

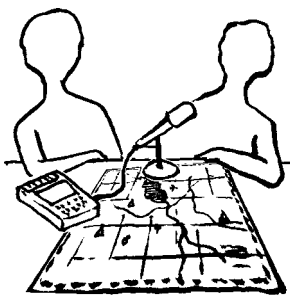


Map Biographies and Composites

Land use and occupancy projects typically collect data using what are called map biographies. These are face to face interviews with individuals who are asked questions about their use of the community's territory. Throughout the session the locations of the use and occupancy sites are indicated on a paper base map, or onto a clear overlay taped over the map. Usually the interviewer asks for information about the participants' experience of the land base or seascape over their entire lifetime. That is why it is referred to as a biography, although it might more correctly be thought of as an autobiography.

Most researchers focus on obtaining data pertaining only to the participant's direct personal activities and experiences. Others have found it useful also to ask for information about knowledge of sites obtained from parents and elders. If the interviewer covered enough topics and the participant had perfect memory and was willing to sit at the mapping table long enough, the resulting biography would represent everything that could be marked on a map. This of course never happens. What does emerge from the map biography is a useful but simple and incomplete representation of the participant's life story on the land and waters of the territory.

Some practitioners restrict their use of the map biography method to questions about harvesting activities like hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering, and travelling to engage in those activities. Others extend the

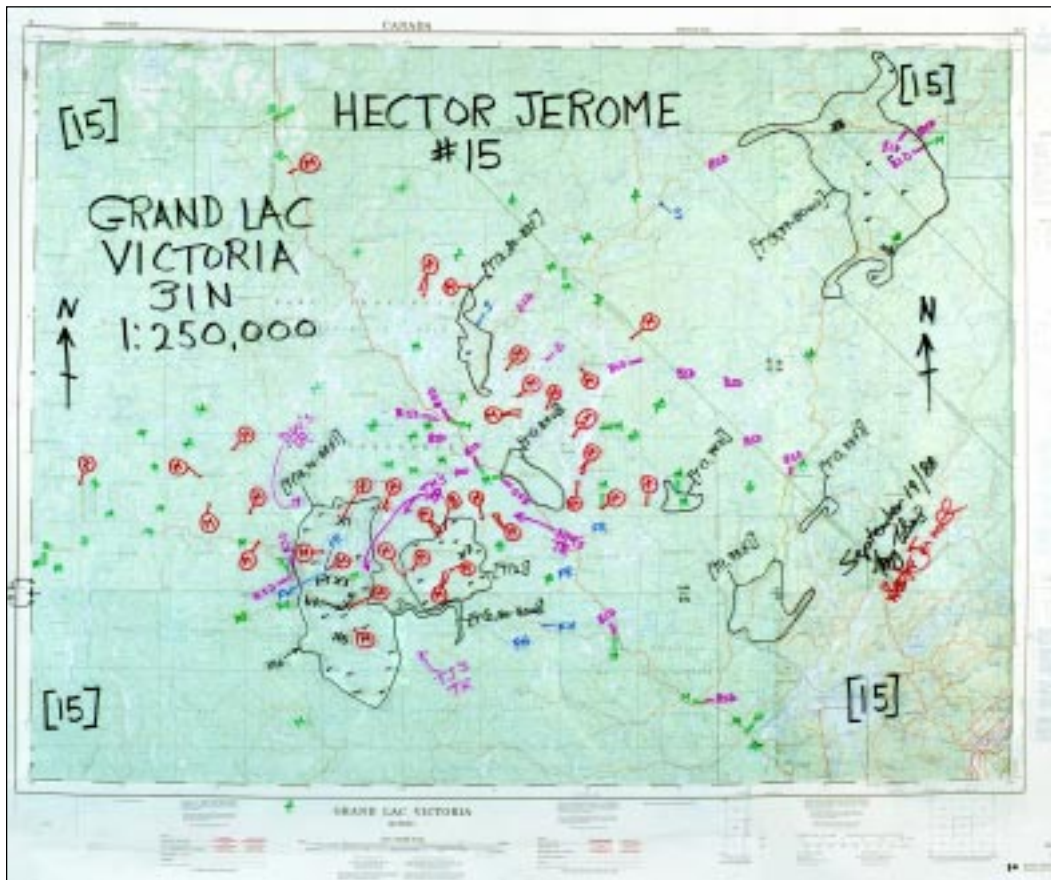


map biography method to cover questions about the participant’s experience and knowledge of ecology and critical wildlife habitat, traditional habitation sites, spiritual and sacred areas, legends and stories associated with sites, and aboriginal place names.

In the photograph to the right, Hector Jerome is getting ready to do his map biography. He is a member of the Algonquins of Barriere Lake, near Rapid Lake, Quebec. The community did a number of different use and occupancy mapping projects. It needed the information for a co-management agreement aimed at ensuring that the Algonquins would always be able to pursue traditional activities on their territory. Map 1 shows the data that were marked on Hector’s map biography during one of his interview sessions.



Hector Jerome prepares to do his map biography interview with the help of Scot Nickels and Sue Roark-Calnek.



MAP 1

This is one of Hector Jerome’s map biography overlays. The transparent overlay is taped to a mosaic of four National Topographic System paper base maps.

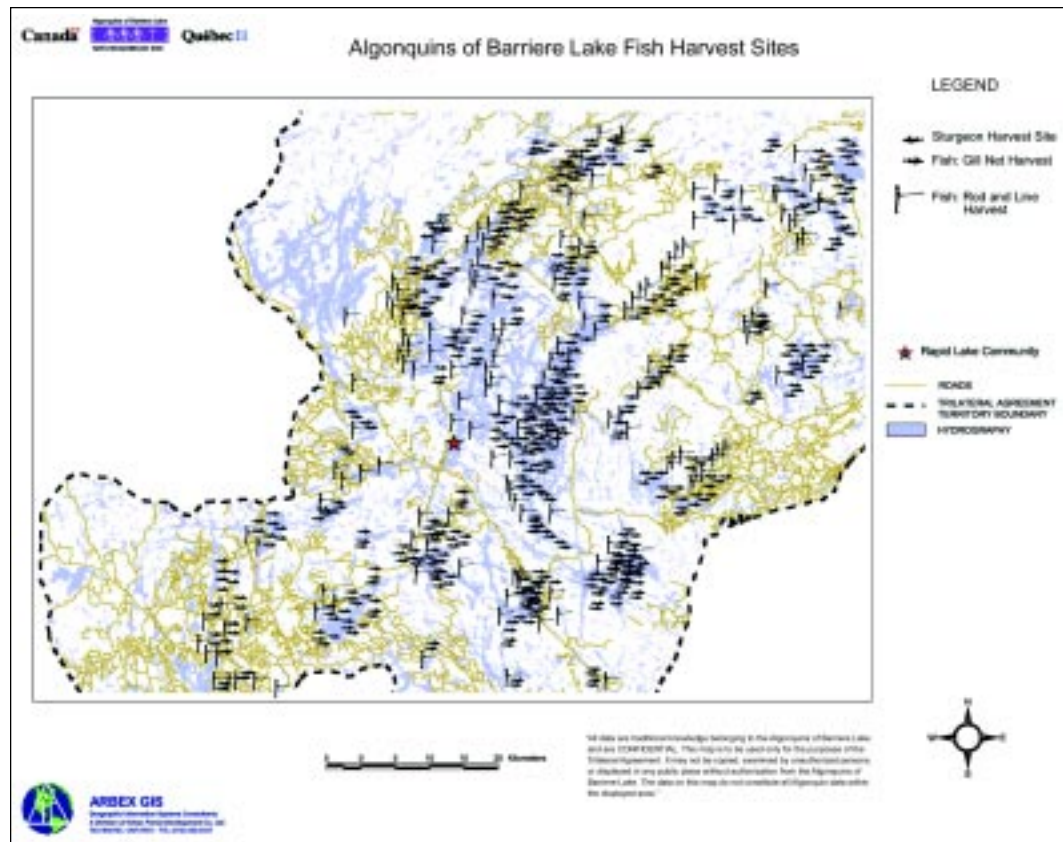
During that particular session, Hector was asked to indicate places where he had killed big game animals, small game, where he had caught fish, where he had done his trapping, gathered plant materials like berries, and the locations of cabins and camp sites he had used. In subsequent mapping sessions he recorded Algonquin place names and some of his main travel routes.

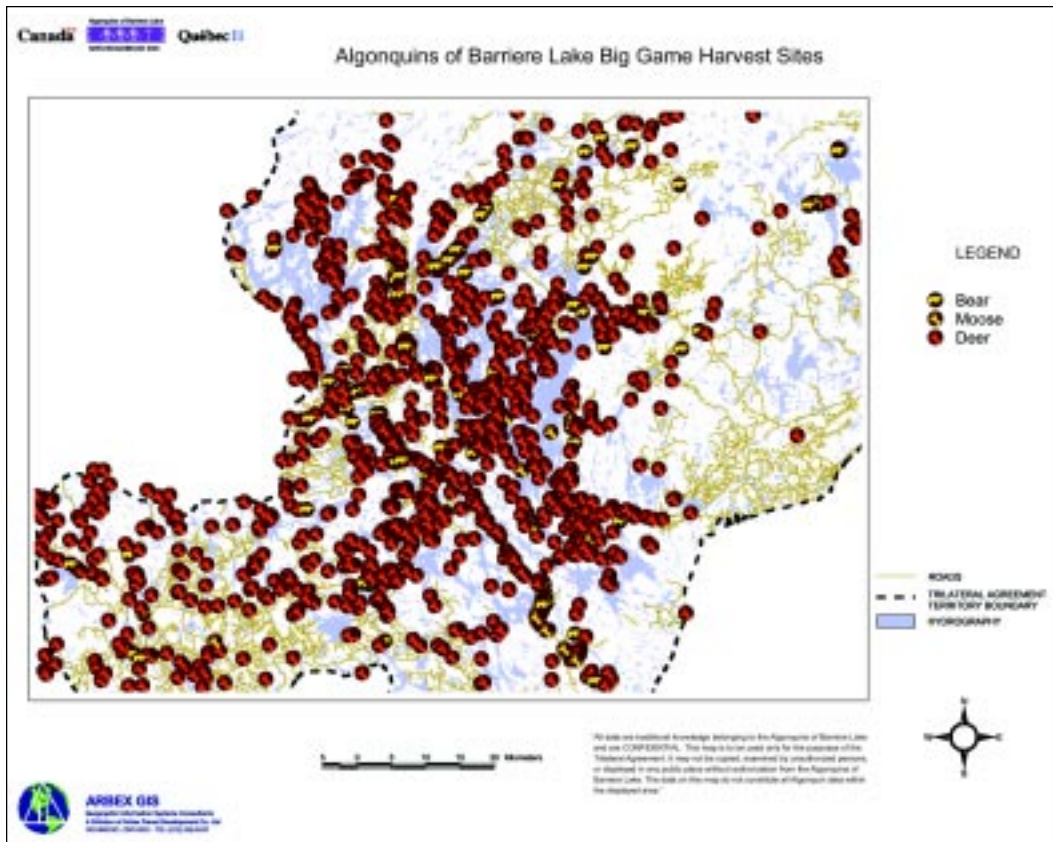
After some dozens or hundreds of map biographies are completed, the information from them is used to make a series of composite maps. These break out subsets of information provided in map biographies and combine them for all community members or for groups (teenagers, for example) in the community. The Algonquins of Barriere Lake project has produced the following seven map composites, which are preliminary and in draft form.

- ◆ Fish harvest sites
- ◆ Big game harvest sites
- ◆ Trapping areas
- ◆ Plant harvest sites, special wildlife sites, sacred areas
- ◆ Main travel routes
- ◆ Habitation sites
- ◆ Algonquin place names

MAP 2

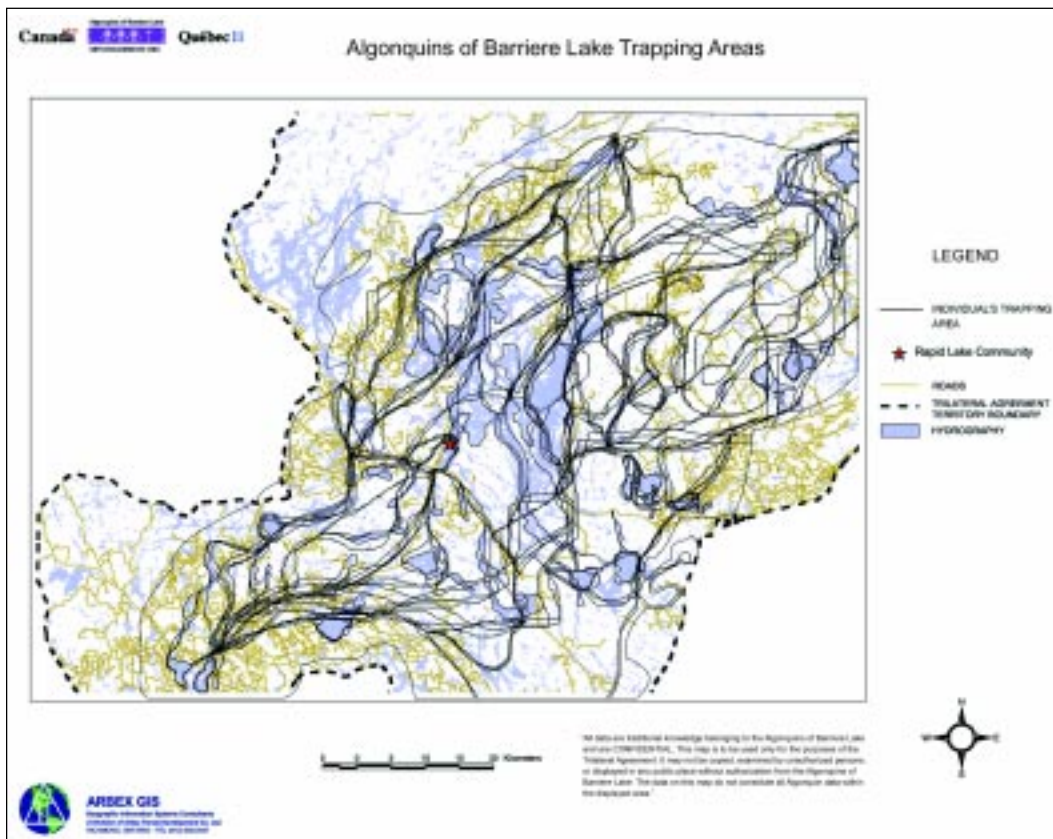
This composite shows some of the community's fish harvest sites. It displays a different symbol for each of sturgeon, fish caught in gill nets, and fish obtained by angling.





MAP 3

Some of the community's big game harvest sites are shown on this map. A different symbol is used for each of black bear, moose, and white-tailed deer.

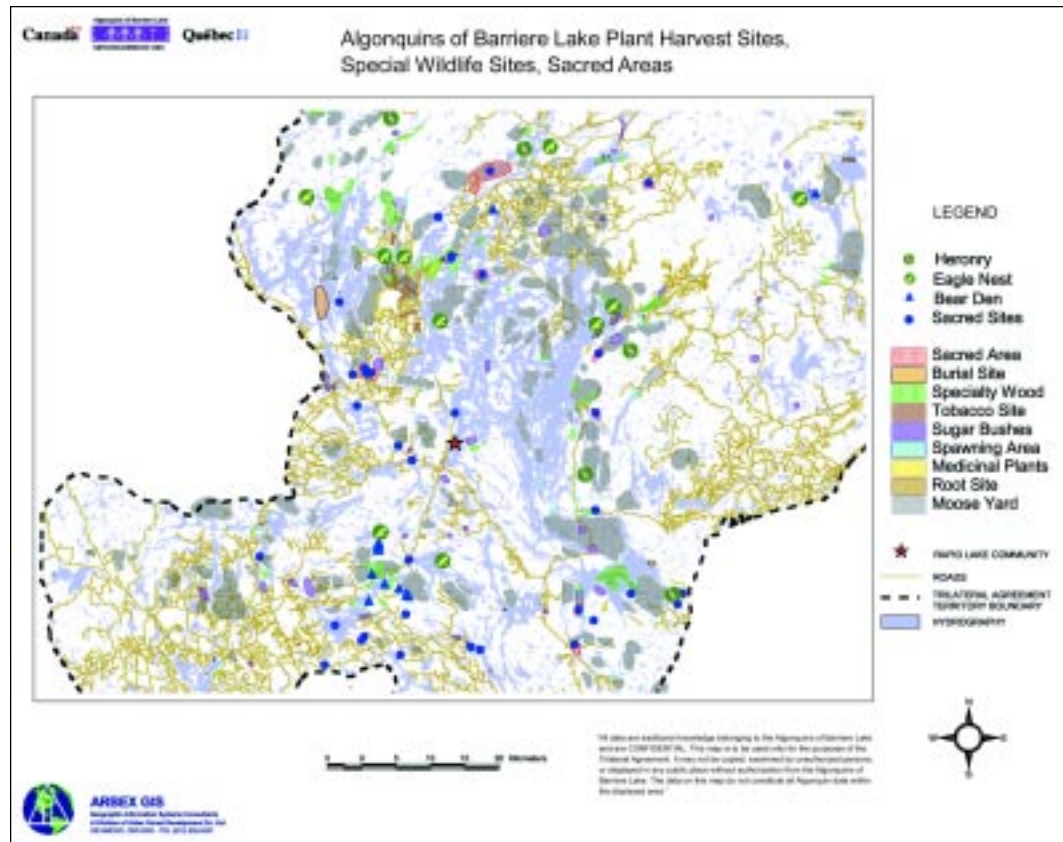


MAP 4

Each participant who had done any trapping indicated the areas trapped over their lifetime, and each of those areas is indicated on this composite as a polygon. The Algonquins call this their spaghetti map.

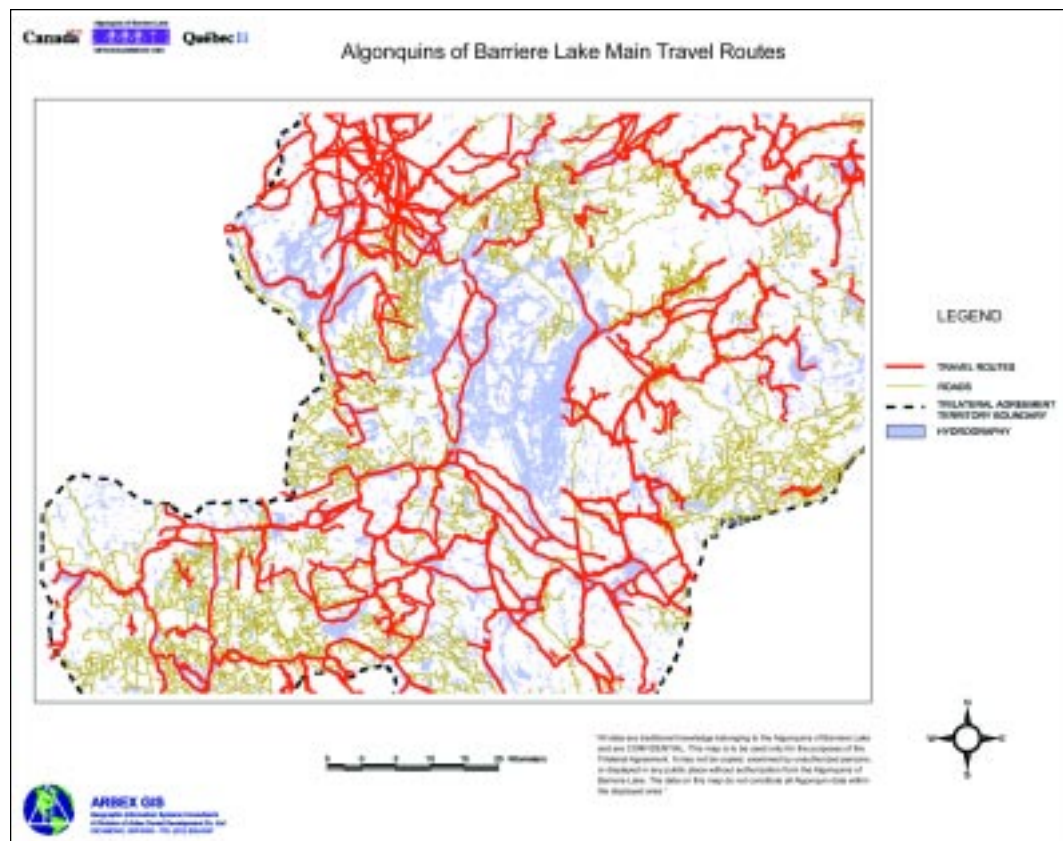
MAP 5

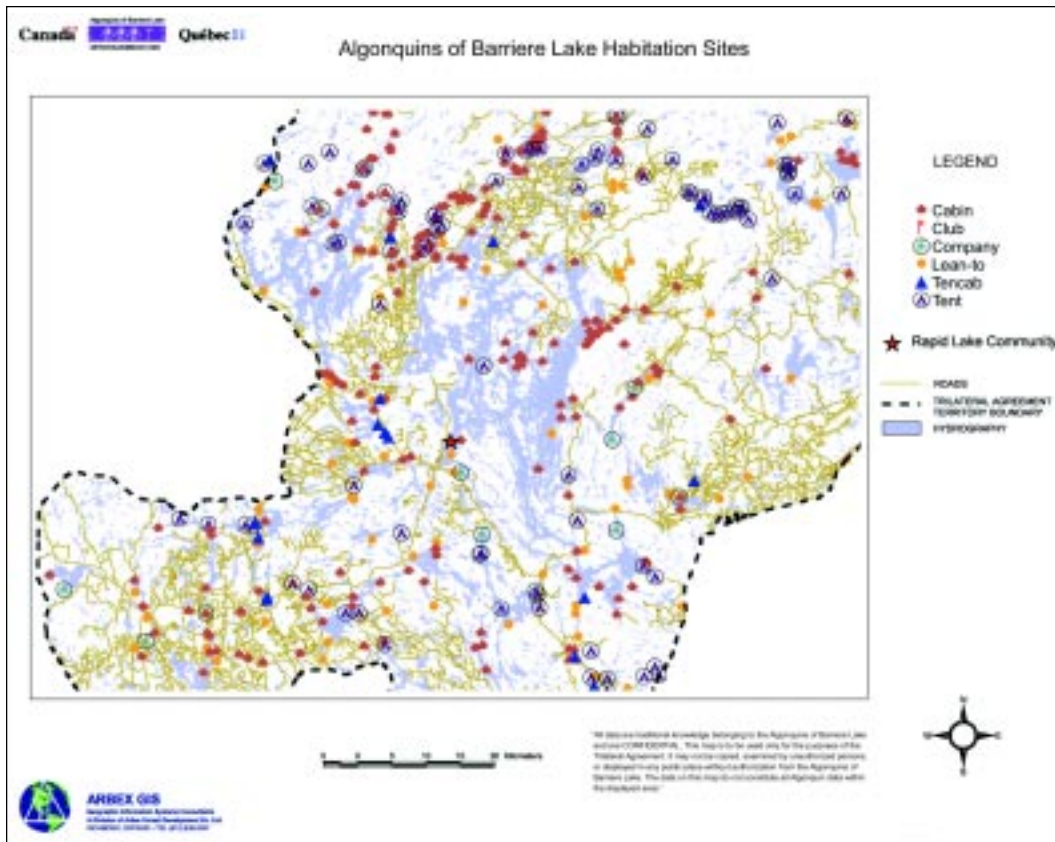
This composite shows some of the plant material harvest sites, special wildlife sites, and sacred areas. It displays a different symbol for each of the following: specialty wood, tobacco, sugar bush, medicine plant, root collecting, heronry, eagle nest, bear den, spawning site, winter moose use, sacred area, and burial site.



MAP 6

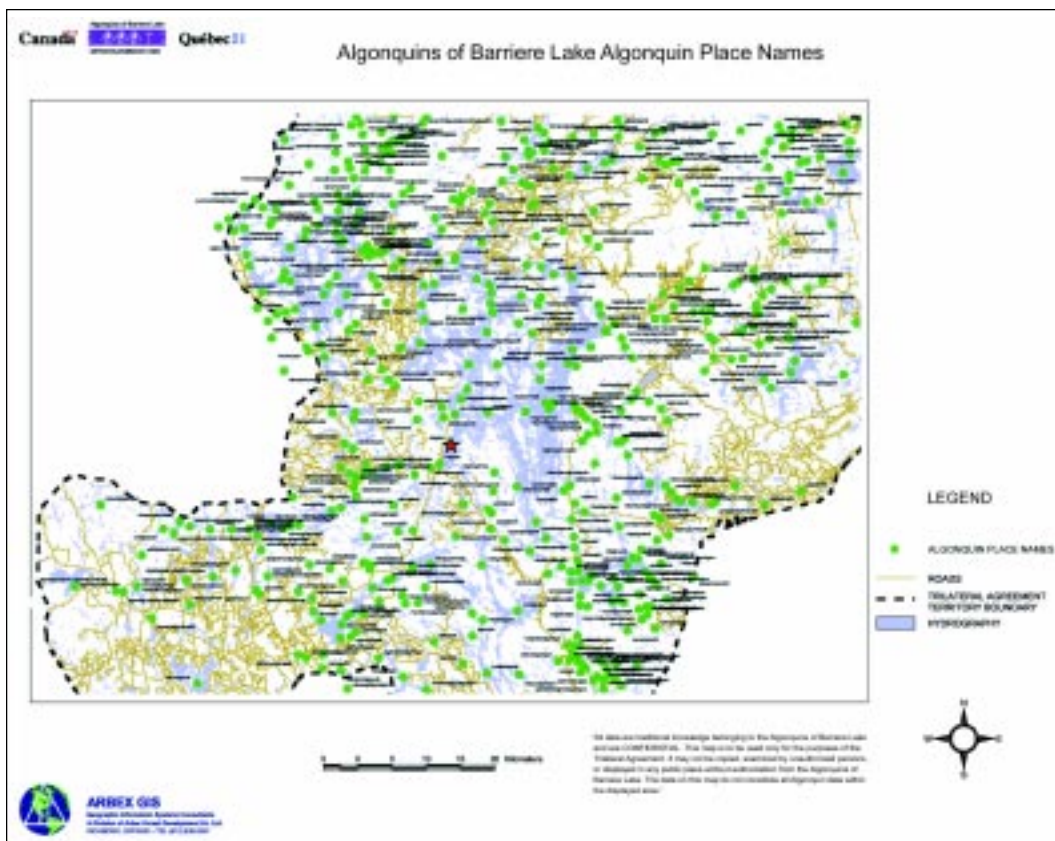
Some of the community's main travel routes are shown on this map.





MAP 7

This composite depicts some of the Algonquins' habitation sites. A different symbol is used for each of the following types of structures: trapper cabin, tourist camp, company building, lean-to, tent-cabin, and tent.



MAP 8

Approximately 900 Algonquin place names are displayed on this composite.

The categories for each composite change depending on what part of the country the mapping is being done for, which First Nation is doing it, and the intended uses of the maps. The Barriere Lake big game composite (Map 3) has three different symbols, one for each of moose, deer and black bear. In contrast, the Nahanni Butte Dene Band's big game composite might show symbols for each of moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, caribou, deer, black bear, and grizzly bear.

While the map biography is used for collecting an individual's use and occupancy information, the map composite is used for displaying or presenting the entire community's data. The biography is a data collection tool while the composites are what are used for presentation, education, negotiation, litigation, and so on.