

## **APPENDIX K**

### **Naskapi Land Use in the Schefferville, Quebec, Region**



**NEW MILLENNIUM  
CAPITAL CORP.**

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## **DIRECT-SHIPPING ORE PROJECT**



**Naskapi Land Use in the Schefferville, Quebec, Region**

**BY: Michael H. Weiler**

**January, 2009**



## Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1.	Context	4
1.2.	Methodology	5
2.	NASKAPI LAND USE PATTERN	6
2.1.	Naskapi Land Use in the Study Area, 1983/84 Survey	6
2.1.1.	Caribou Hunting	7
2.1.2.	Fishing	8
2.1.3.	Small Game Hunting	8
2.1.4.	Waterfowl Hunting	9
2.1.5.	Trapping	9
2.1.6.	Camp Sites	10
2.1.7.	Travel Routes	10
2.2.	Naskapi Land Use in the Study Area, 1993 Survey	18
2.2.1.	Caribou Hunting	18
2.2.2.	Fishing	19
2.2.3.	Small Game Hunting	19
2.2.4.	Waterfowl Hunting	19
2.2.5.	Trapping	19
2.2.6.	Camp Sites	20
2.2.7.	Travel Routes	20
2.3.	Naskapi Land Use in the Study Area, Howells River Survey 2006	27
2.3.1.	Caribou Hunting	27
2.3.2.	Big Game other than Caribou	28
2.3.3.	Fishing	28
2.3.4.	Small Game Hunting	29
2.3.5.	Waterfowl Hunting	29
2.3.6.	Trapping	30
2.3.7.	Harvesting of Plant Resources	30
2.3.8.	Travel Routes	31
2.3.9.	Camp Sites	31
2.3.10.	Naskapi Toponyms	32
2.3.11.	Reported Pattern of Caribou Fall Migration	32
2.3.12.	Ashkui	32
3.	CONCLUSION: The Significance of Contemporary Naskapi Land Use in the Study Area	45
	References	47

## Map Illustrations:

Fig 1:	Study Region	4
Fig. 2:	Caribou Hunting, pre-1983	11
Fig. 3:	Fishing, pre-1983	12
Fig. 4:	Small Game Hunting, pre-1983	13
Fig. 5:	Waterfowl Hunting, pre-1983	14
Fig. 6:	Trapping, pre-1983	15
Fig. 7:	Camp Sites, pre-1983	16
Fig. 8:	Travel Routes	17
Fig. 9:	Caribou Hunting, 1993 Survey	21
Fig. 10:	Fishing, 1993 Survey	22
Fig. 11:	Small Game Hunting, 1993 Survey	23
Fig. 12:	Waterfowl Hunting, 1993 Survey	24
Fig. 13:	Trapping, 1993 Survey	25
Fig. 14:	Camp Sites, 1993 Survey	26
Fig. 15:	Caribou Hunting, Howells River Survey 2006	33
Fig. 16:	Big Game other than Caribou, Howells River Survey 2006	34
Fig. 17:	Fishing, Howells River Survey 2006	35
Fig. 18:	Small Game Hunting, Howells River Survey 2006	36
Fig. 19:	Waterfowl Hunting, Howells River Survey 2006	37
Fig. 20:	Trapping, Howells River Survey 2006	38
Fig. 21:	Harvesting of Plant Resources, Howells River Survey 2006	39
Fig. 22:	Camp Sites, Howells River Survey 2006	40
Fig. 23:	Travel Routes, Howells River Survey 2006	41
Fig. 24:	Naskapi Toponyms, Howells River Survey 2006	42
Fig. 25:	Pattern of Fall Caribou Migration, Howells River Survey 2006	43
Fig. 26:	Ashkui	44

## Tables:

Table 1:	Naskapi Place Names	32
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I also thankfully acknowledge the contribution of Angelika Storost, geographer, who entered a large part of the original raw data into a geographic information system.





# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Context

This study is part of the environmental assessment of the Direct-Shipping Ore Project as outlined in Section I.1 of the project description (*New Millennium Capital Corp. & Paul F. Wilkinson & Assoc. Inc. 2008:8-13*).

The project intends to mine iron ore in open pit operations on the ridge<sup>1</sup> located to the west and northwest of Schefferville, crushing and washing the ore to achieve LO (sized) product, which is then transported via rail to the transshipping point of Sept-Iles.

This study focuses on the project's first phase in which NML intends to mine areas identified as Sectors DSO 2 and DSO 3, the centres of which are located respectively about 10km and 20km northwest of the town of Schefferville.

The Study Area of this report covers a buffer area of 15 km around the project sites which includes the associated portion of the Ridge as well as the central portion of the Howells River valley to the west and part of the upper Swampy Bay River basin to the east of it.

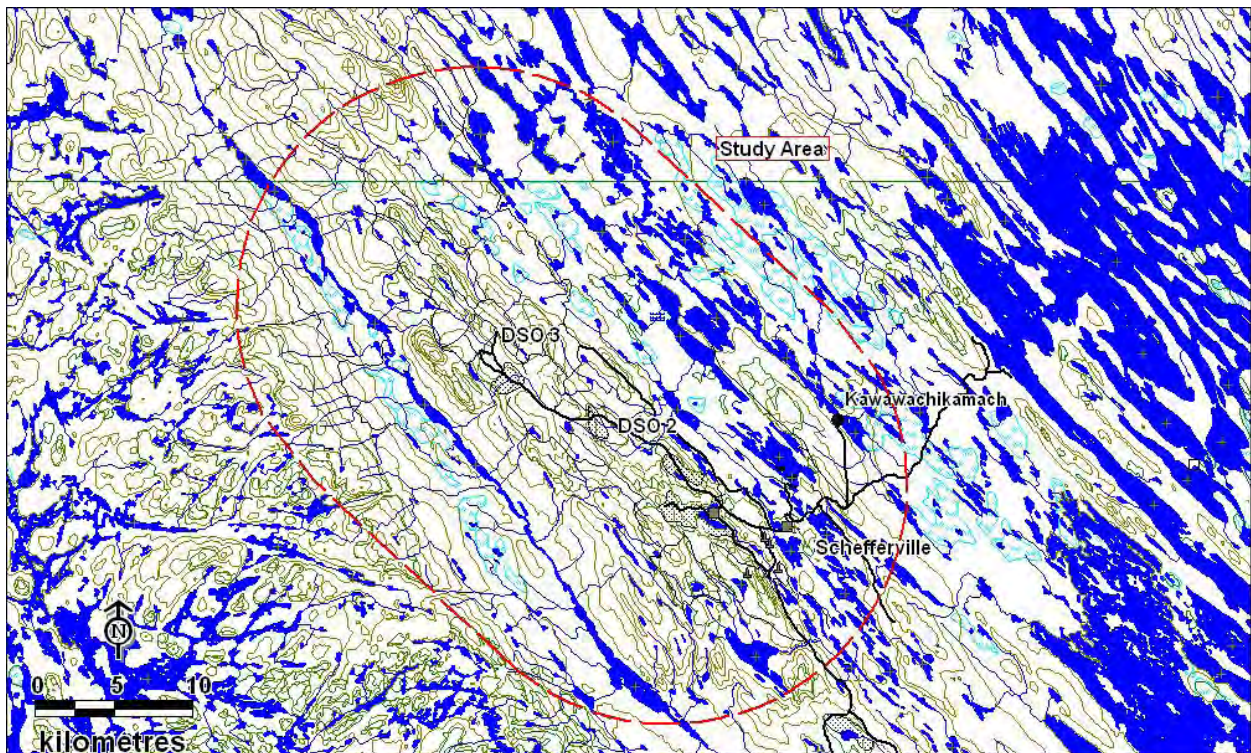


Fig. 1: Study Area

<sup>1</sup> The „Ridge“ in this document refers to the iron-ore rich range of hills between the Howells River valley and the Swampy Bay River basin

## 1.2. Methodology

For the purpose of this report, existing land use information has been compiled from various sources.

However, most of the information presented here has been collected by the author. The first data set was compiled during an extended stay in the community in 1983-84 and relates to the general land use pattern as it existed during the decades of the first mining phase in the Study Area between 1954 and late 1982.

A second data set, collected between 1989 and 1993, includes harvesting activities carried out during the decade after the termination of mining in 1982.

A third data set was collected in 2006 in the context of the LabMag Iron Ore Project assessment. It focuses on harvesting activities in the Howells River basin and surrounding areas, the region within which the study area for this report is located.

While the first two data sets represent broad resource categories such as fishing, small game hunting, trapping, etc., the latter distinguishes between individual species such as lake trout fishing, ptarmigan hunting (small game), or marten trapping. With caribou representing the culturally, historically and (under normal environmental conditions) economically most significant resource<sup>2</sup>, it is represented as a distinct category in all three data sets.

The information in all three data sets was collected in extended informal interviews with representative samples of the Naskapi community's active land users. During these interview sessions land use data was recorded on mylar overlays on 1:250.000 scale topographic map sheets.

It is important to keep in mind that the study area in the first two data sets was the entire traditional territory of the Naskapi. The density of information is therefore lower than it is in the third data set.

Also, as the data presented here are based on information provided by samples of Naskapi harvesters, it is important to point out that while the harvesting areas shown on the accompanying maps are positive indicators of specific types of land used in a given area, it would be incorrect to conclude that areas where no specific harvesting activities have been identified are therefore not used by, or not important to, Naskapi harvesters. It is, however, reasonable to conclude that areas with several overlapping polygons of recorded harvesting activities represent relative concentrations of land and resource uses by the Naskapi community.

These data have a historical depth usually described as „living memory“ of the current population of the community's active harvesters and Elders.

This information is supplemented where possible by data from relevant scholarly studies and unpublished reports by various other authors.

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<sup>2</sup> Cooke 1976, 1979; Meredith & Müller-Wille 1982; Speck 1935; Turner 1894, Weiler 1986a,b

## 2. NASKAPI LAND USE PATTERN

### 2.1. Naskapi Land and Resource Use in the Study Area, 1983/84 Survey

The land use information collected during the interviews held in 1983-84 relating to the Study Area describes activities during the period of Iron Ore Company (IOC) mining operations between 1954 and 1982. During this phase the Naskapi were residing at the edge of the town of Schefferville, at John Lake from 1956 to 1972, and at Matimekosk<sup>3</sup> from 1972 to 1984. While some data given refers to the era prior to the settlement of the Naskapi at John Lake, these relate to land use activities occurring further to the north, that is outside the Study Area.

This information is grouped into the categories of caribou hunting, fishing (primarily lake trout, brook trout, whitefish, sucker, ouananiche, pike, burbot), waterfowl hunting (mainly Canada and Snow geese, black duck, mallard, teal and several other species of ducks), small game hunting (porcupine, ptarmigan, grouse, hare), trapping (marten, mink, weasel, otter, wolverine, squirrel, beaver, muskrat, lynx, red and arctic fox, wolf), travel routes and camp sites<sup>4</sup>.

As indicated above, caribou<sup>5</sup> are a key resource in economic terms and play an equally important role in the cultural and philosophical fabric of Naskapi society.

During the first decades of their settled life at the edge of Schefferville, caribou were not plentiful in this region. In fact, in first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century the caribou population was generally low across the Quebec/Labrador peninsula, and in the process of gradually recovering from a breakdown around the turn of the century.

In addition, a number of factors prevented the Naskapi from participating adequately in the local mining economy leaving them for the first two decades generally with insufficient financial resources to outfit themselves for longer-range caribou hunting excursions<sup>6</sup>. Harvesting during this period was restricted in range and had to focus on other resources such as fish, small game and waterfowl. Nevertheless, caribou were hunted and harvested locally whenever and wherever they became available.

During the 1970s the population of the George River caribou herd began to rebound significantly<sup>7</sup>. The Naskapi community during the same time began to recover from the trauma of their relocation from Fort Chimo to Schefferville, moved to what became the Matimekosk Reserve, entered into land claims negotiations, began to feel the benefits of the 1978 Northeastern Quebec Agreement<sup>8</sup>, and the community's economy began to gradually consolidate<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Both the John Lake and Matimekosk settlements were shared with the Montagnais of Schefferville.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed list of furbearer, small game and fish species in the region, see Naskapi Development Corporation 1989:243,261; Leblanc 1999:4-5

<sup>5</sup> Primarily the George River herd, and to a lesser extent the Leaf River herd to the northwest and the Caniapicau and McPhadyen River herds to the southwest (Naskapi Development Corporation 1989:223-242)

<sup>6</sup> Hess 1984; Naskapi Development Corporation 1989:31-36; Weiler 1994b:B19-17,1986b, 1992:23-29; Meredith & Müller-Wille 1982:18-25

<sup>7</sup> Naskapi Development Corporation 1989:229

<sup>8</sup> Among others a Hunter Support Programme. See Meredith & Müller-Wille 1982:26-45, Weiler 1992:38-

During the late 1970s and early 1980s Naskapi hunters and hunting teams were increasingly able to make use of snowmobiles and bush plane charters to expand their harvesting range again and recapture some of their traditional hunting areas<sup>10</sup>.

### **2.1.1. Caribou Hunting**

Caribou is generally considered the primary food resource by Naskapi, even though its availability is subject to dramatic seasonal and local fluctuations that are not entirely predictable. However, a successful caribou hunt usually provides a large food supply that is customarily redistributed within the community.

Caribou hunting generally involves the setting up of a camp in the respective hunting area. This was especially the case, even when hunting close to the community, during the Naskapis' first decades in Schefferville, when few individuals were able to use trucks or snowmobiles for accessing the hunting area and transporting the yield back to the community.

During this first phase of mining activities caribou hunting in the wider Schefferville region was, as Figure 2 illustrates, carried out largely in three areas:

Firstly, in portions of the ridge between Schefferville and the Howells River, which include the northern part around Sunny Mountain and Greenbush as well as the western slope dropping down to the Howells River valley. These are located in the northern portion of the Study Area and beyond as well as along its western edge.

Secondly, in the area to the west of Howells River which includes the western portion of the valley and the wooded adjacent plateau.

And thirdly, in the area of Attikamagen Lake and the series of lakes to the northwest of it. Within these three areas, the highest density of caribou hunting activity was recorded in the Sunny Mountain/Greenbush region located in the northwestern portion of the Study area and beyond.

While the Sunny Mountain/Greenbush area was reported to be used mainly during the fall caribou migration, when caribou appear in larger numbers, the other two are primarily utilized during the winter, when caribou tend to live in dispersed smaller groups and are less mobile.

This data set contained no records of caribou hunting activities in vicinity of IOC mining operations. The interviewees' explanations for this lack of hunting activities in these particular locations were two-fold:

For one, hunters expressed their conviction that migrating caribou were avoiding this area due to the noise and dust created by the mining machinery, blasting and truck traffic as well as that these activities had denuded much of the area of the vegetation caribou might feed on.

The other reported reason was that hunters' access to the mining area was discouraged by the operating company.

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40, 1986b

<sup>9</sup> Naskapi Development Corporation 1989:36-42; Weiler 1992:30-36, 1988:B13-20

<sup>10</sup> Weiler 1994b:B1986b, 1992:23-29; Meredith & Müller-Wille 1982:18-25

### **2.1.2. Fishing**

Fishing has always been an important component of the Naskapi economy since it is carried out year-round<sup>11</sup> and provides a more stable and reliable source of food than other wildlife harvesting activities. It was particularly important to the Naskapi community during the first decades after their resettlement to Schefferville, when the availability of caribou was low.

As it is generally carried out with gill nets that need to be checked regularly and frequently, it is more involved in terms of the required investment of time and effort than the harvesting of small game. To be carried out effectively, it usually involves the establishment of a camp (or use of a cabin) at a productive fishing site and a stay over an extended period of time.

Fishing during the same period focused on the water bodies of the upper Swampy Bay River basin and the Attikamagen Lake system (Figure 3).

The upper Swampy Bay River basin represents the northeastern portion of the Study Area within which the following chains of lakes were identified as being used by members of the Naskapi community: Squaw Lake, La Cosa, Vacher, De Milly, Miltière, La Tesserie, Hameau and Annabel, as well as lakes Peter, Matemace, Gunshot, Baussac, and Guillet.

Also situated in the Study Area and identified as being used for fishing are lakes Elross, Fleming and Kivivic in the Howells River valley.

The fact that the Howells River valley, in spite of its proximity to the John Lake and Matimekosh settlements, appears to have seen relatively little fishing activity during this period was likely due to the access barrier that the ongoing mining operations on the Ridge in-between had represented at the time.

### **2.1.3. Small Game Hunting**

Small game may be harvested during hunting excursions specifically aimed at those species. However, small game hunting is usually also carried out as a secondary activity while fishing, trapping, berry picking, even travelling. It may even be done in the form of brief outings in the vicinity of the community<sup>12</sup>. The most productive season for small game hunting is the winter.

Small game harvesting in the Schefferville region was reported to occur to the northwest and the south and southeast of Attikamagen Lake. These areas show the highest level of small game harvesting activity based on the sample of interviewed harvesters.

Small game hunting was also recorded within the Study Area (see Figure 4). Outlined as hunting areas were the northern part of Dolly Ridge to the west of Lake Matemace, the area around Evelyn and Stork lakes immediately to the west of DSO1, the area west of Lake La Cosa, at DSO 2, and the northern portion of the Ridge starting to the west of Annabel Lake.

Even though access to the mining area was discouraged and hunting officially not allowed there during the years of IOC operation, it was not too difficult to enter the area for a brief visit to hunt, in this case, ptarmigan near what were then the Ruth (DSO 1) and Ferriman/Star Creek (DSO 2) sites.

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<sup>11</sup> With the exceptions of the brief periods of freeze-up in the fall and break-up in the spring

<sup>12</sup> Weiler 1992:47f.

#### **2.1.4. Waterfowl Hunting**

Waterfowl in the spring is an important resource as it can provides relatively large amounts of high-quality food during a time when other resources are low<sup>13</sup>: fishing is difficult due to unsafe ice conditions; caribou are less mobile and have generally retreated from the area; and hunters' movements are becoming restricted due to difficult snow and ice conditions making small game hunting less attractive as well.

Waterfowl hunting during that period is therefore a very welcome and needed opportunity to replenish domestic food stores. It is carried out in a stationary manner, from a particular suitable site and can yield high returns for relatively little investment of time, effort and transportation. Such suitable locations are Ashkui<sup>14</sup> locations, sites of early open water in otherwise still ice-covered water bodies during the time of the spring waterfowl migration.

To a lesser extent, waterfowl is also harvested during the fall migration, when they tend to stop to rest on suitable water bodies or feed on hilltops and ridges offering berries or other feed.

Locally breeding populations are occasionally hunted as well.

As Figure 5 shows, none of the reported waterfowl hunting areas for this time period were located within the Study Area. The key areas identified in the wider Schefferville region were located at Attikamagen Lake, part of the upper Swampy Bay/Ferrum rivers basins around lakes Annabel, Gillard and Rouллоis, and the Lake Harris area in the Howells/Goodwood rivers watershed.

#### **2.1.5. Trapping**

Historically, trapping did not play a major part in the Naskapi economy due to their highly mobile and nearly self-sufficient lifestyle prior to the breakdown of the regional caribou population and the settlement of the Naskapi in Schefferville. Its relative significance increased with a more settled lifestyle and more urgent need for a cash income<sup>15</sup>.

Several trapping areas within the Study Area have been identified (see Figure 6). One of these is the upper and central portion of the Howells River basin, the other the surroundings of Lac Baussac and the area to the northeast of Lac Baussac and Matemace Lake. Other trapping areas immediately beyond the Study Area lie in the Swampy Bay River and Ferrum River basins around lakes Gillard, Rouллоis and Grouvel as well as at Attikamagen Lake.

#### **2.1.6. Camp Sites**

The first data set contained little information on camp site locations within the Study Area.

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<sup>13</sup> Weiler 1992:48f.

<sup>14</sup> „Ashkui“ is an Innu term (translated: „open water in the ice“) for a location in a water body where the water does not freeze over during the winter or opens up very early in the spring. See Figure 26

<sup>15</sup> Cooke 1976; Weiler 1992:19-22 50f., 1994b:B7,1986a

Two sites were identified. One was located at Vacher Lake, the other was at the site between lakes Peter and Matemace which later become the location of the new village of Kawawachikamach.

### **2.1.7. Travel Routes**

Long-distance travel routes principally follow waterways while balancing principles of seeking paths of „least resistance“ (or effort) with maximizing travel safety and availability of food resources.

For a highly mobile society such as the Naskapi relying on seasonally and locally fluctuating resources, these travel routes are the key to their economic, and up to quite recently their very physical, survival.

As they are based on the geology and drainage patterns of the traditional Naskapi territory, such travel routes remain stable through history, varying only in the amount of use they see in response to changes in patterns of resource harvesting.

Two major travel routes dissect the Study Area (see Figure 7). Both traverse the entire traditional territory of the Naskapi from its northernmost limit at Ungava Bay to the central lake plateau around Attikamagen, Petitsikapau and Michikamau<sup>16</sup> lakes in the south.

The first route follows the Howells River connecting Ungava Bay with the Ashuanipi region via the lower Koksoak, Caniapiscou, Goodwood rivers in the north and Menihek and Ashuanipi lakes in the south<sup>17</sup>.

The second route follows the Swampy Bay River and links the Ungava region via the lower Koksoak and lower Caniapiscou rivers with the Attikamagen-Petitsikapau lake plateau and ultimately Michikamau Lake.

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<sup>16</sup> Now the Smallwood Reservoir

<sup>17</sup> where a portage to the upper Moisie River gives further access to the St. Lawrence North Shore

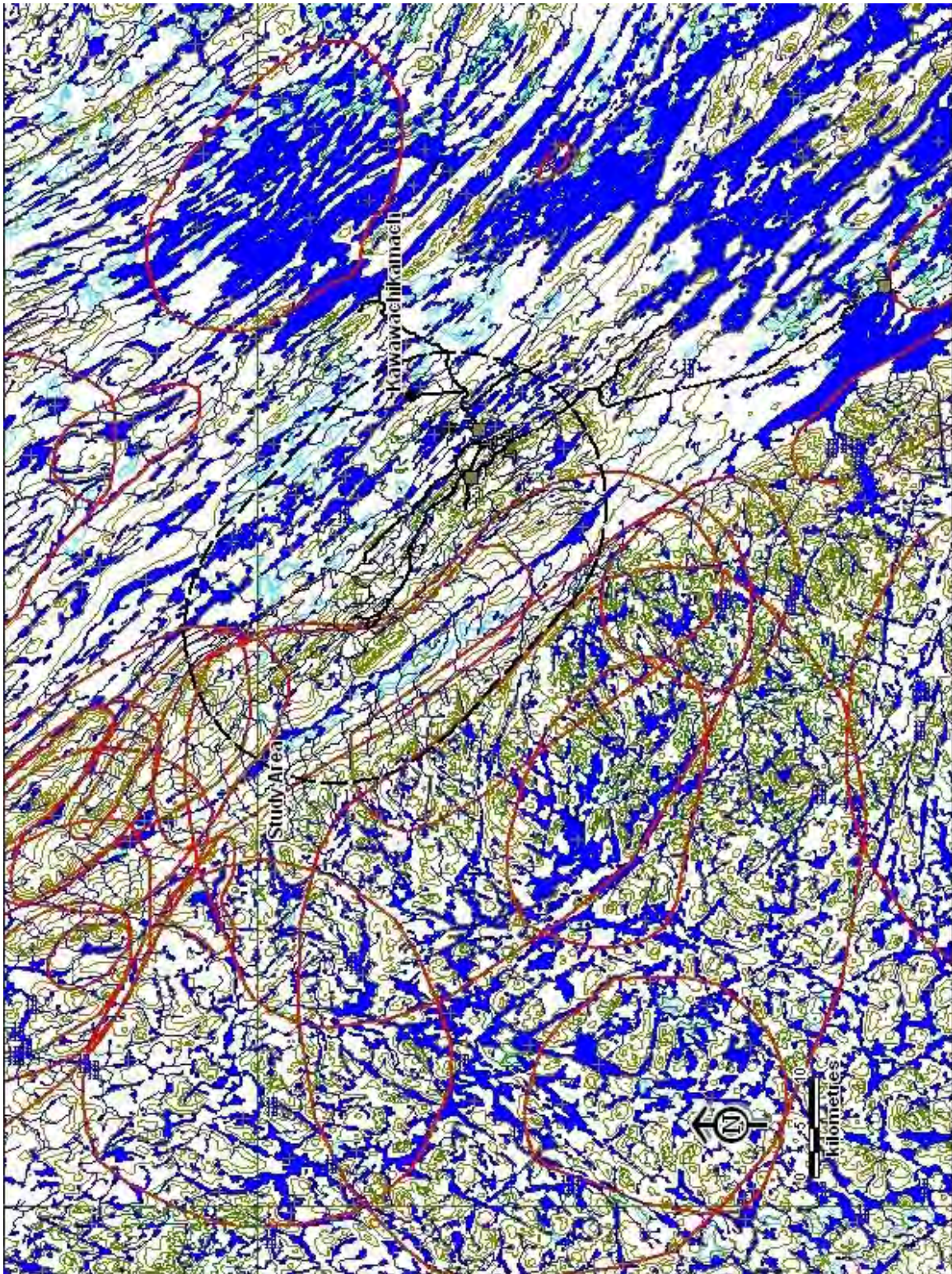


Fig. 2: Caribou Hunting, pre-1983



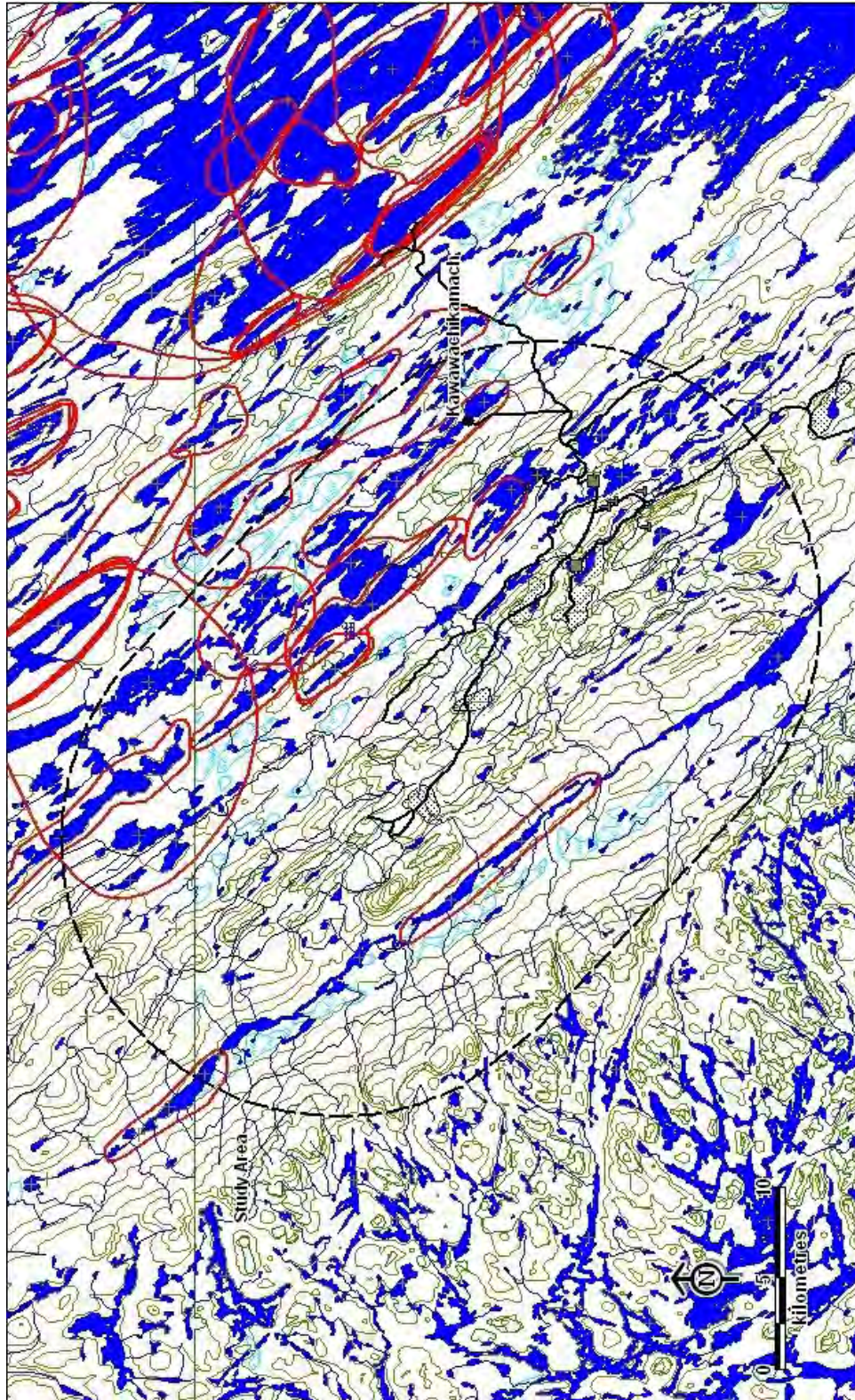


Fig 3: Fishing, pre-1983

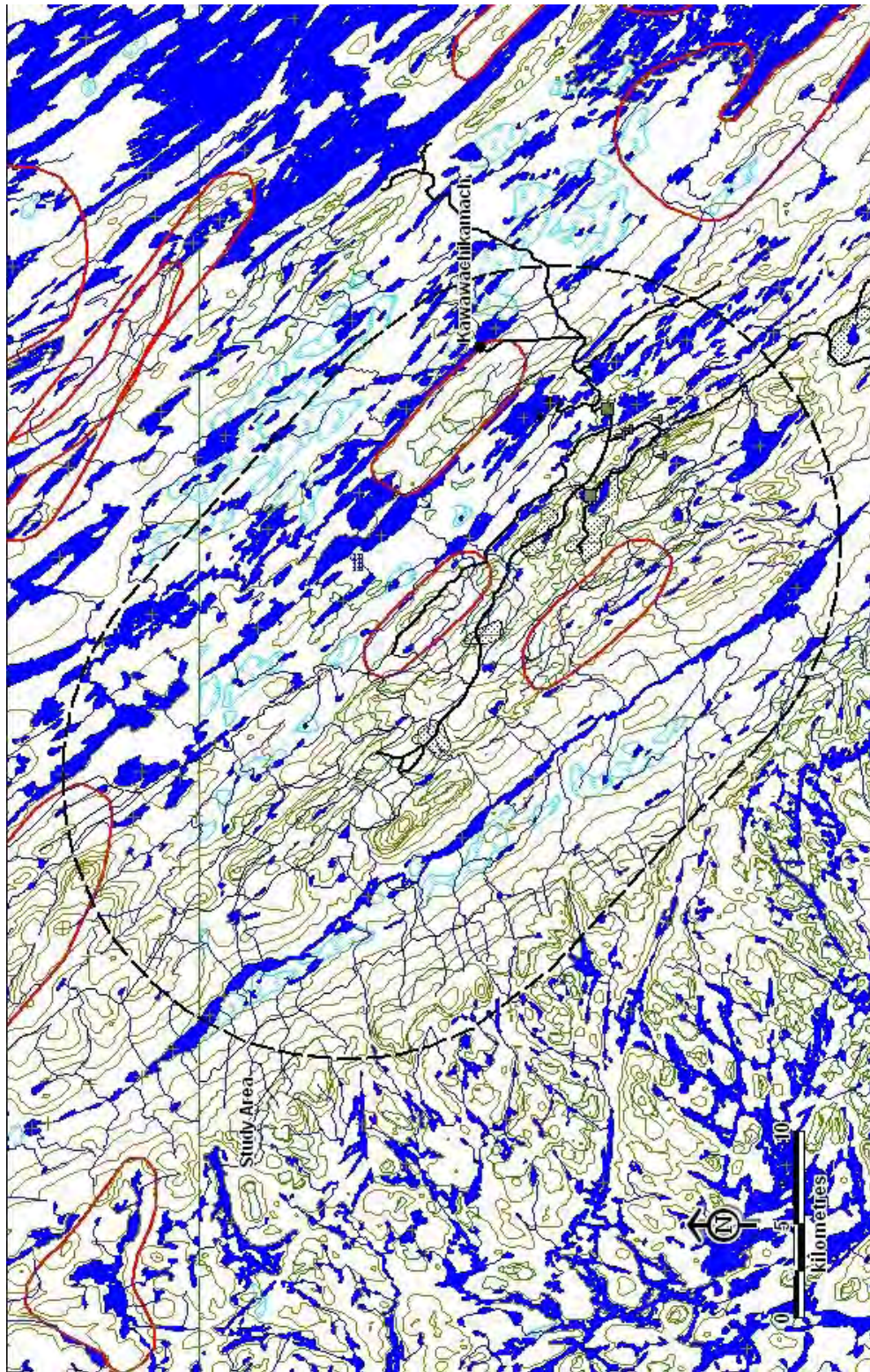


Fig 4: Small Game Hunting, pre-1983

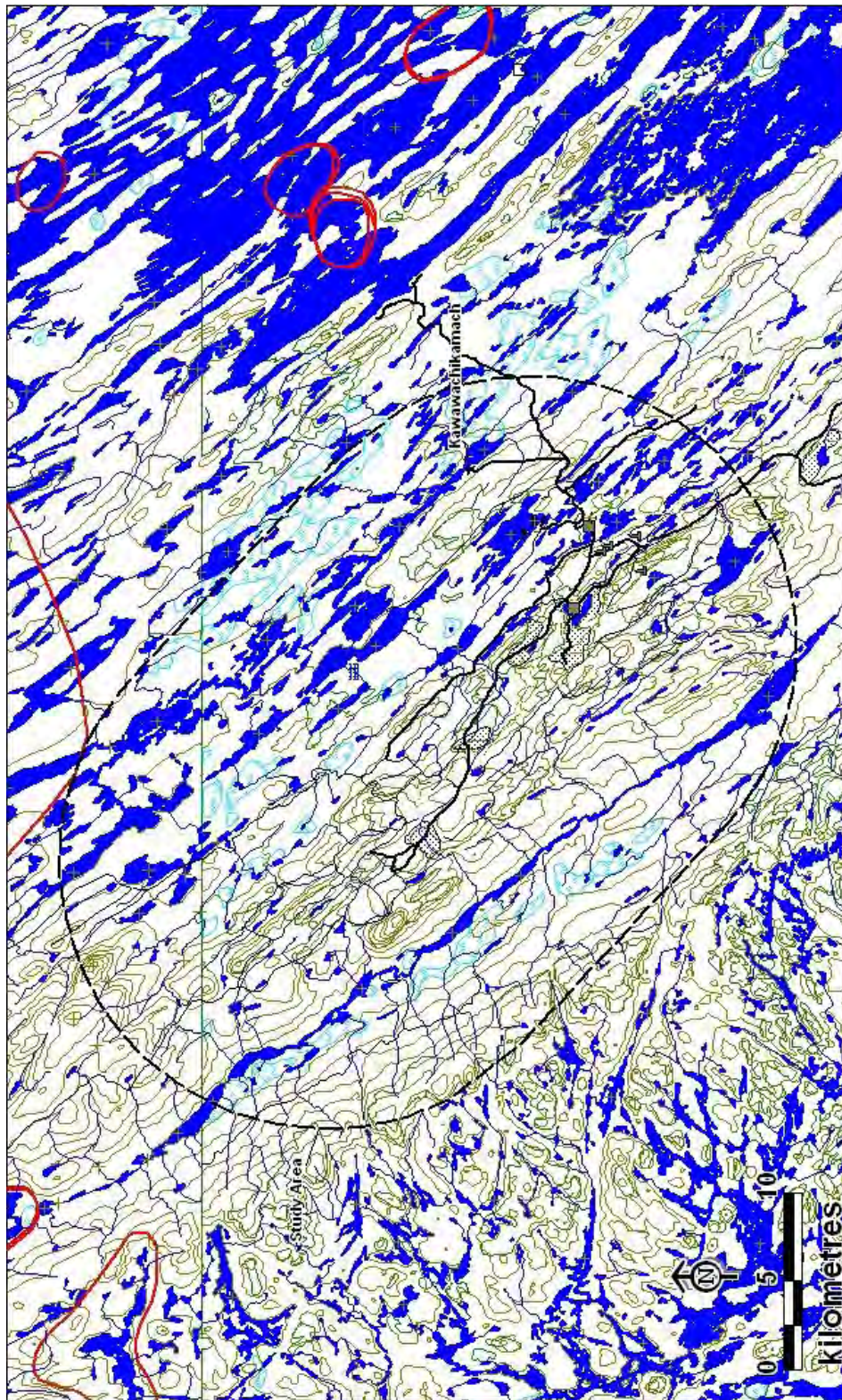


Fig. 5: Waterfowl Hunting, pre-1983

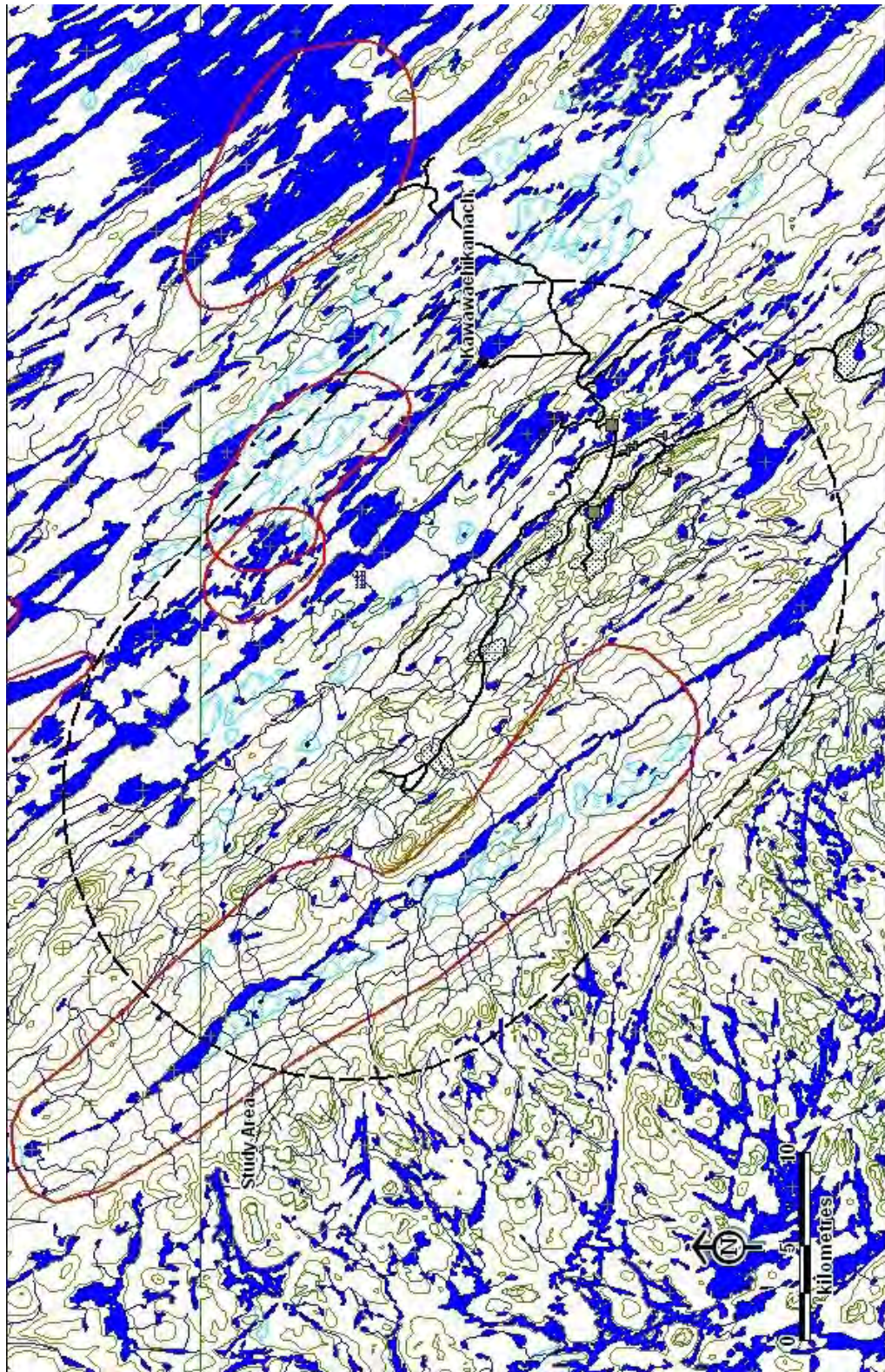


Fig. 6: Trapping, pre-1983

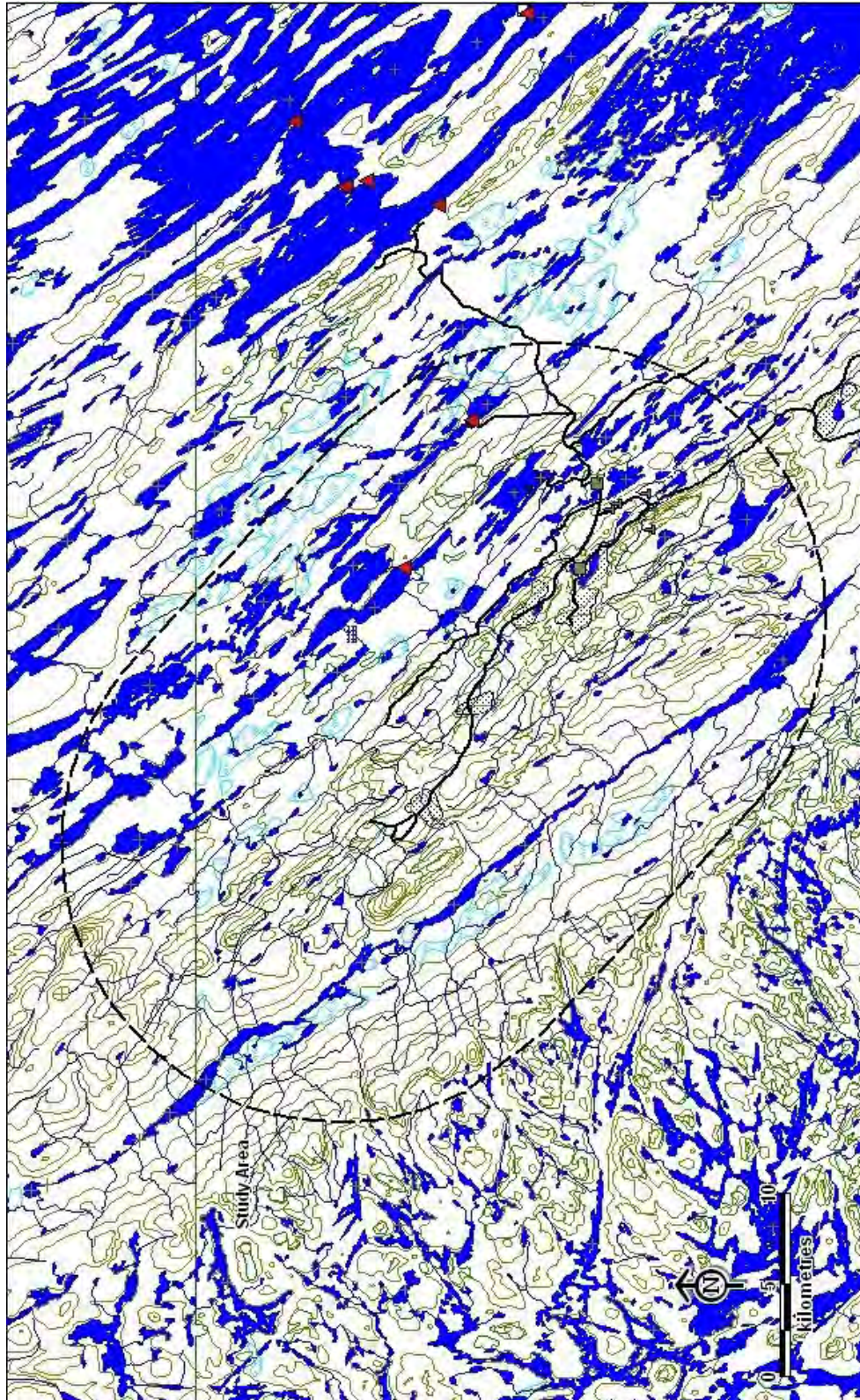


Fig. 7: Camp Sites, pre-1983

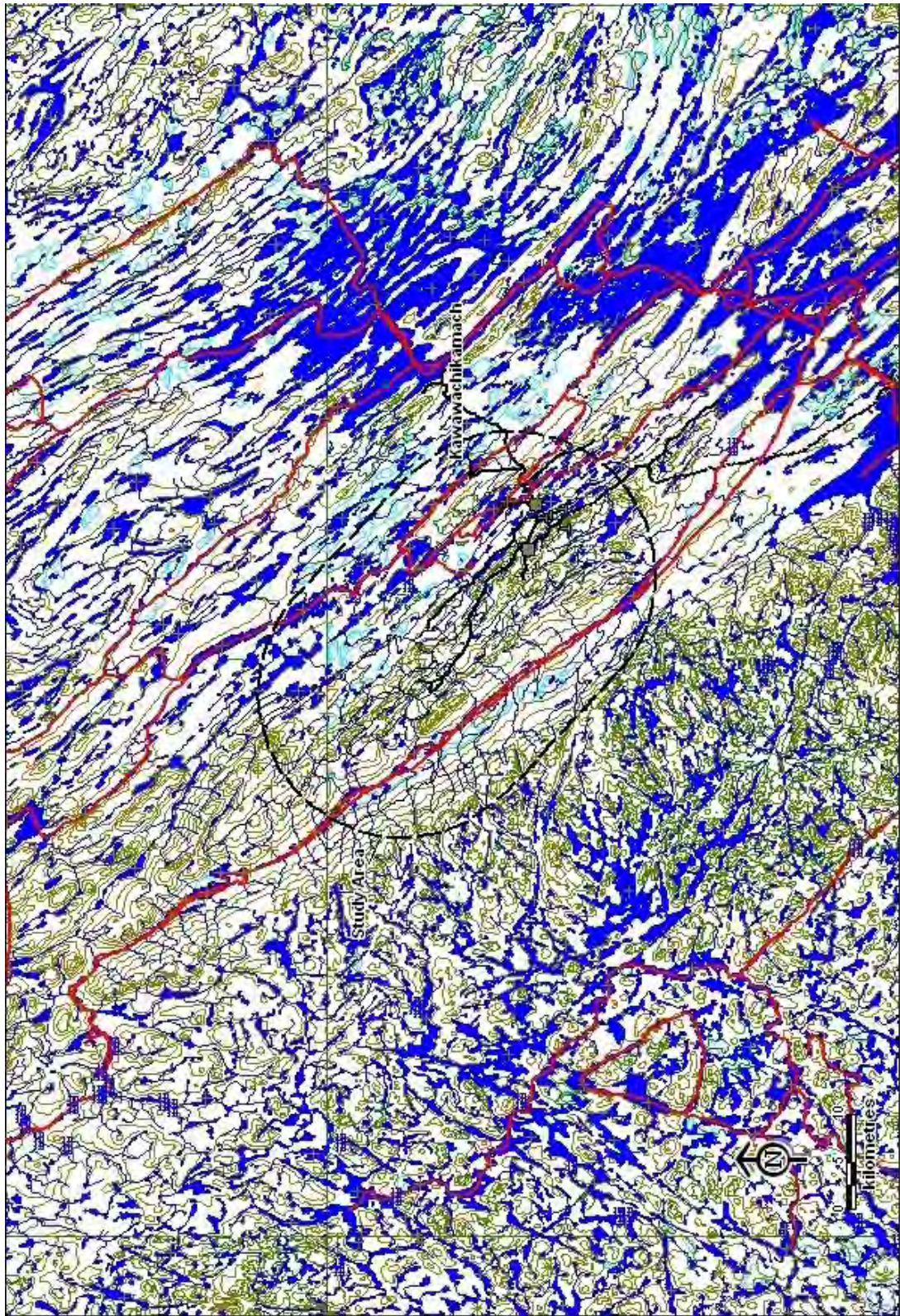


Fig. 8: Travel Routes

## **2.2. Naskapi Land and Resource Use in the Study Area, 1993 Survey**

Two events during the early 1980s had a major impact on Naskapi land use patterns: one was the termination of IOC mining activities in November of 1982; the other the move of the Naskapi community to their own newly constructed village<sup>18</sup> site of Kawawachikamach about 15 km from Schefferville.

The effects of the mine closure were manifold: the population of the town dropped dramatically within a very short time, and so did the services and employment opportunities the town was able to provide; access restrictions to the mining sites and the Ridge in general were lifted; industrial activity and associated vehicular traffic, noise and dust pollution along the Ridge stopped.

The George River caribou, whose numbers had been growing rapidly over the previous years, began traversing the now quiet Ridge again during their fall migration.

The move by the Naskapi to their own village of Kawawachikamach, away from Schefferville, appears to have brought about a social, cultural and economic re-focusing on their own community, its values and aspirations. As employment opportunities with IOC had disappeared and those with Schefferville businesses become extremely scarce, local self-government/administration and services and „traditional“ wildlife harvesting activities became the community“s key economic sectors<sup>19</sup>.

The Hunter Support Programme (HSP), a provision of the land claims agreement, promotes and subsidizes the wildlife harvesting sector by funding „community hunts“, the yields of which are redistributed amongst the members of the community<sup>20</sup>. The HSP focuses on projects promising high returns, such as caribou hunting, waterfowl hunting and fishing, and participants are paid for their efforts for the benefit of the community. During the first decade of operation HSP hunts were able to fund bush plane charters to allow hunting teams to access productive but distant resource areas of the Naskapi territory. Unfortunately, HSP funding has over the past years not been able to keep pace with rising operating costs and, as a result, the frequency and geographic range of HSP hunts have been shrinking<sup>21</sup>. This, of course, increased the community“s reliance on nearby resource areas.

### **2.2.1. Caribou Hunting**

With caribou more plentiful again and the Ridge part of their usual migratory route again in the fall, this location has become a prime caribou hunting area.

Its proximity to the community adds to its attractiveness to local hunters, and so does the existence of a fairly extensive system of dirt roads established by the IOC. This allows easy and

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<sup>18</sup> Part of the provisions of the 1978 Northeastern Quebec Agreement

<sup>19</sup> Weiler 1986b

<sup>20</sup> Meredith & Müller-Wille 1982:26-46

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication with hunters 1993 & 2006.

quick access to caribou without major expenses for transportation and the necessity to set up camp for an extended stay.

As Figure 9 shows, caribou hunting activities reported in this data set cover the entire Study Area: the respective portion of the Ridge, the portion of the Swampy Bay River basin to the east of it, as well as the section extending into the Howells River valley to the west.

While caribou hunting has been reported in all surrounding areas as well, the data show a concentration of activity along the Ridge and in the surrounding areas. The Study Area represents the southern part of this hunting area.

### **2.2.2. Fishing**

The densest concentration of recorded fishing activity in this data set occurs east of the Study Area, in the Attikamagen Lake region and the upper Ferrum basin area located immediately to the north of it (around lakes Tait, Hayot, Rouллоis and Pluton).

Nevertheless, within the Study Area fishing activities were reported on both sides of the Ridge (see Figure 10), in the extensive lake system of the upper Swampy Bay River basin as well as the Howells River and the lakes along that stream (Stakit, Elross, Fleming, Rosemary and Kivivic). Some of the lakes along the edge of the Ridge that are located close to the former mine sites (e.g. Ruth, Elizabeth, Evelyn lakes) are consciously avoided by some of the Naskapi due to fears of contamination from mine tailings.

### **2.2.3. Small Game Hunting**

Although it has been shown that small game, at least as a secondary resource, is hunted wherever other types of wildlife harvesting are carried out<sup>22</sup>, no harvesting areas within the Study Area were recorded in this data set (see Figure 11).

### **2.2.4. Waterfowl Hunting**

The sole harvesting area for waterfowl indicated within the Study Area is a system of interconnected water bodies in the Swampy Bay River basin consisting of Vacher, Gunshot, La Miltière and De Milley lakes. It relates primarily, though not exclusively, to waterfowl hunting during the spring migration.

### **2.2.5. Trapping**

Trapping activities were reported to occur throughout the Study Area (see Figure 13). The two main areas are located in the Swampy Bay River basin portion of the Study Area, the other in the Howells River valley, including its eastern slope. Both these areas are forested habitats interspersed with water bodies. Most of the furbearer species of interest to trappers are

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<sup>22</sup> Weiler 1994b:B28-29; 1992:47



indeed either primarily forest dwellers (e.g. marten, weasel, ermine, wolverine, lynx, squirrel) or riparian (beaver, muskrat, mink, otter). However, red and arctic foxes as well as wolves may be encountered anywhere. That includes the fairly barren Ridge, which had become a resource area since the termination of IOC mining activities.

#### **2.2.6. Camp Sites**

No information on camp sites in the Study Area was contained in the data set collected in 1993.

#### **2.2.7. Travel Routes**

As indicated above, travel routes are one of those features of traditional land use and occupancy that generally remain stable over generations. Therefore, see chapter 2.1.7. and Figure 8.

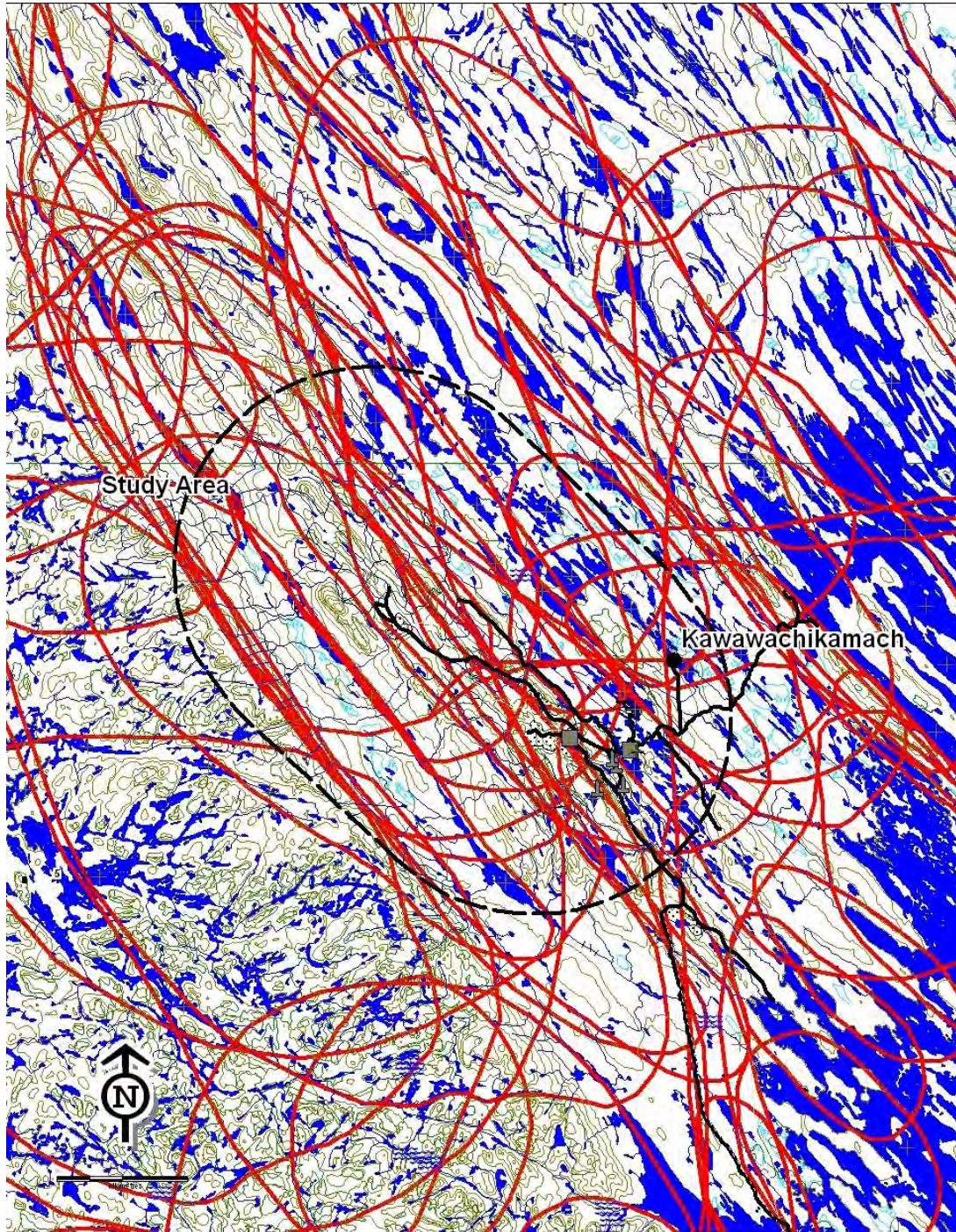


Fig. 9: Caribou Hunting, 1993 Survey

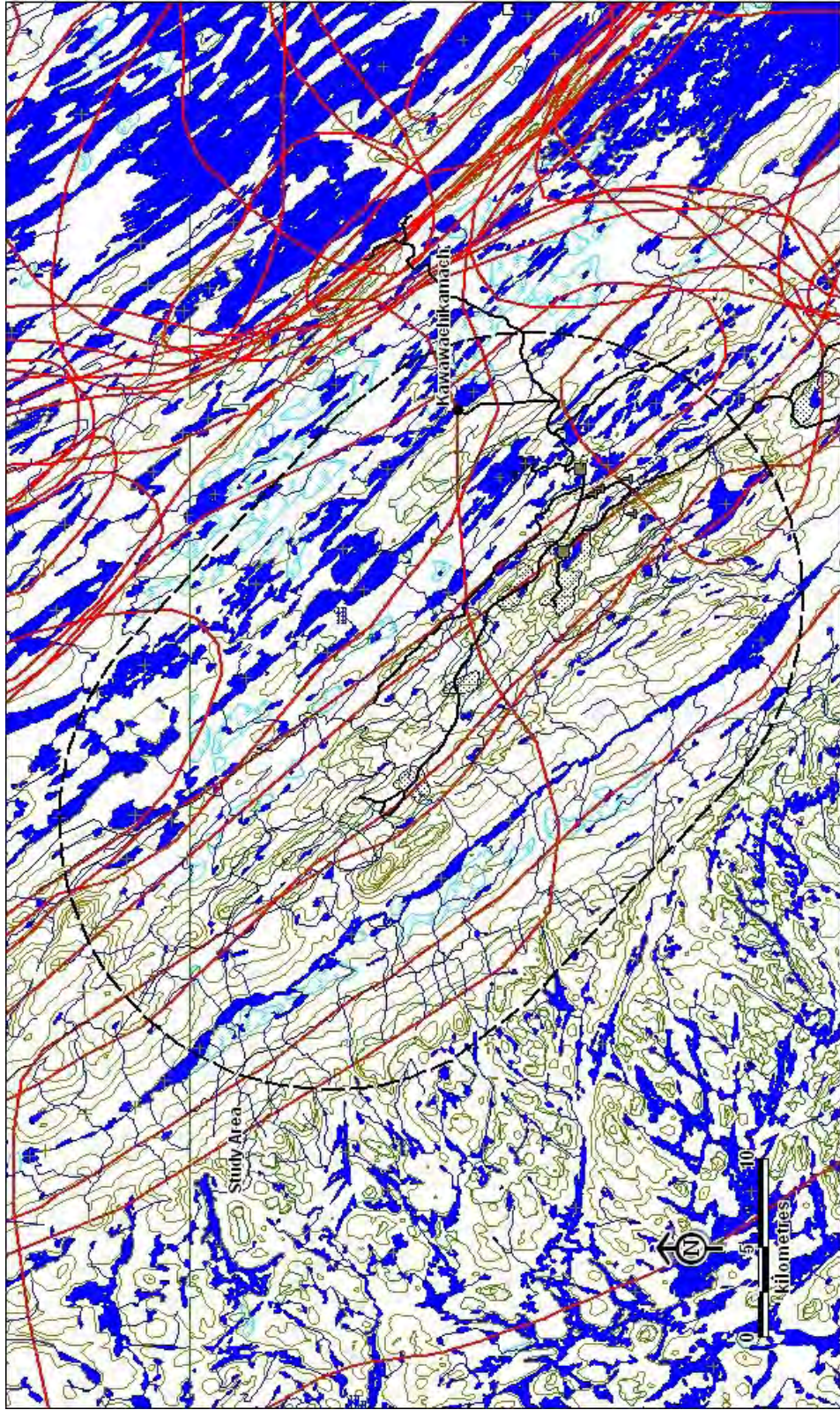


Fig. 10: Fishing, 1993 Survey

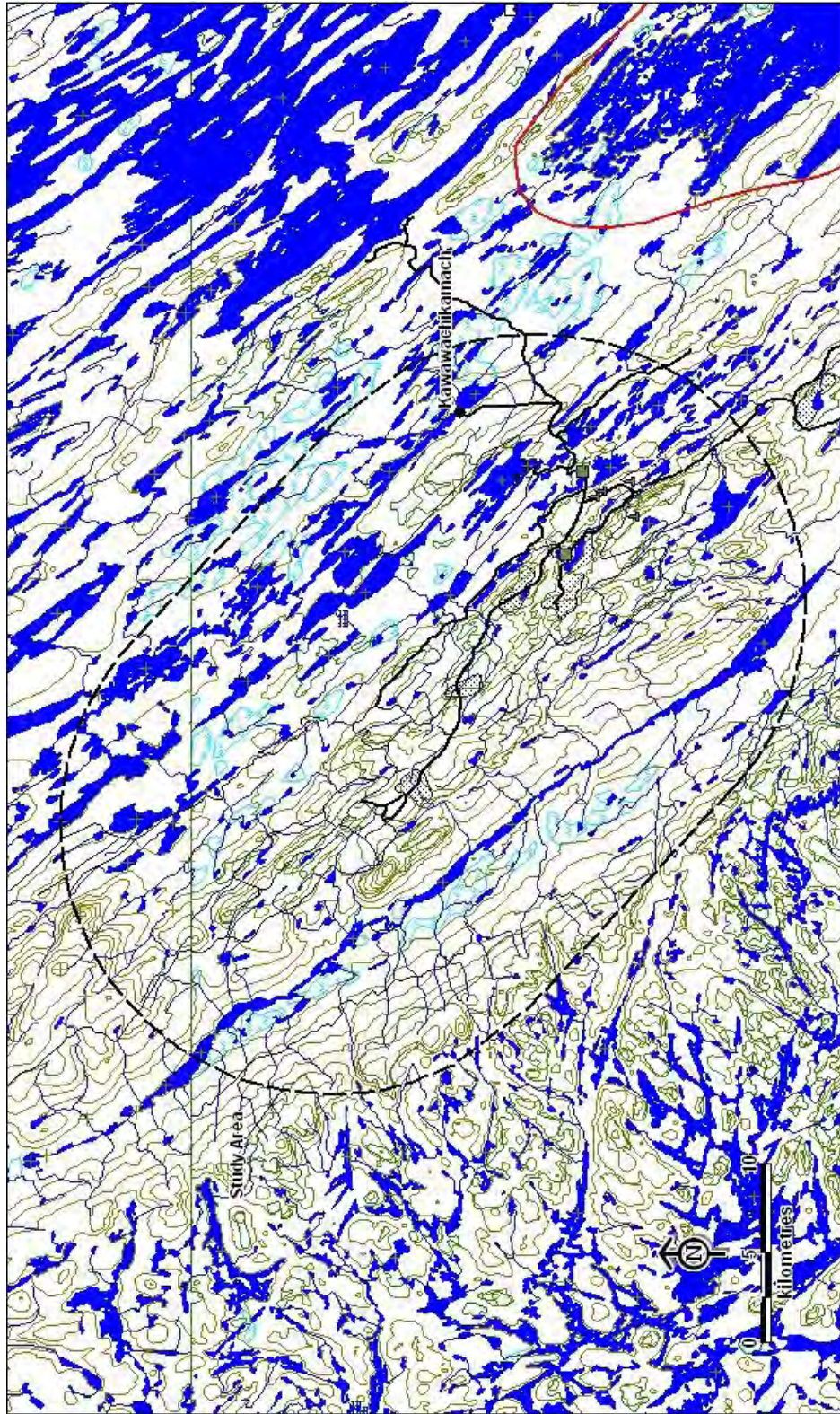


Fig. 11: Small Game Hunting, 1993 Survey

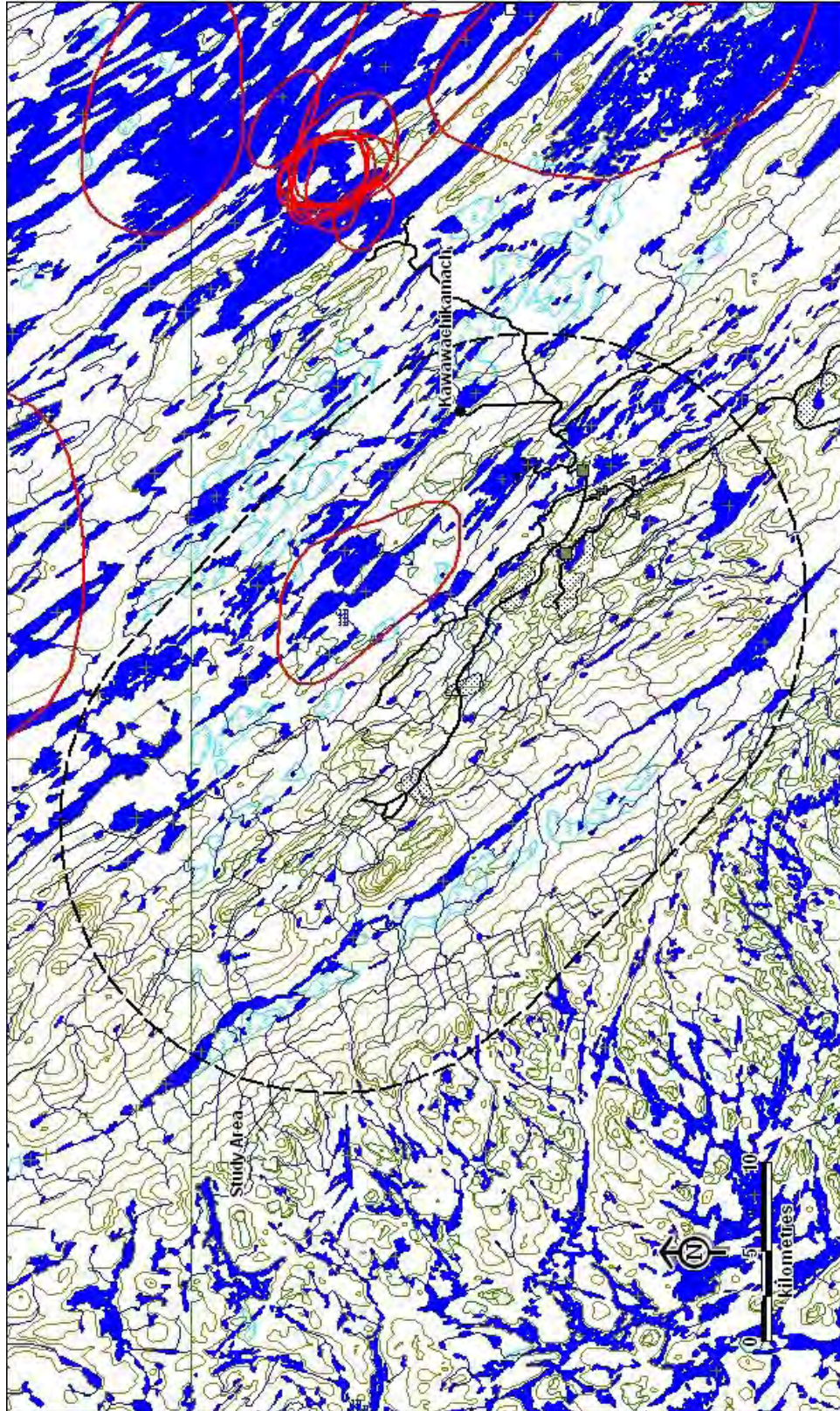


Fig. 12: Waterfowl Hunting, 1993 Survey

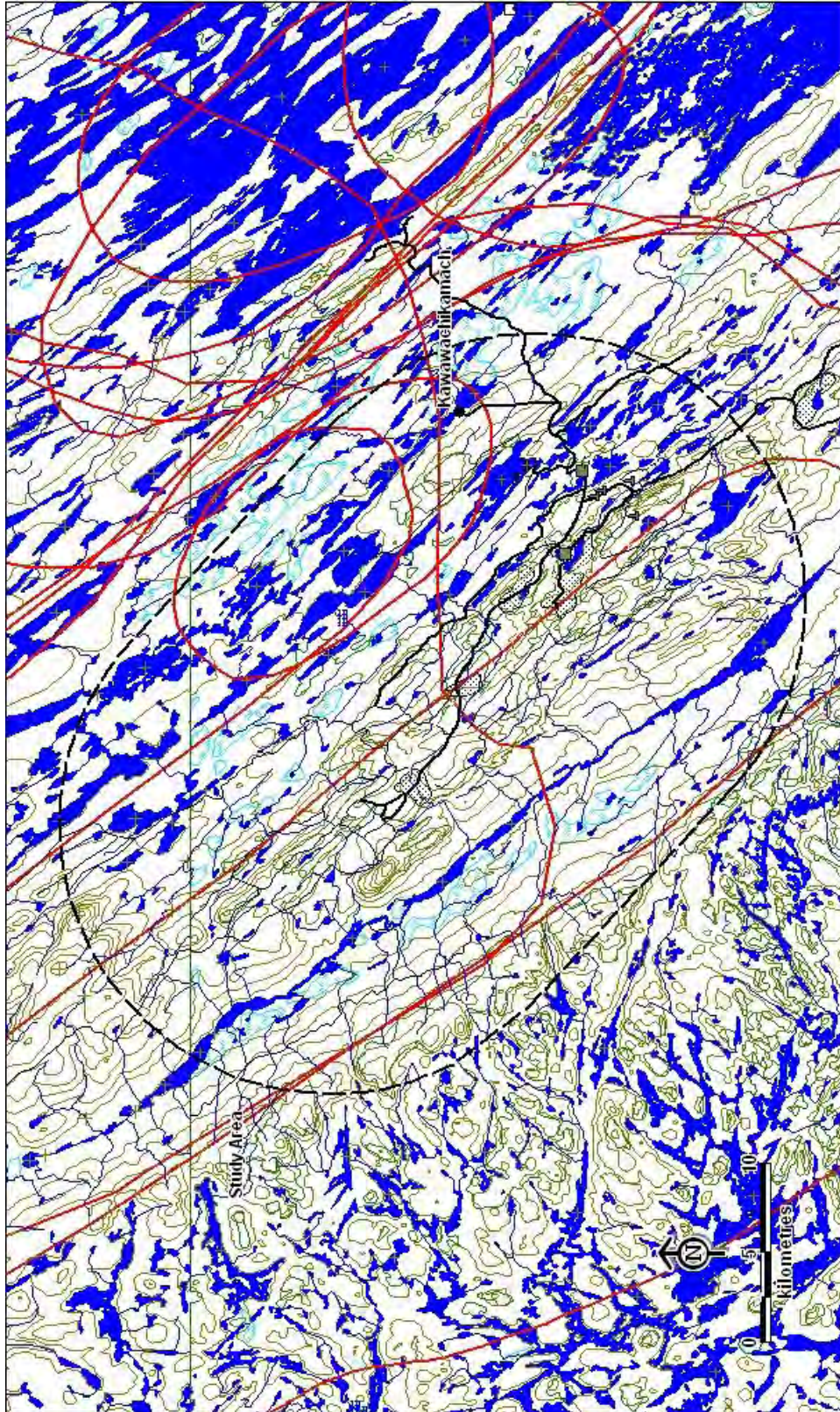


Fig. 13: Trapping, 1993 Survey

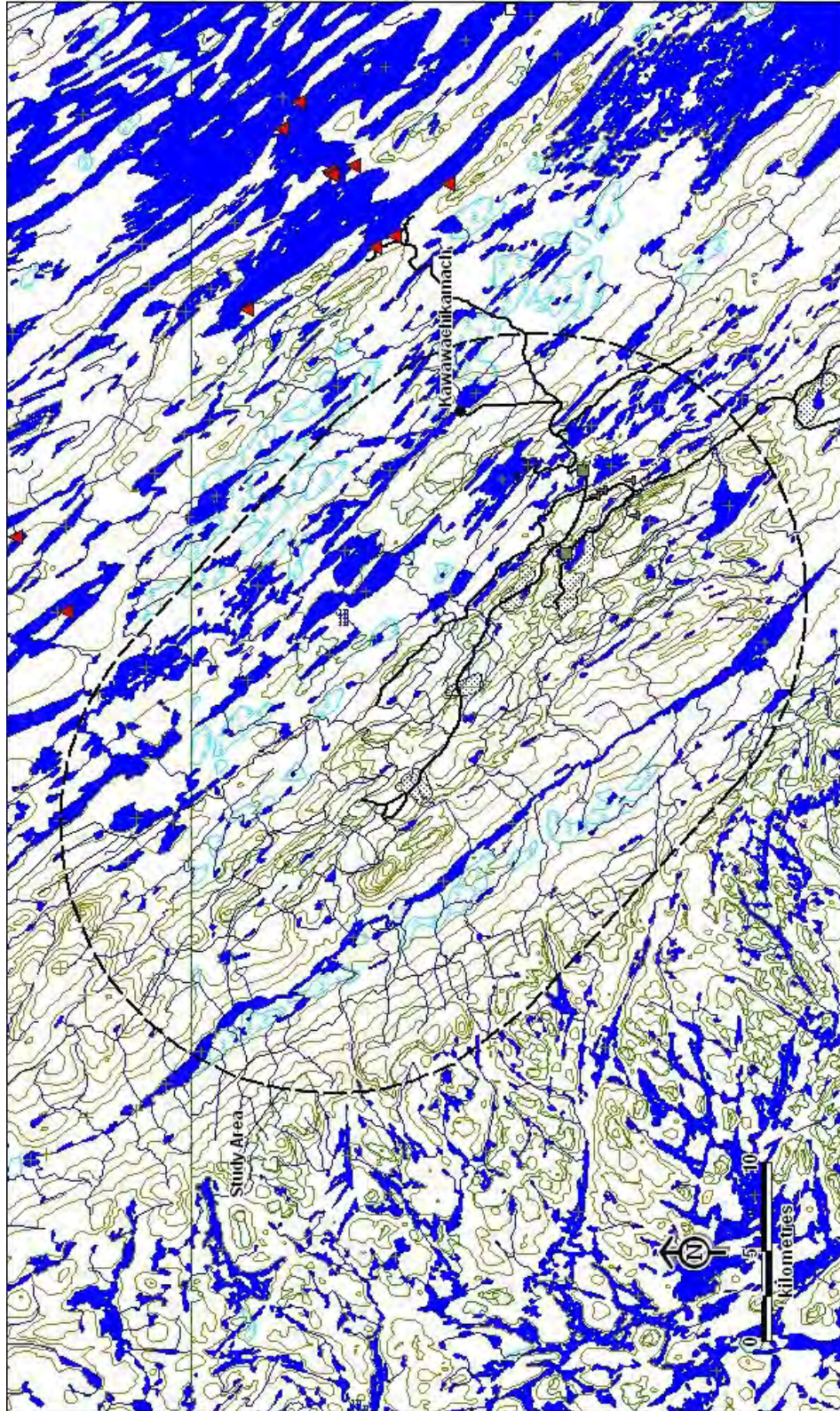


Fig. 14: Camp Sites, 1993 Survey

### **2.3. Naskapi Land and Resource Use in the Study Area, Howells River Survey 2006**

The previous two surveys aimed at gathering land use and occupancy information across the entire traditional territory of the Naskapi in broad categories such as caribou, small game, and waterfowl hunting, fishing, trapping, plant resources, camp sites and travel routes.

The 2006 survey of Naskapi land use, however, was conducted focusing specifically on the Howells River basin including the ridges along both sides of it. As a result, the data relating to the Study Area necessarily show a significantly denser pattern than those of the previous surveys.

Also, the information is more specific as, in most cases, the interviewees identified individual species within those general categories.

As the following description will reveal, the Howells River basin as well as the Ridge have become a heavily-used resource area over the past 25 years.

#### **2.3.1. Caribou Hunting**

This survey shows extensive caribou hunting activity throughout the Study Area, with the exception of the immediate surroundings of town site of Schefferville (Figure 15).

The densest concentration of caribou hunting activities was recorded along the Ridge between DSO 2 and the site of the proposed crusher at Goodwood. A secondary area of concentration is the Howells River basin between Kivivic and Stakit lakes.

During the fall migration caribou can be found in both these locations as they traverse this region<sup>23</sup>, but most of the hunting activity during that period occurs along the Ridge. Harvesting is most effective when caribou appear in large numbers along the fairly barren hilltops where they can easily be spotted.

As the migration passes, some caribou tend to stay behind and overwinter in small, scattered groups in the Howells River valley and on the plateau to the west of it, both wooded areas that are able to provide shelter and sustenance to the animals. Hunting activities in these areas therefore tend to occur in late-season (after the main migration has passed) and winter.

Since the George River caribou herd has recovered from its crash in the early 1900s and begun to reappear in significant numbers in the Schefferville region, and since mining activity along the Ridge has ceased and the area has become accessible to hunters, it has become the primary caribou hunting area during the fall.

The fact that this area is located close to the community and is accessible by truck during the fall hunting season<sup>24</sup> adds to the attractiveness and economic significance of this location as a resource area. It offers access to caribou to those who cannot afford the time or expense of extended excursions to more distant hunting areas.

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<sup>23</sup> See chapter 2.3.11 & Figure 25

<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the winter hunting season when virtually all harvesting areas are accessible by snowmobile, vehicular transportation during the snow-free season is restricted to the very limited local road system, most of it extending into the former IOC mining area.



### **2.3.2. Big Game other than Caribou**

While caribou is undoubtedly the primary big game resource in the wildlife harvesting sector of the Naskapi economy, it is not the only one.

Black bears are also harvested, and so are moose. While black bear has always been part of the spectrum of subsistence resources of the Naskapi, moose is a very recent addition.

Over the past few decades moose, typically a resident of a more southerly boreal forest habitat, have been expanding their range northward into marginal but still suitable areas of the forest-tundra ecological zone. Occasionally, but increasingly they are encountered in sheltered and densely forested areas of the Naskapi hunting territory. The Howells River valley is one such area.

Both black bear and moose harvesting have been reported within the Study Area portion of the Howells River valley (Figure 16). While moose hunting is still a rarity here (as elsewhere in Naskapi territory), the black bear population is strong in this valley and is being harvested on a regular basis.

General hunting was also indicated in the Swampy Bay River basin along the eastern edge of the Study Area, which may also include black bear.

### **2.3.3. Fishing**

As the geographic foci of the 2006 survey were the Howells River valley and the Ridge, the recorded fishing activity in this Study Area is concentrated along the Howells River in comparison to the data relating to the Swampy Bay River basin on the opposite side of the Ridge. The survey revealed that the Howells River and the lakes along its course are being used extensively and year-round by members of the Naskapi community.

Speckled trout and sucker are being caught along the entire length of this river system and its connected lakes.

Lake trout, pike, whitefish (both Lake and Round whitefish) and ouananiche are identified as species harvested in all of the lakes along the Howells River (Stakit, Fleming, Elross, Rosemary and Kivivic lakes).

Most of the smaller lakes on the valley's eastern slope are also utilized, though to a lesser extent, with Speckled trout and sucker being the most common species.

However, a number of interviewees indicated that they still avoid those lakes situated close to and below the former mining pits (e.g. Ruth, Elizabeth, Evelyn lakes) for fear of contaminated run-off or seepage entering these lakes.

Fishing is also carried out in the lakes located on the plateau to the west of the valley. There it is usually a winter activity conducted in combination with trapping or caribou hunting.

The only lakes in the Swampy Bay River basin that were positively identified as being fished by the interviewees are lakes Tesserie and Hameau at the foot of the Ridge in the northern part of

the Study area, lakes Mollie, Baussac and Guillet on the northeastern edge of the Study Area, and lakes Barry and Hanas on the southeastern periphery.

#### **2.3.4. Small Game Hunting**

Being densely wooded, the Howells River valley provides an ideal habitat for ptarmigan, grouse, porcupine and snowshoe hare. All these species are harvested there by members of the Naskapi community (Figure 18).

Most of the interviewees commented on the valley's special richness in small game. The strong population of porcupine seems to be particularly appreciated. Porcupine is a highly nutritious food resource, and the largest animal of the small game species. Over many decades, porcupine populations were fairly low across the entire hunting territory of the Naskapi. During the past 20 years, however, porcupine populations have gradually been rebounding, and the Howells River valley has become a very reliable source of porcupine for Naskapi hunters.

Small game is also hunted on the Ridge, primarily ptarmigan, and, in some sheltered wooded areas, hare. Along the more heavily vegetated eastern slopes, grouse and porcupine may be found as well.

Ptarmigan, hare and porcupine have been identified as three of the small game species harvested in the Swampy Bay River portion of the Study Area around La Tesserie and Hameau lakes. Ptarmigan and porcupine are indicated as being hunted in the Guillet and Matemace lakes area.

#### **2.3.5. Waterfowl Hunting**

All three ecological regions of the Study Area, the Howells River valley, the Ridge, and the Swampy Bay River basin, are being used for waterfowl hunting (Figure 19).

Attikamagen Lake, likely the best known and most heavily frequented waterfowl hunting area, sees intensive activity and produces large yields during the spring migration.

In comparison, the various suitable locations in the Study Area offer waterfowl hunting opportunities during spring, summer and fall, albeit at more modest returns per unit of time and effort invested.

During the spring migration, both geese and ducks are harvested in the Howells River valley. Along the course of the river and the associated string of lakes there are a number of Ashkui sites where the water opens up early in the spring. These are the sites most attractive to migrating waterfowl inducing them to land, rest and feed. And these are also the most productive hunting locations. Stakit Lake in the southern valley and Kivivic and Rosemary lakes in the northern part were most frequently identified as waterfowl hunting areas.

During the summer, the valley is reported to retain a considerable breeding population of geese and ducks nesting mostly in the wetlands along the western shore of the Howells River, and especially so on the western side Kivivic Lake. Some of the interviewees hunt these resident populations during the molting period in June or later in the summer.

During the fall migration, the hilltops along the Ridge offer staging areas for flocks of geese. Attracted by a good supply of berries growing on the northern half of the Ridge, geese rest and feed there before moving on. This area is therefore used for goose hunting in the fall, when access to this resource is generally much more difficult than it is during the spring migration.

Waterfowl hunting is also carried out in the Swampy Bay River basin. Within the Study Area, lakes Annabel, Hameau, Mollie, and La Tesserie have been confirmed as waterfowl hunting areas. Hunting there is done mostly during the spring migration.

### **2.3.6. Trapping**

Trapping activities in the Study Area concentrate on the Howells River valley, but are carried out in all three eco-zones (Figure 20).

The combination of dense forests and numerous water bodies makes for prime habitat conditions for most of the furbearer species.

Populations of forest-dwelling species such as marten, weasel, ermine, squirrel and lynx are strong and are harvested by Naskapi trappers. The same can be said of riparian species such as otter, mink and muskrat. Presently, beaver numbers appear to be moderate but rising. Beaver lodges are reported to be located near the mouths of many of the smaller Howells River tributaries and in the wetlands along the western shore of Kivivic Lake. Beavers are trapped by some of the interviewees, while others are waiting for their numbers to increase further.

Wolves and (red) foxes are plentiful in the valley and both are harvested in good numbers. The number of wolves tends to increase during the time of the caribou migration<sup>25</sup>.

Wolverines are reported to be present in this area, and are sought after by trappers. Sightings of wolverine tracks and the animal itself have been indicated, but none of the interviewees reported a wolverine catch.

Furbearer resources taken along most parts of the Ridge are limited to a few species: Red fox, Arctic fox, wolf and occasionally weasel.

Trapping in the eastern part of the Study Area, the Swampy Bay River basin, involves the same species as are listed for the Howells River valley, with the exception of wolverine. Within this region, the area around lakes Miltière, La Tesserie, Hameau, Annabel, Guillet and Boussac were identified as being used for trapping purposes.

### **2.3.7. Harvesting of Plant Resources**

In addition to wildlife, a variety of plant resources<sup>26</sup> is harvested in the Study Area (Figure 21). The richest location with respect to plant resources within the Study Area is the Howells River valley. Protected along the entire length of the river by ridges on either side running nearly at

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<sup>25</sup> Wolves are often shot rather than trapped, especially when encountered during caribou hunts

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed list of plant species occurring in Naskapi territory, see Naskapi Development Corporation 1989:274-322

right angles to the prevailing winds, the valley has a milder microclimate than most of the surrounding landscape. As a result, the valley supports a vegetation rich in variety, density and average size.

Among the plant resources harvested there are several of berries (e.g. blueberry, bilberry, cranberry, cloudberry, crowberry), medicinal plants (e.g. tamarack, Labrador tea, birch, mosses) and specialty woods (e.g. birch, tamarack) used for implements and crafts.

While the medicinal plants gathered there are to be found in other locations as well, it is believed that they grow „stronger“ in this valley and are more effective with respect to their medicinal properties.

A similar perception exists with regard to the specialty woods that are used to manufacture, for example, snowshoe frames, drum rims, sled runners, carvings and other tools or craft items. Wood harvested there is considered of better quality, as local trees grow „stronger“ or larger in size and their trunks contain fewer (or wider-spaced) knots.

Along the Ridge, plant resources used by Naskapi consist mainly of berries. The main varieties there are blueberries, bilberries and crowberries.

Berries of the same varieties are, of course, also found and harvested in the Swampy Bay River basin. Harvesting areas recorded here are the surroundings of lakes La Tesserie, Hameau, Annabel, Miltière, and de Milly.

### **2.3.8. Travel Routes**

As described above<sup>27</sup>, the Howells River represents one of the traditional north-south travel routes of the Naskapi. Figure 23 shows this route in detail.

There are a number of winter crossings along the course of the river, where hunters, generally using snowmobiles for transportation, cross from one side to the other. Two of these crossings were identified, one situated at the north end of Rosemary Lake, another at Stakit Lake.

### **2.3.9. Camp Sites**

A number of camp sites were reported in the 2006 survey (Figure 22), most of them located at the key resource areas within the Study Area.

Those within the Howells River valley are situated at Kivivic Lake, at Elross and Fleming lakes, and at the inflow and the central portion of Stakit Lake.

In the Swampy Bay River basin one camp site was identified on the western shore of Lake Hameau.

### **2.3.10. Naskapi Toponymy**

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<sup>27</sup> 2.1.7., Figure 8

Indigenous toponyms are an important component of a First Nation’s traditional land use. Several Naskapi place names for geographic features within the Study Area were recorded during the 2006 interviews (Figure 24):

Table 1: Naskapi Place Names

<b>Naskapi Place Name</b>	<b>Official Place Name</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Location</b>
Ateshakaskuach		Beginning of tundra	Hill	67.1509°, 55.0871°
Gabosaskuach			Lake	67.2340°, 54.9824°
Godaduach			Hill	67.1656°, 54.9058°
Kabohobsachuach		Small, dried-up stream	River	67.3146°, 55.0344°
Kauishkumas	Kivivic Lake	Twin lakes	River	67.3183°, 54.9972°
Kauishugamachi	Annabel Lake		Lake	67.0691°, 55.0379°
Papatau-shipu	Howells River	River of round stones	River	
Patsikupau	Howells River valley	Wooded area	Valley	
Tome-unimashema	Kivivic Lake	Tommy’s lake	Lake	67.3183°, 54.9972°

### 2.3.11. Pattern of Fall Caribou Migration

Based on hunters’ reports, Figure 25 illustrates the fall migration pattern of the George River caribou as they traverse the Study Area.

Averaging out the individual routes depicted, the predominant direction of migrating caribou in the fall is from the northeast to southwest.

The map also identifies two locations where caribou cross from one side of the valley to the other during the winter, one being at Rosemary Lake, the other at Stakit Lake. These same sites were reported to be used by hunters on snowmobiles (see Figure 23).

### 2.3.12. Ashkui

Ashkui sites are an important ecological feature of subarctic winter habitats as they attract a variety of fish, birds and mammals, especially in the spring.

They are equally important to hunters as a harvesting location for fish and waterfowl in the spring and an easily accessible source of fresh water.

However, they also represent a danger to travelling hunters not totally familiar with the ice conditions in a particular area.

Ashkui sites are said to be found on Kivivic Lake, at the south ends of Elross and Fleming lakes, in the river section between Fleming and Stakit lakes as well as on Stakit Lake itself.

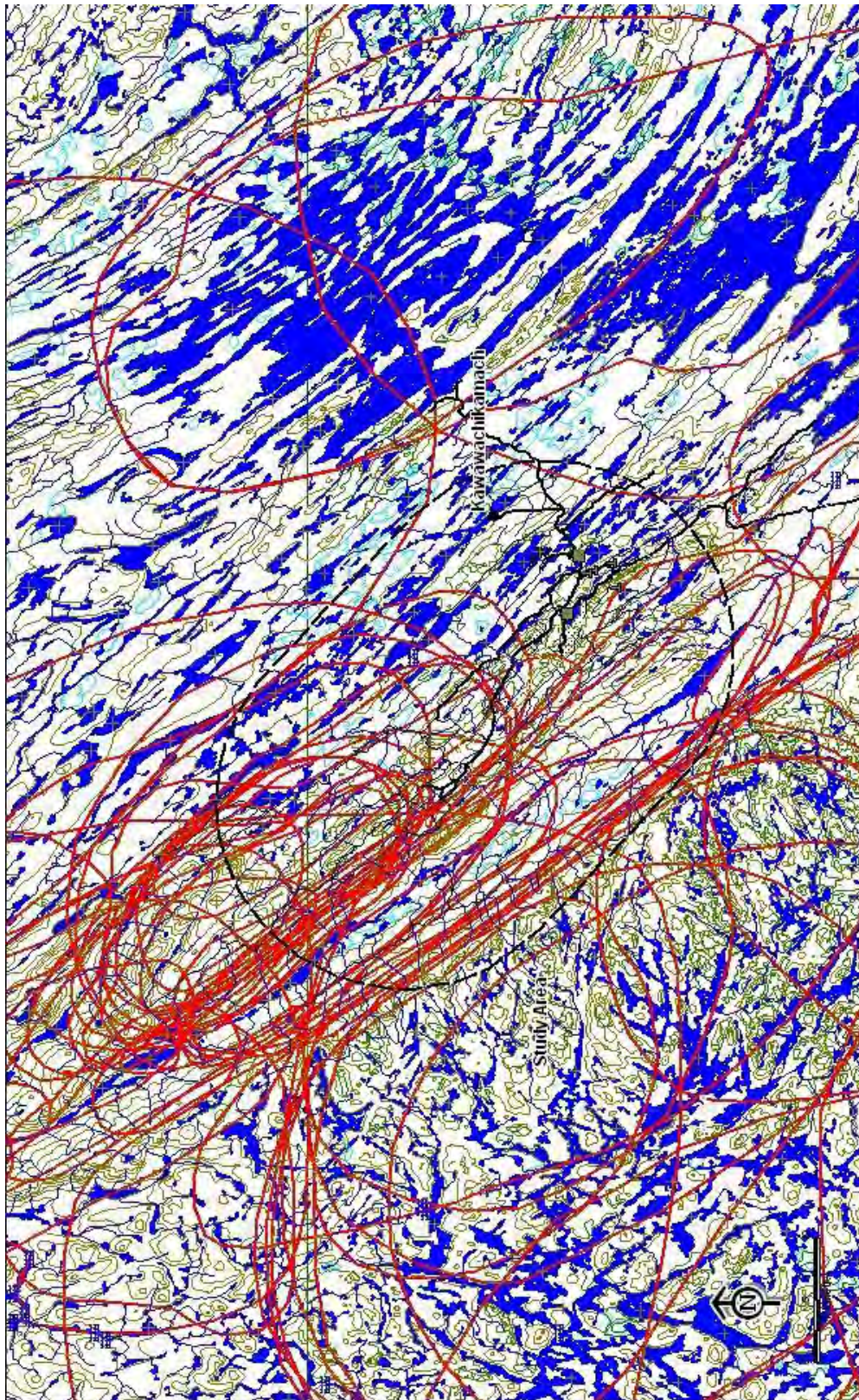


Fig. 15: Caribou Hunting, Howells River Survey 2006

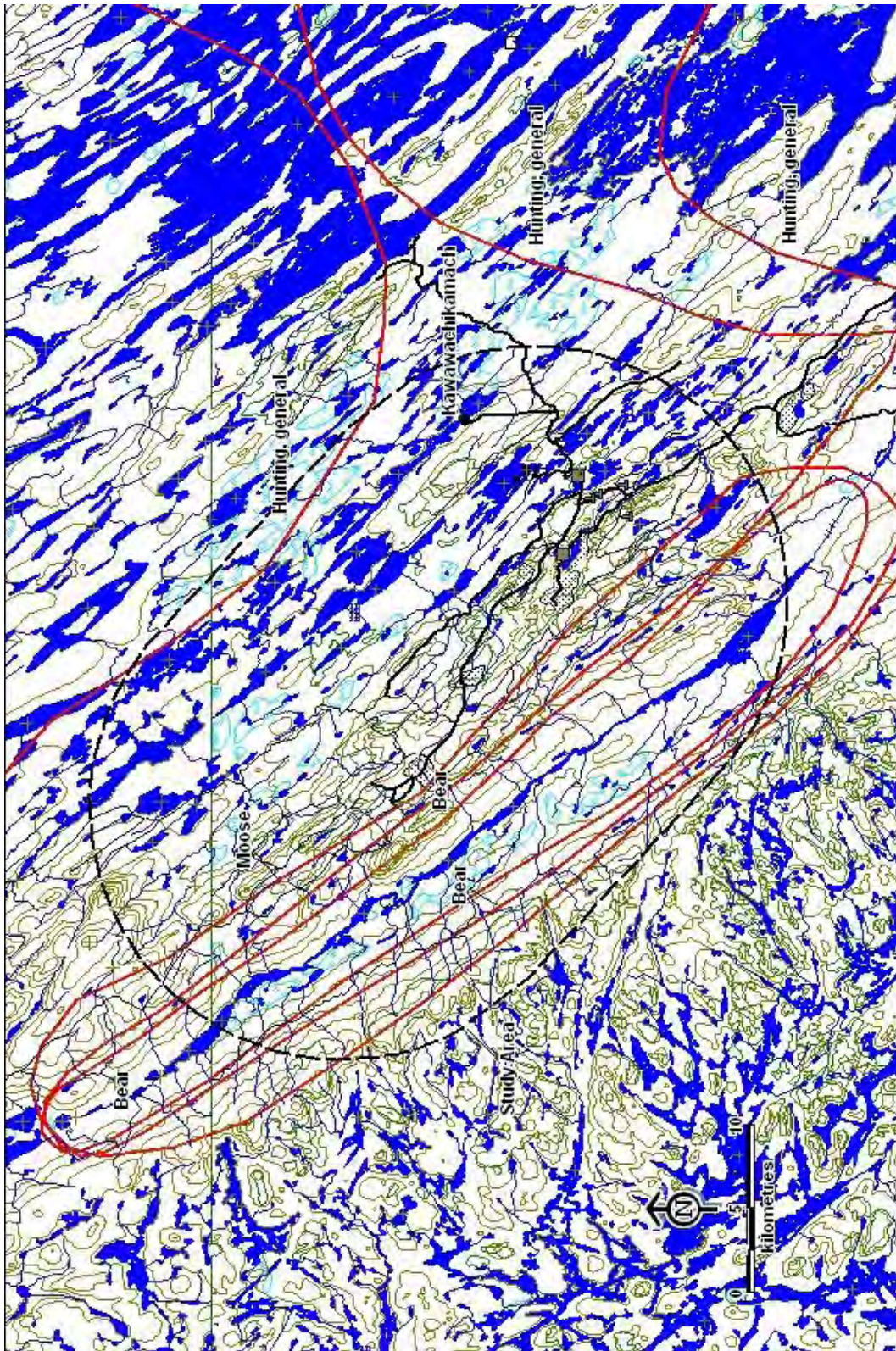


Fig. 16: Hunting of Big Game other than Caribou, Howells River Survey 2006

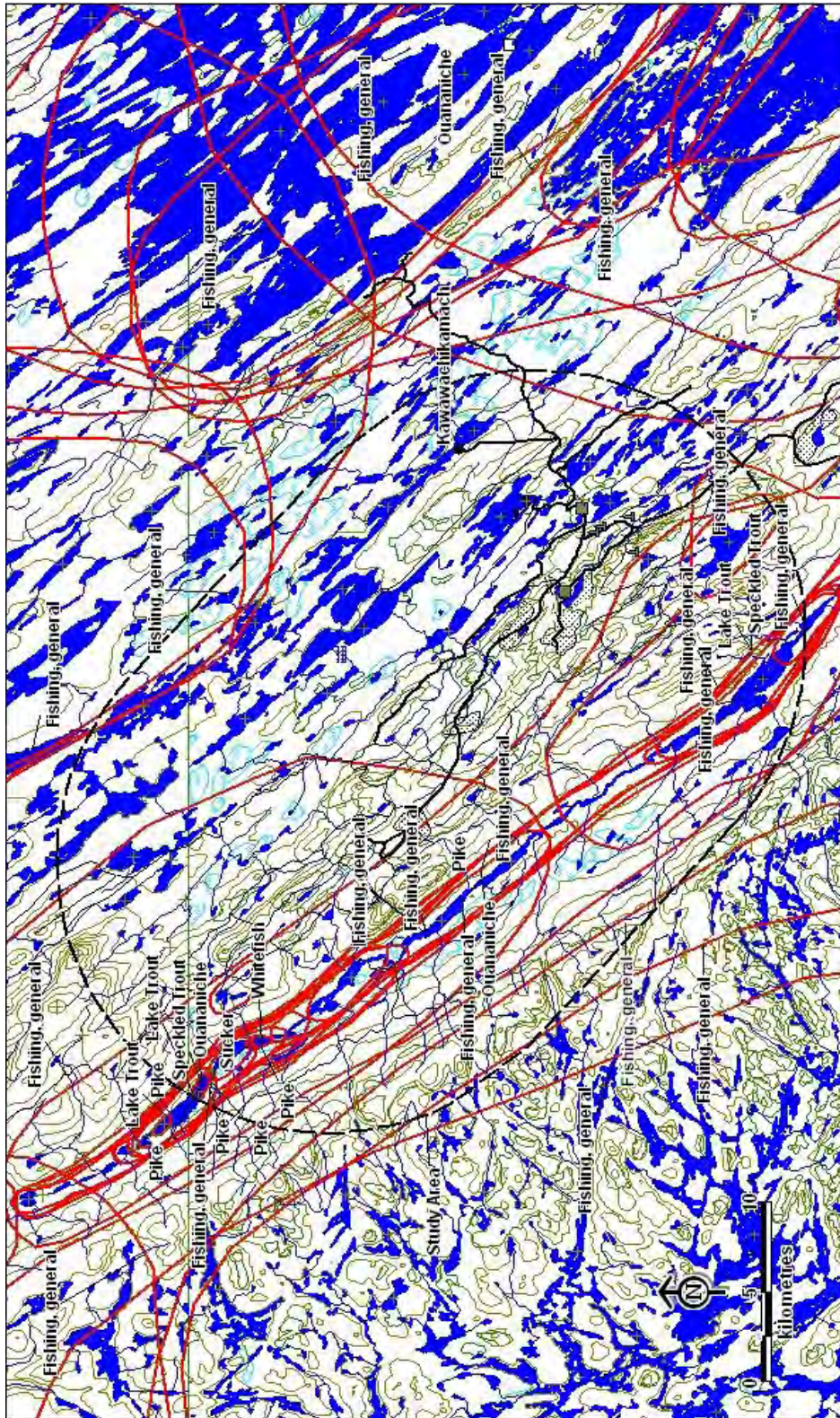


Fig: 17: Fishing, Howells River Survey 2006



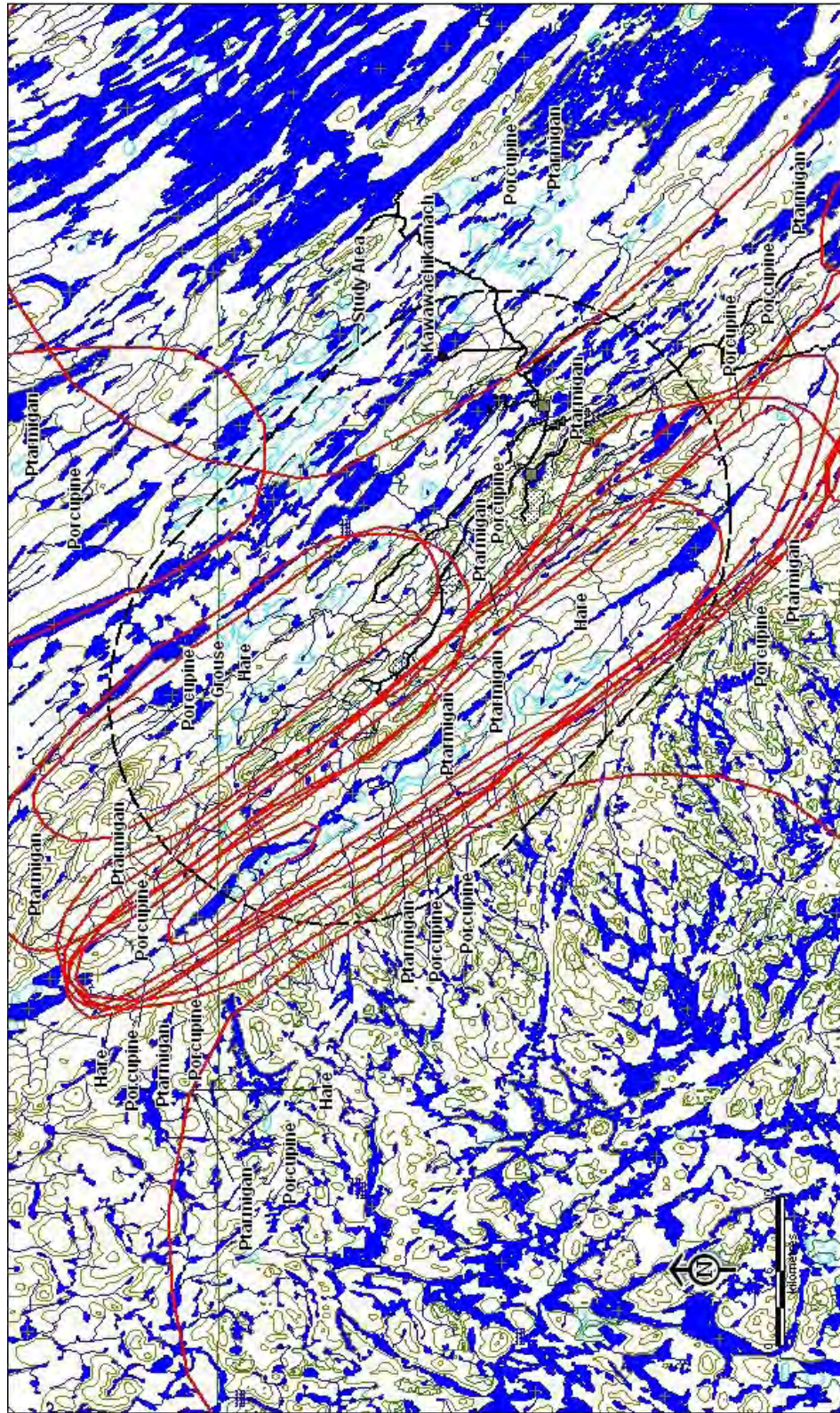


Fig. 18: Small Game Hunting, Howells River Survey 2006

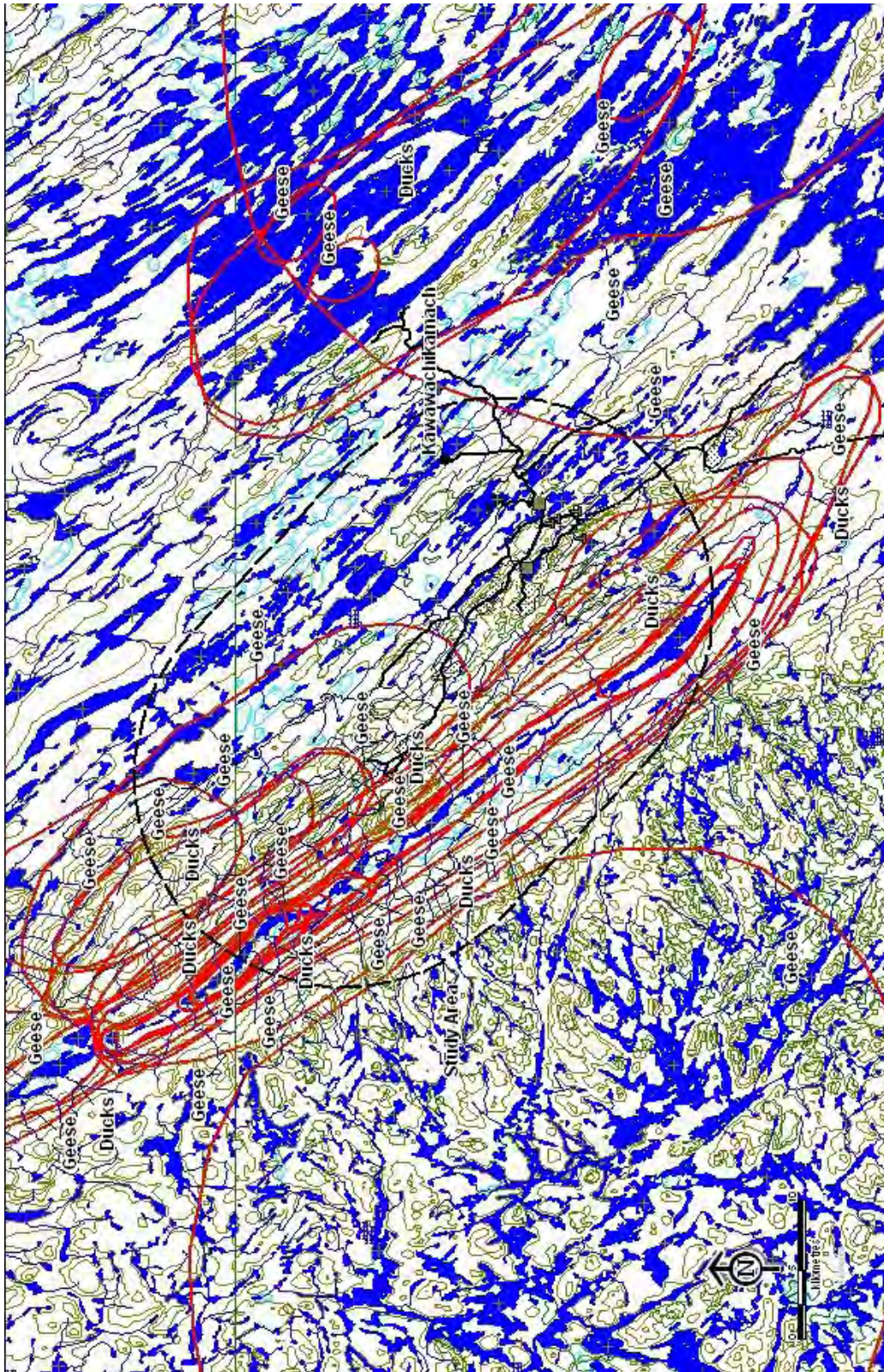


Fig. 19: Waterfowl Hunting, Howells River Survey 2006

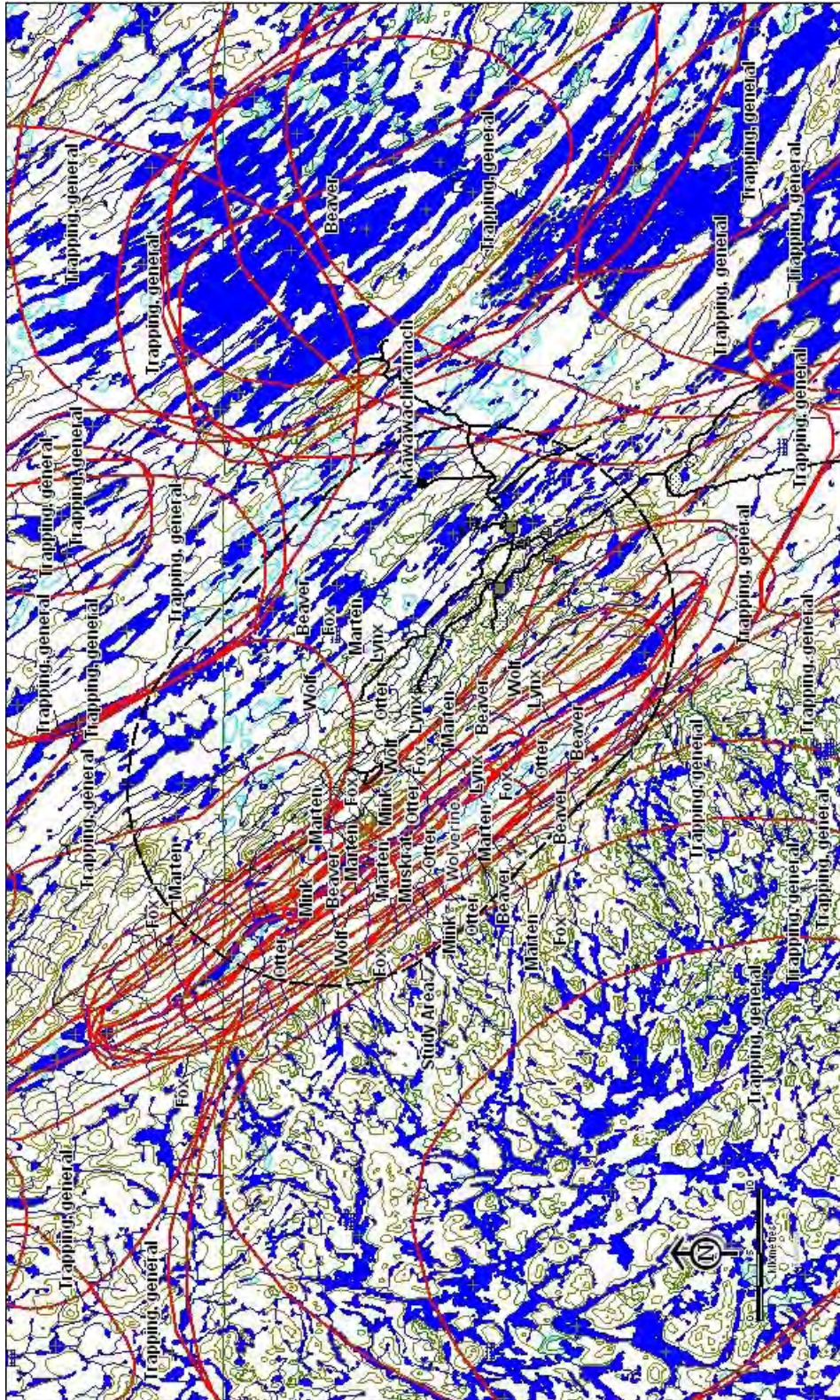


Fig. 20: Trapping, Howells River Survey 2006

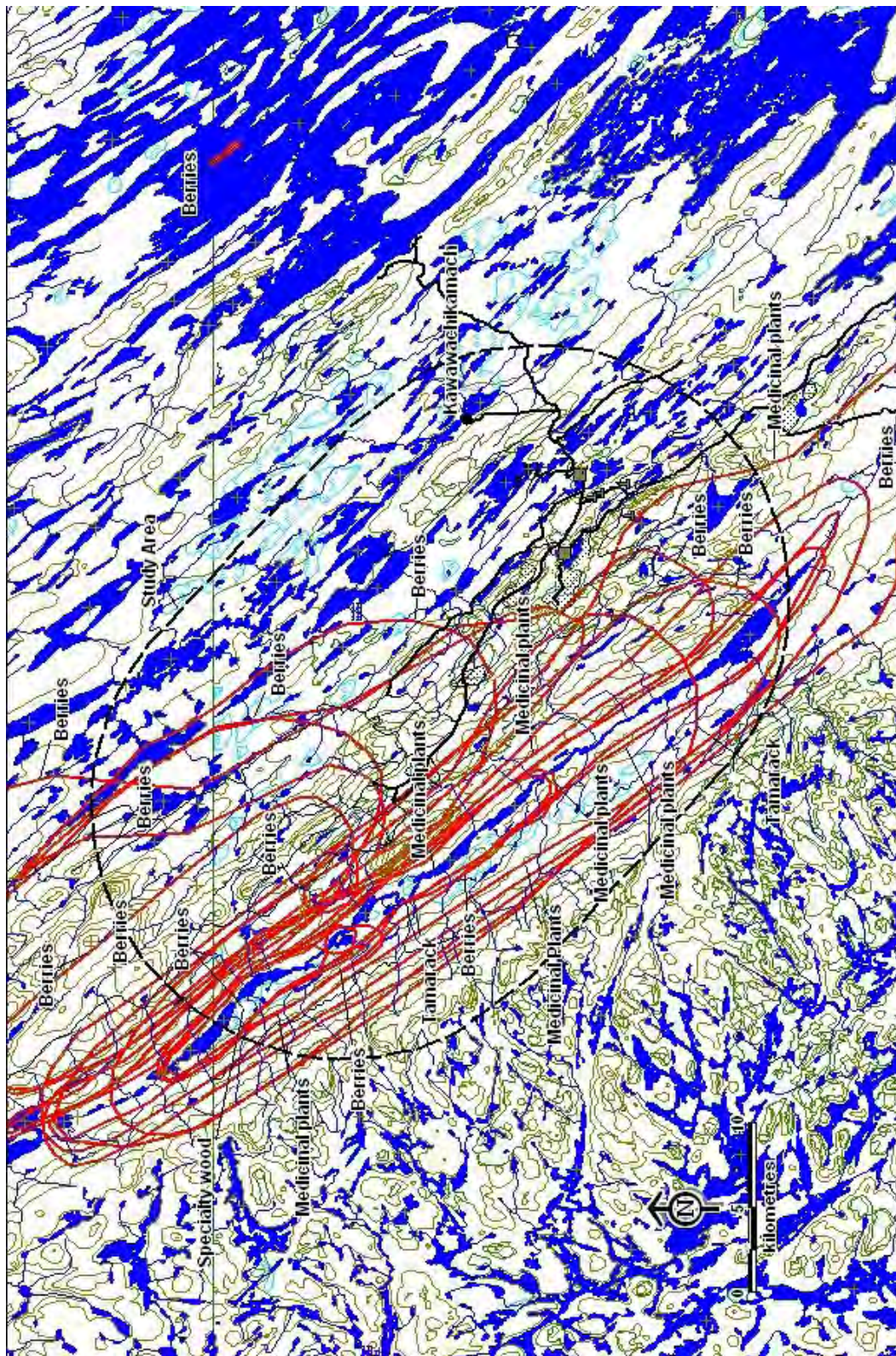


Fig. 21: Harvesting of Plant Resources, Howells River Survey 2006

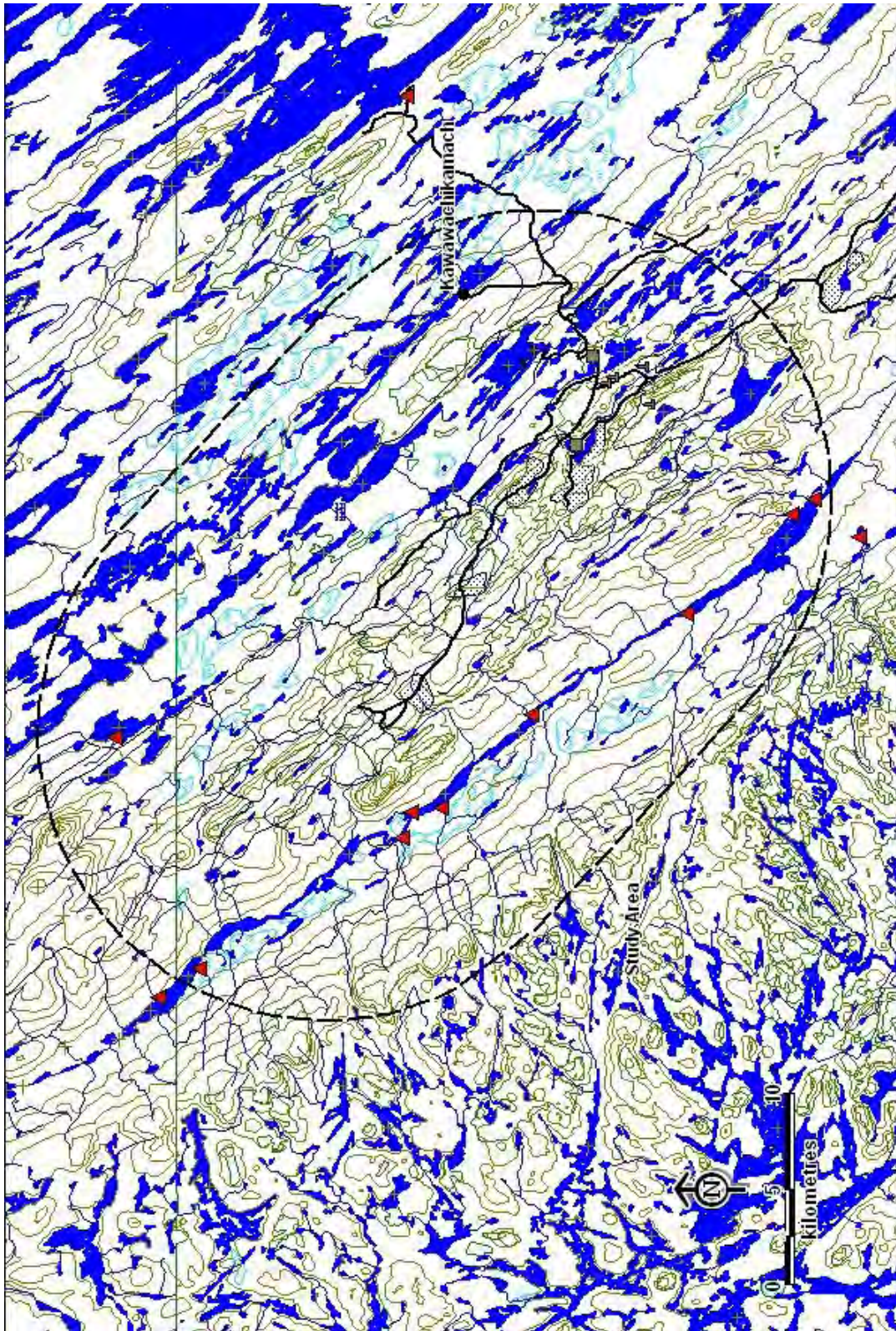


Fig. 22: Camp Sites, Howells River Survey 2006

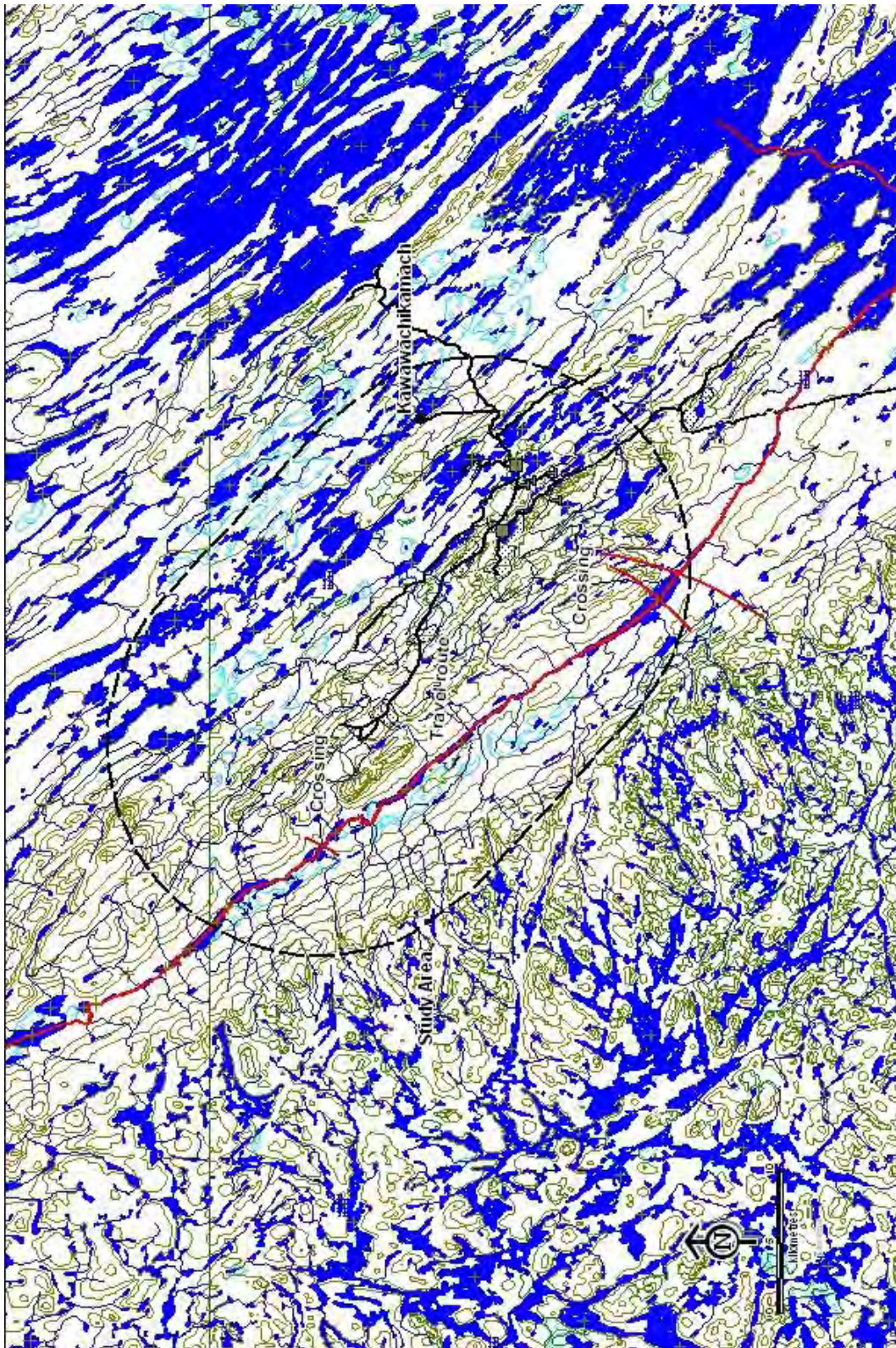


Fig. 23: Travel Routes, Howells River Survey 2006

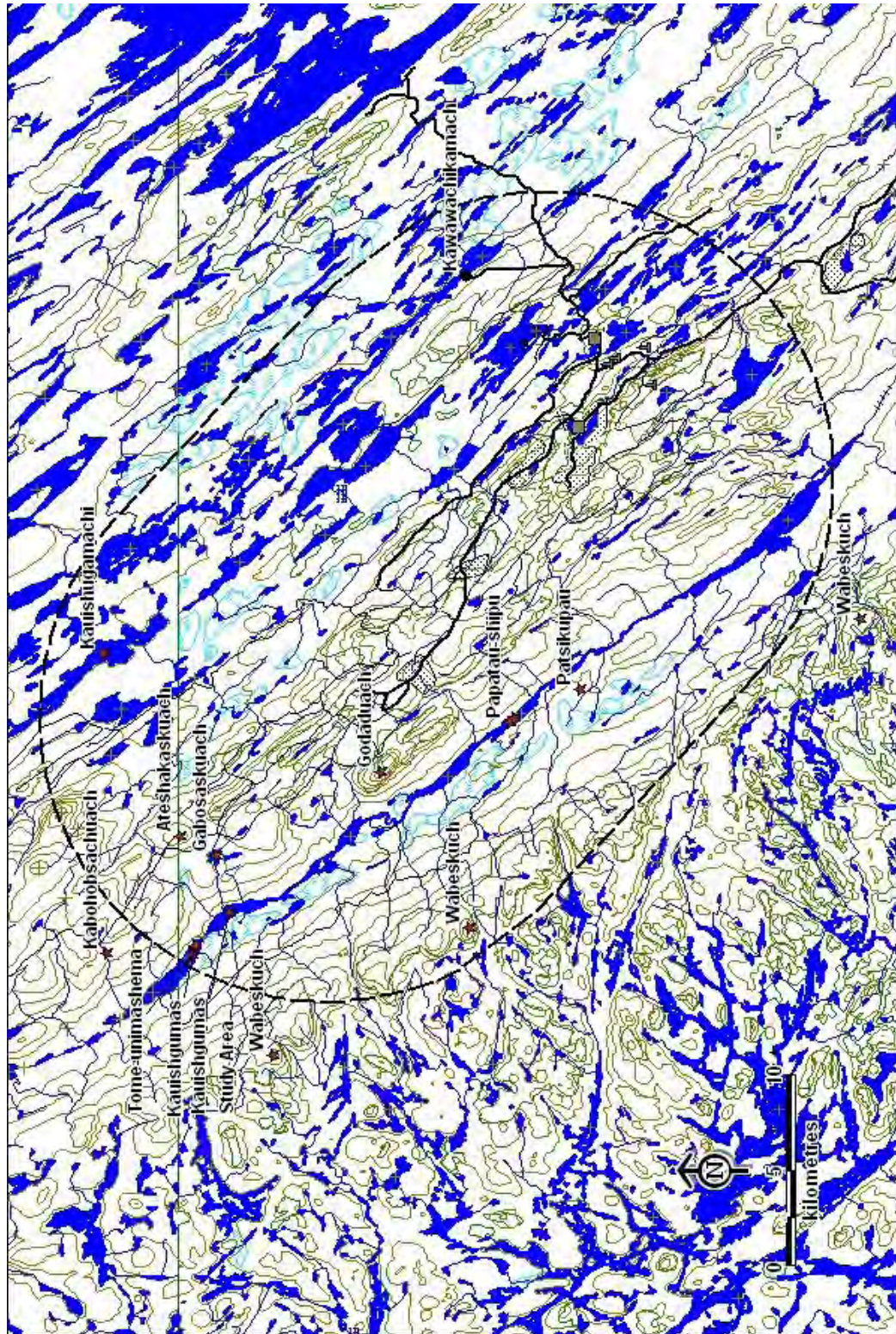


Fig. 24: Naskapi Toponyms, Howells River Survey 2006

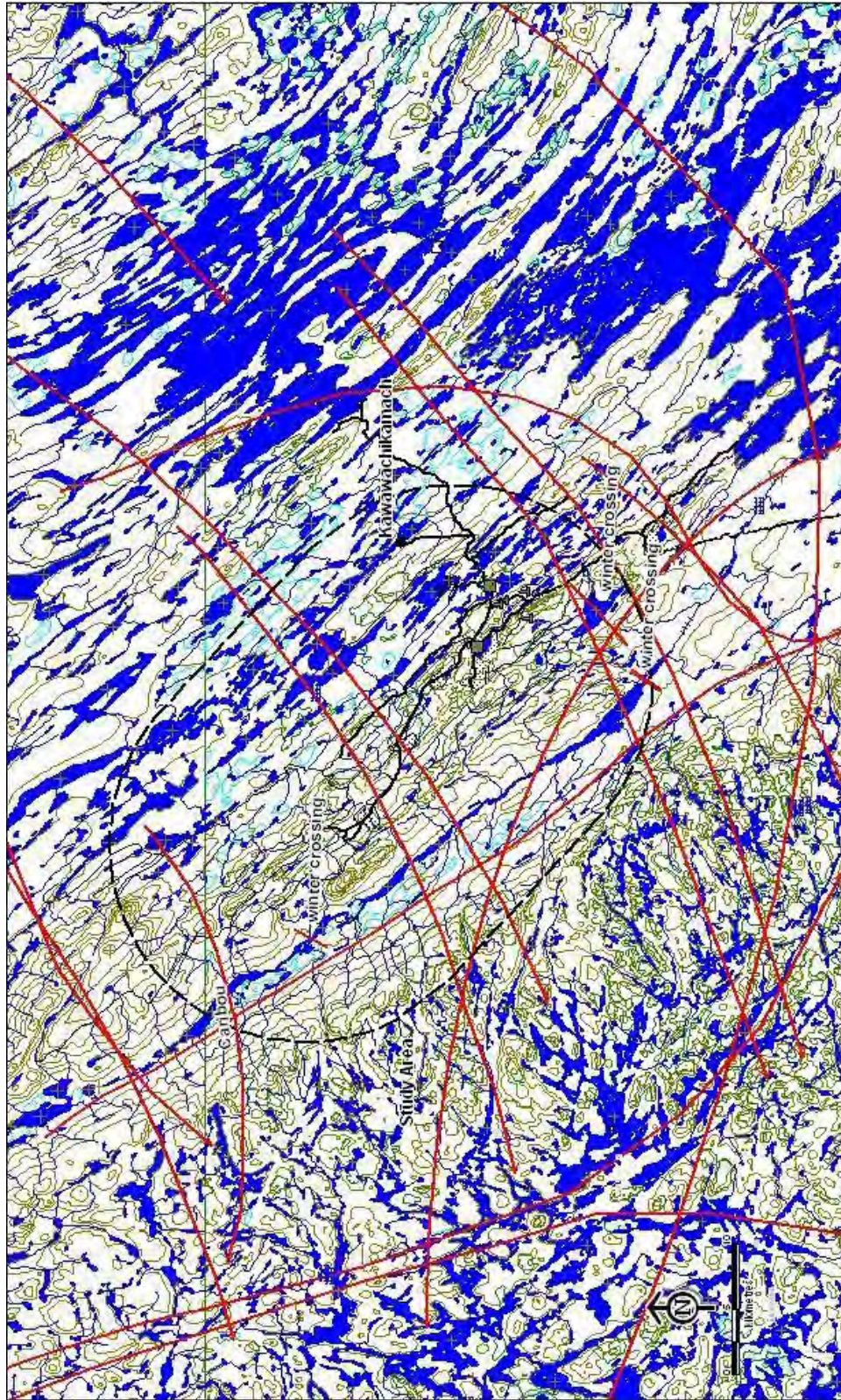


Fig. 25: Reported Pattern of Caribou Fall Migration, Howells River Survey 2006



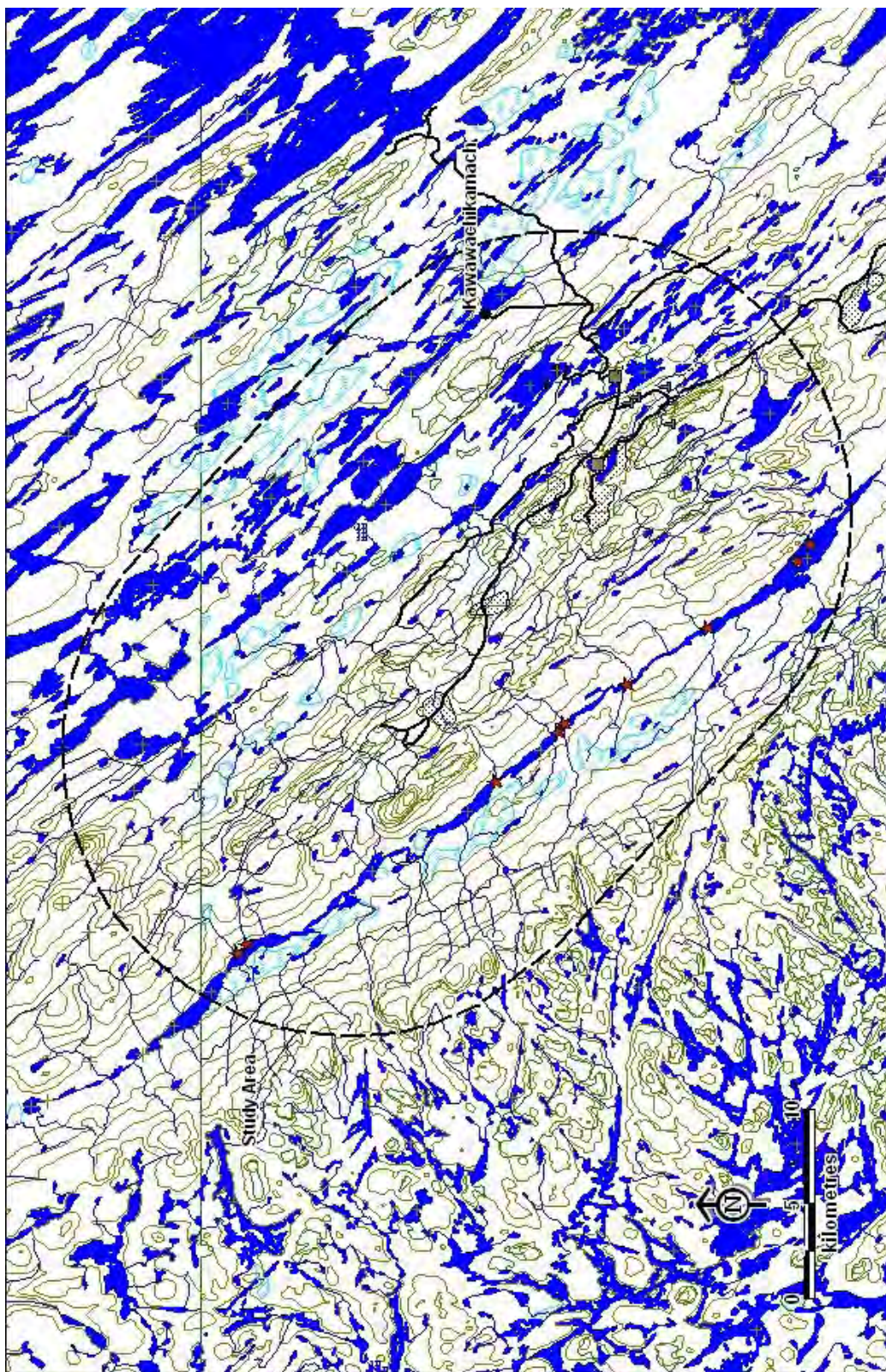


Figure 26: Ashkui

### 3. CONCLUSIONS: Naskapi Land Use in the Study Area

As the preceding discussion has shown, the resources of the Study Area figure significantly in the renewable resource sector of the Naskapi economy.

Harvesting activities along the Ridge have intensified drastically since the closure of the IOC mining operations, and even the adjacent Howells River valley has seen increased use since.

Both the Ridge and the Howells River valley are unique, in that they offer exceptional stores of resources without demanding from harvesters large investments of funds, time and effort.

The main resource provided along the Ridge is caribou, and it is available periodically in large enough numbers to sustain harvesting by a considerable portion of the community's hunters. Lacking exact harvest figures, the amount of country food thus provided by the resources of this area is estimated to amount to a significant portion of the community's overall caribou harvest.

The range of resources offered by the Howells River valley is much more varied, covering within a relatively small area virtually the entire spectrum of wildlife and plant species harvested in the traditional sector of the Naskapi economy. With different resources being available or in their prime at different seasons, the valley is an attractive resource area year-round.

Even though less information exists on recent land use activities in the Swampy Bay River basin, it is safe to say that the Swampy Bay River portion of the Study Area is also a valuable harvesting area. However, it offers the same resources as the remainder of the Swampy Bar/Ferrum River basin.

Both the Ridge and the Howells River valley are easily accessible by road which, during the snow-free season, represents a significant advantage over other resource areas within a comparable distance from the community.

With rapidly rising fuel and equipment costs over the past two decades thwarting long-distance individual as well as Hunter Support Program hunting excursions, resource areas that are accessible easily and cheaply have become increasingly important. These areas are able to provide access to food, traditional medicines and cash<sup>28</sup> to individuals with low incomes. It also allows hunters with part-time and even full-time employment to engage in harvesting activities during their off-time.

These areas have another important function. They serve as a training ground for the community's young generation. Due to children's school commitments and the multitude of distractions they experience in the community, and due to the fact that ever fewer adult Naskapi, for a variety of reasons, spend long periods in hunting camps away from the village, Naskapi parents today rarely have the opportunity to follow the traditional educational path of passing on their skills and knowledge in the setting of a hunting camp.

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<sup>28</sup> through income from fur or crafts sales based on local resources (specialty woods, leather, etc)

Having these exceptionally productive harvesting areas within easy reach also gives young hunters the opportunity to hone their skills and begin making a contribution to their families' income in country foods.

**Recommendation:**

Since, as stated above, the focus of the 2006 survey was the Ridge and the Howells River valley, there is an imbalance between the information available on those two areas and data relating to the Swampy Bay River portion of the Study Area.

I therefore recommend an additional round of data collection in order to correct this imbalance.

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