoba. Today, there is a growing trend within Manitoba First Nations to reclaim their traditional name of their respective community as a means of infusing First Nation languages into mainstream Canadian culture. This movement has the potential to educate the general public who are not fluent in the language that the First Nations identified their homelands in the language before it was identified with a non-Indigenous name. Information from the project was gathered by surveys, presentations, published sources and personal interviews with community members. The mapping project will also address the difficulty of undertaking a language-based map without a standardized form of a written language for each of the 5 different language groups. Reclamation of the traditional name for a specific community can reinforce the position of First Nation sovereignty to gain jurisdiction over certain Manitoba First Nation government matters.

INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of reasons why map making is undertaken. The general use of maps is for directions, topography, and identifying boundaries of countries, cities and townships. This article will underscore the importance of creating First Nation maps to promote the traditional names of communities in Manitoba. It is equally important to emphasize that the creation of First Nation maps also strengthens the basis for First Nation sovereignty through the infusion of the First Nation languages into the mainstream language and to promote the various First Nation distinct societies in Manitoba.

In Manitoba there are 64 recognized First Nations. These 64 communities are comprised of 5 distinct language groups. There are 7 Treaty areas that are represented in Manitoba: Treaties 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10. Of these 64 Communities there are 30 Ojibway First Nations, 23 Cree First Nations, 5 Dakota First Nations, 4 Oji-Cree First Nations, and 2 Dene First Nations. Each language

group is unique and some communities within a language category may have different dialects. Today, the majority of the First Nation communities in Manitoba are identified on maps with English pronounced words. In the past, the community members would refer to their geographic locations in their First Nation's language. Today, there is a growing trend among the First Nations to identify their communities in their own language.

TRADITIONAL FIRST NATION COMMUNITY NAMES MAPPING PROJECT

Infusion of the Language & Sovereignty

One of the unique features of the project is the intention to educate the general public that the First Nation people historically referred to their communities in their own language. The original place names of the communities in all likelihood evolved from the oral history of the different linguistic groups. Archibald (2008) indicated that the Elders often told stories of the different meanings of specific place names and how these names should be respected.

Sovereignty

Sovereignty can be defined as having supreme authority over a territory. Since 1867 the Canadian Government has exerted its sovereignty over its territory. As the territory expanded, so did the authority to ensure that the Federal Government exerted its authority over its territory. The underpinning tenet or principle in this project was to demonstrate that the First Nation identified their homelands with their own names before they were labeled with English names.

There is a limited number of research mapping projects that have been undertaken by First Nation peoples or organizations to reclaim the usage of traditional names for their communities on a provincial scale. One project that was undertaken was the North West Territories Community Names Map. This project also included a pronunciation guide (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, n.d.). There have also been some regional language based interactive audio mapping projects such as the one created by the Gwich'in Social & Cultural Institute. This project created an interactive place name map that identifies the traditional names in the Gwich'in language as part of their effort to preserve the history and cultural significance of the various geographic locations (Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, n.d.).

Indian & Northern Affairs Canada, in their Aboriginal Place Names project, has acknowledged that the name of Canada and certain Provinces and cities have their roots in the place names of different Aboriginal languages. For example:

Canada: is from Kanata, meaning “settlement” or “village” in the language of the Huron,

Saskatchewan: the province got its name from the Saskatchewan River, which the Cree called Kisiskatchewanipi, meaning “swift-flowing river.”

Manitoba: the likeliest source is the Cree maniot-wapow, “the strait of the spirit or manitobau.” This name refers to the roaring sound produced by pebbles on a beach on Manitoba Island in Lake Manitoba. The Cree believed the noise sounded like a manito, a spirit, beating a drum. It has also been suggested that the name comes from the Assiniboine words mini and tobow, meaning “Lake of the Prairie” (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, n.d.).

Based on these examples, other First Nation language groups in Canada have realized the importance of creating traditional name place mapping projects. It is interesting to note that the federal government does recognize the origin of the name of Canada and some of the provinces that have their roots in the First Nation languages

The purpose of this article is to highlight a project that was undertaken by the Research and Development unit of the Manitoba First Nation Education Resource Centre to demonstrate that the homelands of the First Nation people were referred to by names in their own language before it was labeled as an English name. The Manitoba First Nation Education Resource Centre Inc. is a provincial organization mandated to support the First Nation schools to develop a comprehensive education system inclusive of First Nation languages, world views, values, beliefs and traditions with exemplary standards, under First Nation jurisdiction.

The overall objective of this mapping project was to promote awareness of the First Nation’s use of language to identify their homelands. Most of the locations of Indian Reserves in Manitoba have been labeled as an English name that slightly resembles the literal translation of the interpretation of the words when they are pronounced in the First Nation language. This approach may be reminiscent of the Indian Agents who were not fluent in the

First Nation language and imposed an English surname on individuals that resembled their Indian names. According to oral history, during the distribution of Treaty money to band members, Indian Agents would record the names in ledgers of who received the payment. In some cases, the Indian Agent could not understand and write the name of the individual who used an Indian name into the English language. In the translation process, the Indian Agent would impose an English surname upon an individual in order to document the process. Later on, this individual would use this English surname as a form of identification. Recently, more and more First Nation people have attempted to reclaim their original Indian name in an effort to strengthen their First Nation identity (Battiste, 2000).

It is apparent from these instances that the difference in languages plays a key role in the identification process. That is to say, the dominant language of English supersedes First Nation languages in the creation of identity whether it is a community name or personal identification. Eurocentric thinkers concluded that Aboriginal knowledge and language are irrelevant to contemporary Canadian thought (Henderson, 2000). In keeping with this movement of asserting aspects of cultural heritage, this mapping project is an attempt to reclaim the traditional name of a community in the First Nation language and educate the readers of the map that the people identified their homelands with their own words rather than English words. The map further explains the meaning of each individual community so the reader becomes educated of which language is used and what the community means in the English language.

The project also attempts to infuse First Nation languages into the mainstream society to ensure that the distinct language becomes part of the discussions that may occur among non-fluent First Nation speakers in reference to the communities. In other words, it is the intention to replace the existing English word of a community with the traditional name. For example, if the media were reporting about events in a First Nation community, it would be ideal if they used the traditional name instead of the English name to begin the process of infusing the language into mainstream language. Reference to the traditional place name of a community allows Canadians to acknowledge the relevance of the First Nation language, which is the first step in the reclamation process.

Finally, the third objective of this project is to strengthen the First Nation position to pursue the issue of sovereignty. The naming of your traditional

territory and community underscores the “Use and Occupancy” which in Aboriginal Law are the foundations for Aboriginal Title (Mainville, 2003). Aboriginal title or communal interests in the land paves the way for the authority over the territory. Authority in this perspective means jurisdiction over identified First Nation affairs similar to the Nisg’a Treaty (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Fact Sheet, n.d.).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The compilation of traditional names of the communities was obtained through the use of surveys, consultations at community gatherings, and general conversations with community residents who are fluent in their own language. Information was also gathered from published sources and cross-referenced with other oral history projects that were undertaken or completed by other First Nation organizations in Manitoba. There are 64 First Nation communities in Manitoba and it was the intent of the research to acquire as much feedback as possible. Generally the consultation sessions at conferences and discussions with community members achieved the most usable data. The information gathered from this study informed the development of a Traditional First Nations Community Names map (Figure 1).

Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc.
TRADITIONAL FIRST NATION
COMMUNITY NAMES



● Cree Communities:

Table with 2 columns: Traditional Name of First Nation and Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name. Lists Cree communities and their meanings.

● Dene Communities:

Table with 2 columns: Traditional Name of First Nation and Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name. Lists Dene communities and their meanings.

● Oji-Cree Communities:

Table with 2 columns: Traditional Name of First Nation and Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name. Lists Oji-Cree communities and their meanings.

● Ojibway Communities:

Table with 2 columns: Traditional Name of First Nation and Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name. Lists Ojibway communities and their meanings.

● Dakota Communities:

Table with 2 columns: Traditional Name of First Nation and Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name. Lists Dakota communities and their meanings.

Explanatory Note

It should be noted that there is no standardized spelling formats for the Cree, Ojibway, Oji-Cree (Island Lake Area), Dakota and Dene languages in English. The spelling of the traditional place names on the map and in the legend has incorporated the Roman Orthography approach in an attempt to duplicate the First Nation verbal pronunciation into an English sounding word.

Figure 1: All 64 First Nations represented in Manitoba. Each First Nation is color coded for each language group. Map also highlights interpretations and an explanatory note.

In Manitoba, there are five distinct languages: Cree, Ojibway, Oji-Cree (Island Lake Dialect) Dakota and Dene. Each of the different language groups are geographically based in certain regions of the province. The Cree language group is primarily located in Central & Northern Manitoba. These communities are identified in Black on the map (Figure 2a and 2b).

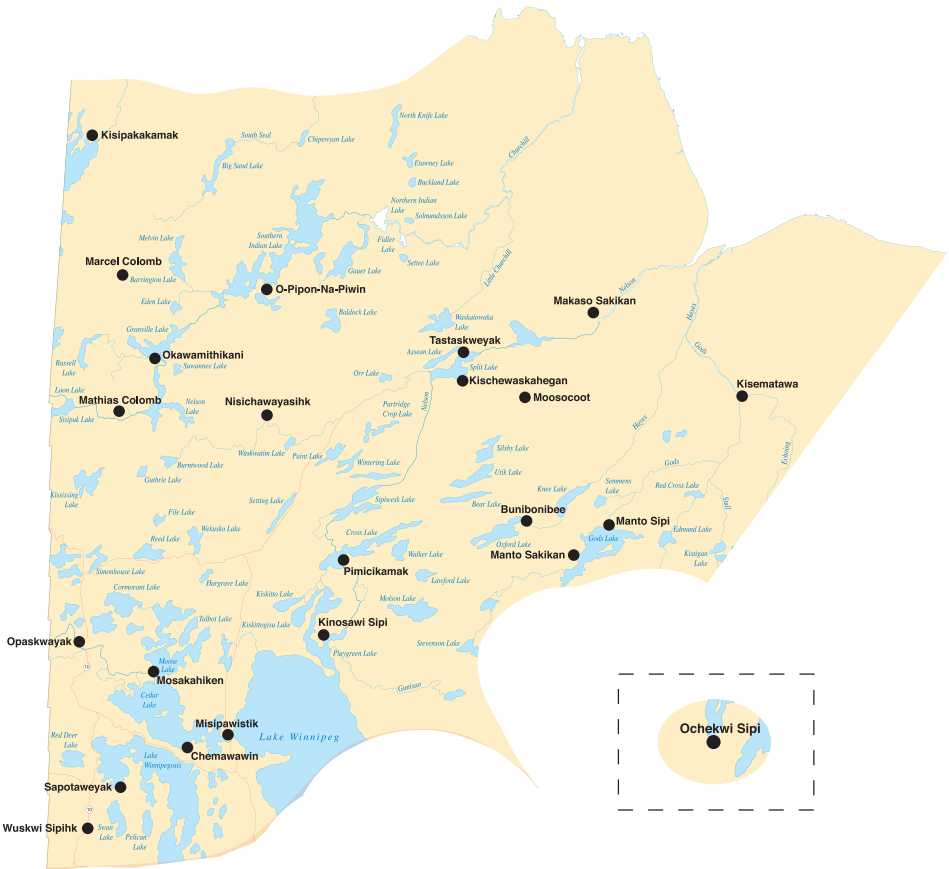


Figure 2a: Cree language communities in Manitoba.

● Cree Communities:

Traditional Name of First Nation:	Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name:
Bunibonibee (Oxford House)	Derived from Pinipawinipi which in Cree means the water falls and dips. There is an area in Oxford Lake which seems to dip or fall.
Chemawawin (Easterville)	Chemwawin in Cree means fishing with two canoes across from each other pulling a net.
Kinosawi Sipi (Norway House)	River with lots of fish.
Kischewaskahegan (York Landing)	Refers to the trading post at York Factory. Kische waskagan means the main house in Cree.
Kisipakamakam (Brochet)	Kisipakamakam in Cree means "the water ends". Brochet is located at the North East end of Reindeer Lake.
Kisematawa (Shamattawa)	Where two rivers meet together.
Makaso Sakikan (Fox Lake)	Makaso is the Cree word for Fox and Sakikan is the Cree word for lake. It said that there were a lot of foxes in the area.
Manto Sakikan (God's Lake)	Manto is the Cree word for God and Sakikan is the Cree word for lake.
Manto Sipi (God's River)	"Manto" means God in Cree and "Sipi" means river.
Marcel Colomb (Lynn Lake)	Named after a community leader.
Mathias Colomb (Pukatawagan)	Named after the first Chief of the community.
Misipawistik (Grand Rapids)	"Misi" means big and "Pawistik" means rapids in Cree.
Moosocoot (Ilford)	Mooso is the Cree word for moose and ocot is Cree for nose.
Mosakahiken (Moose Lake)	"Mosa" is Cree for Moose and "Sakikan" is lake in Cree.
Nisichawayasihk (Nelson House)	Where the three rivers (Footprint/Rat/Burntwood) meet.
Ochekwi Sipi (Fisher River)	Named after the animal: Fisher.
Okawamithikani (Granville Lake)	Pikeral Narrows. Okaw is the cree word for pickeral.
Opaskwayak (Opaskwayak)	Opas-kway-ow in Cree means the place where there is upward growth of trees/vegetation/brush.
O-Pipon-Na-Piwin (South Indian Lake)	Winter camp along the shores of South Indian Lake.
Pimicikamak (Cross Lake)	Where the rivers cross.
Sapotaweyak (Pelican Rapids)	Sapotawayak means where the water or river runs through.
Tastaskweyak (Split Lake)	Where the lake/river splits into two passage ways.
Wuskwi Siphk (Birch River)	Wusko is "Birch" in Cree.

Figure 2b: Cree language communities interpretation section.

The Ojibway language is largely spoken in the southern part of the province. These communities are highlighted in Red on the map (Figure 3a and 3b).



Figure 3a: Ojibway language communities in Manitoba.

Ojibway Communities:

Traditional Name of First Nation:	Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name:
Animo-ziiḅing (Lake Manitoba)	Dog Creek or Dog River
Ataagewiniḅing (Gamblers)	Gambling Man Place
Azaadiwi-ziiḅing (Poplar River)	Poplar River Place
Baaskaandibewi-ziiḅing (Brokenhead)	Brokenhead River
Bawingaasi-ziiḅing (Paingassi)	Sandy Narrows
Binemoodaang (Pinaymootang)	Partridge Crop Place
Ditibineya-ziiḅing (Rolling River)	Rolling River Place
Dootinaawi-ziiḅing (Tootinaowaziiḅeng)	Valley River
Gaa-biskigamaag (Swan Lake)	The lake (Swan Lake) that is curved.
Gaa-ginooshkodeyaag (Long Plain)	Place of the long plain.
Gaa-gwekwekojiwang (Ebb & Flow)	Water that flows back and forth.
Gaa-wiikwedaawangaag (Little Saskatchewan)	It describes the shoreline where the community is located.
Gaa-wiikwedaawangaag (Sandy Bay)	Along the sandy shore.
Giizhigoowining (Keeseekoowenin)	Sky Man
Ginoozhewishtigwaaning (Jackhead)	Jackhead Place
Ishkwaawinaaning (Skownan)	At the edge of the land before the next place.
Makadewaagamijiwanoonsing (Black River)	Little Black Flowing Water
Mememwi-ziiḅing (Berens River)	Pigeon River
Mina'igo-ziiḅing (Pine Creek)	Pine Creek
Mishi-baawitigong (Little Grand Rapids)	Large Rapids Place
Misko-ziiḅing (Bloodvein)	Blood River
Neyaashing (Buffalo Point)	The point by the water.
Obashkodeyaang (Lake St. Martin)	High bluff
Ojijaako-ziiḅing (O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi)	Crane River
Okwewanashko-ziiḅing (Rouseau River)	Rouseau River
Oshki-ishkonigan (Peguis)	The new reserve. Peguis is also named after Chief Peguis.
Waanibiigaaw (Hollow Water)	Hole in the water.
Wewezhigaabawing (Waywayseecappo)	Standing at attention.
Zaagiing (Sagkeeng)	At the mouth of the river place.
Zaaskajiwaning (Dauphin River)	Dauphin River

Figure 3b: Ojibway language communities interpretation section.

The Oji-Cree dialect has its roots in the area referred to as the Island Lake area. These communities are identified in Green on the map (Figure 4).



● Oji-Cree Communities:

Traditional Name of First Nation:

Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name:

Kistiganwacheeng (Garden Hill)

A place for gardening or the hill where the garden is planted.

Mithkwamepin Thaakkahikan (Red Sucker Lake)

Red Sucker Lake

Minithayinikam (St. Theresa Point)

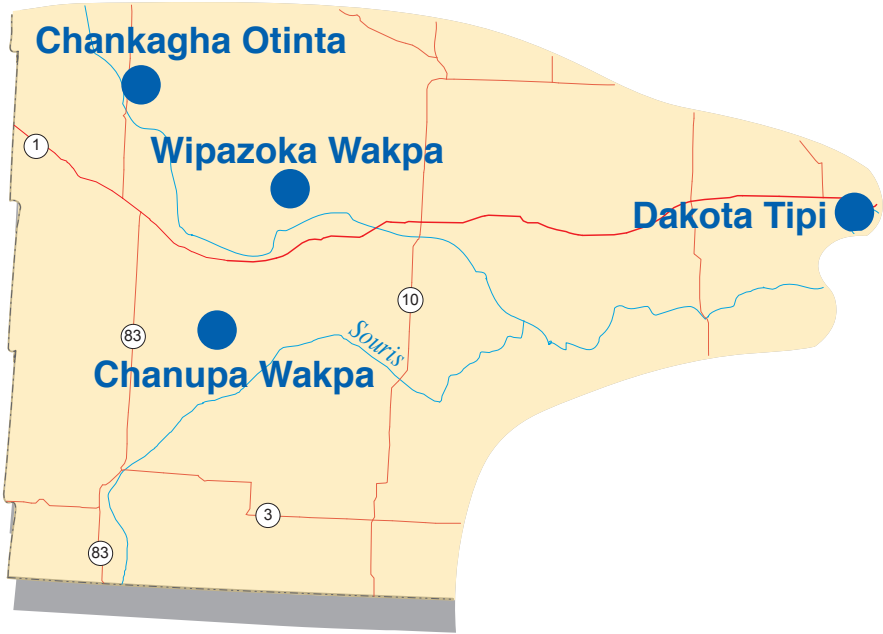
Means Maria Portage. A Maria (fish) was seen swimming across the portage after it had flooded.

Waasikamaank (Wasagamack)

Is the meaning for the word bay.

Figure 4a: Oji-Cree language communities in Manitoba with interpretation section.

The Dakota language is spoken in the Southwest portion of the province. These communities are highlighted in blue on the map (Figure 5).



Dakota Communities:

Traditional Name of First Nation:	Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name:
Chankagha Otinta (Birdtail Sioux)	The people were referred to as the people of the "Log Houses".
Chanupa Wakpa (Canupawakpa)	Pipestone River, a pipe was found along the river.
Dakota Tipi (Dakota Tipi)	Home of the Dakotas.
Wakhpetunwin Otinta (Dakota Plains)	Leaf dwellers
Wipazoka Wakpa (Sioux Valley)	Saskatoon River: there are an abundance of Saskatoon bushes along the river.

Figure 5: Dakota language communities in Manitoba with interpretation section.

There are only two Dene communities in the province, which are located in the far North close to the Nunavut border (Figure 6).



● Dene Communities:

Traditional Name of First Nation:

Dahlu T'ua (Lac Brochet)

Tes-He-Olie Twe (Tadoule Lake)

Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name:

Jackfish Lake

Ashes floating on the lake (Tadoule Lake)
Sayisi Dene also refers to Eastern Dene.

Figure 6: Dene language communities in Manitoba with interpretation section.

One of the unique characteristics shared amongst all of the language groups is that they are descriptive: meaning; that the basis of the language is grounded on the interpretation of the landscape (McLeod 2007). This is clearly evident when the reader views the Interpretation of First Nation Traditional Name on the map. All of the interpretations reference an animal, geographic description of the land or identify a person or symbol.

CHALLENGES OF THE PROJECT

The principal complication in producing the map was arriving at a general consensus for the spelling of the traditional name for the community. There were no concerns from community members regarding the interpretation of the traditional name. Rather, it was the spelling that most concerned community members when the project was evaluated.

Most of the communities have attempted to spell the traditional name as it would sound in English. The problem is that one individual's or organization's approach may differ from another individual's or organization's perspective. For example, the spelling of the Ojibway community of Sagkeeng exists in contrast to the spelling Zaaging to identify. Through consultations with community members in this study, the Sagkeeng spelling was more prevalent. Patricia Ningewance, in her book *"Talking Gookum's Language"* Learning Ojibwe spelled the name as *Zaagiing*.

This portion of the discussion is intended to support the notion that there is no standardized way of spelling for all of the five language groups in Manitoba – a complication that was anticipated by the project researchers. In order to clarify any confusion the readers may encounter while viewing the map, an explanatory note was created to explain the non standardized spelling of the languages and that other names may exist for a community. That explanatory note reads:

It should be that there is no standardized spelling formats for the Cree, Ojibway, Oji-Cree (Island Lake Area) Dakota and Dene Languages in English. The spelling of the traditional place names on the map and in the legend has incorporated the *Roman Orthography* approach in an attempt to duplicate the First Nation verbal pronunciation into an English sounding word. Another point to remember is that there can be additional place names for the First Nation with a different spelling. The traditional place names on this map and its interpretation is a

generally accepted name by the community members. In some cases the Traditional Name is the literal translation for the community.

The map further attempted to avoid confusion by using both spellings Zaaging (Sagkeeng) to acknowledge the differences with one version being used in the map while the other is highlighted in parentheses (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Illustration to highlight the different versions of spelling from an Ojibway community.

CONCLUSION

It is the intent of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc. that the Traditional Names Mapping Project will help educate the public of the fact that there are 5 distinct language groups in Manitoba and the First Nation people did historically refer to their homelands in their own language. It is further anticipated that these names will become part of the mainstream vocabulary when the communities are identified in print, in the media and in the mindset of the general public. Finally, it is our organization's belief that this map will contribute to the First Nation's leadership to assert their sovereignty and position for jurisdiction to manage their own First Nation affairs, which will ultimately lead to their own educational institutions.

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