



## Summary

The following are some recommendations that emerge from the discussion in this book.

- 1 If you are going to undertake land use and occupancy mapping, do it well. An inferior set of maps is unlikely to serve your community's interests. Be clear whether the priority is to use the data collection as an opportunity to produce maps that can help win long-term benefits, or to create short-term employment.
- 2 Develop a long-term strategic research plan and know where your land use and occupancy mapping fits into it. Make sure each research project builds on the strengths of previous ones, and pay attention to database compatibility. Any research component designed and undertaken in isolation from the others is likely to fall far short of its potential for concrete gains.
- 3 If you are going to use the data to identify territorial boundaries for purposes of land claims, consider whether it is in your best interest that the negotiations focus on maps based on occupancy data, in contrast to use data.
- 4 As part of your strategy, do your best to negotiate interim measures that give some protection to the kinds of features that your mapping project will cover, and to other categories of cultural features for which the project will not attempt to collect mapped data. Avoid the museum approach to mapping.

- 5 Find ways to maintain control of your map data to a level that meets your community's needs, and negotiate an information-sharing agreement that includes them.
- 6 Read the funding agency's instructional "how-to" materials with an eye to discovering all possible flexibility that can be used to your advantage. Avoid the invitations to fail that are often hidden in such guidelines, especially the invitation to design an overly-ambitious project that generates too much response burden.
- 7 Have the interviewers, transcribers, digitizers and other people doing each of the major mapping project tasks consult with each other on an ongoing basis and encourage their consultations to start as early as possible.
- 8 Budget realistically for all the mapping project tasks needed to obtain a quality research product. Avoid the mistaken assumption that data collection is the sole major expense.
- 9 Carefully define the project's basic parameters before you start data collection. It is all right to have multiple objectives as long as you have clearly identified one as primary. The study population, period covered by the mapping, study area, and interview guide are all defined with reference to that primary objective. Construct your interview guide carefully, keeping response burden in mind.
- 10 Refer to the principles of research design and data collection at every step of your mapping project.
  - ◆ Respect participants in a heartfelt manner, at all times.
  - ◆ Adopt official mechanisms that define what confidentiality looks like, in concrete terms, and follow through with honouring them.
  - ◆ Make sure that potential participants have the information needed for them to offer informed consent, and that they can withdraw from the process at any time.
  - ◆ Maintain a workable focus by being realistic about the number of themes you attempt to map in a single project, and by being selective in constructing the interview guide so the average session is not too long.
  - ◆ Be flexible in the administration of the interview guide while also maintaining sufficient focus, "sufficient" being that which ensures the primary objective is finally met.
  - ◆ Have all interviewers follow the same methodology in a highly consistent manner.
  - ◆ Stay organized so that you can set up for interviews quickly, track raw data easily, and have the project notebook material you need to write a quality methodology report.



*Elder Martin Smith of Pinehouse is shown skinning a mink on his trapline in northern Saskatchewan. For many aboriginal communities the mapping of the areas their members have trapped is important because trapping has been a key economic activity for many decades, and numerous other harvesting activities have been done in association with trapping. Fur-bearers continue to be an important source of both dollar income and edible meat for many First Nation families.*

- ◆ If you are going to err in the recording of data, err on the side of caution.
  - ◆ Design your current use and occupancy research to obtain as much self-reported data as possible, and in a way that lets you sort out which data were reported secondhand.
  - ◆ Tape record the interviews and design other aspects of data collection and record-keeping in a way to ensure good integrity of data, which allows you to track the source of any particular datum.
  - ◆ Train your interviewers to think in terms of data diamonds, which will give your maps historical depth, and provide concrete evidence of longtime use and occupancy.
  - ◆ Have fun, and find ways to celebrate the process.
- 11** Keep the measures of data quality in mind at every step of your project.
- ◆ Ensure good reliability by carefully designing the methodology, administering it in a consistent manner, and providing a thorough written account.
  - ◆ Ensure good validity by having interviewers be clear about the nature of the data that are being sought, by having a well-constructed interview guide that uses carefully selected definitions and key words, and by having data collectors who convey those definitions to participants and consistently use those key words.
  - ◆ Define what level of accuracy and which data collection scale best suit your needs, and also how much verification of accuracy is needed, and when. Be realistic about the strengths and limitations of the various map scales for data collection purposes.
  - ◆ Ensure good representativeness by making the criteria that determine who is a member of the study population consistent with the primary objective of the mapping project, and by achieving a high coverage rate.
  - ◆ Help achieve your objectives by having composites that are of demonstrably high quality. Make them a positive factor in reconciliation processes, by generating understanding and consensus. Composites that are reliable, valid, accurate, and representative are not likely to be controversial.
- 12** Do whatever is necessary to inform your people about the project, address concerns about issues like confidentiality, and develop a consensus that the project is in the best interests of all families. Have this consensus in place before data collection starts.
- 13** Find a research director who has a track record of having worked with aboriginal communities on cultural research projects, having earned their trust, and having produced useful product.

- 14 Select your team of interviewers with attention to their commitment, interpersonal skills, community respect, sobriety, map reading, use of the indigenous language, ability to interview in a probing manner, familiarity with culture and harvesting systems, willingness to pay close attention to detail, and reading and writing skills.
- 15 Obtain the training your interviewers will need to do a good job at data collection.
- 16 Be prepared to provide your community interviewers with all the political, material, and moral support they need. Designate a staff member who has the skills and time to help with the problems that interviewers will face from time to time.
- 17 Make it as easy as possible for your interviewers to remain focused on data collection, the single most important task for the success of the research and the task they have been trained to do. Respect their limitations and do not invite failure by having them take on responsibilities unrelated to data collection.
- 18 Ensure that the project strengthens the community's culture of research by creating a groundswell of understanding about the study, designing it carefully and avoiding excessive response burden, actively supporting the interviewers, following through on promises to participants, holding well-planned verification meetings, celebrating project completion and thanking participants, making the research products accessible, and keeping people informed about how the research findings are used.



In summary, implementing effective land use and occupancy research does not have to be the complicated and hit-and-miss process that has sometimes been the experience of First Nation communities. You can have a winner every time. The above recommendations will get you headed in the right direction, and if you do your best to be uncompromising on data quality, you will have maps that your elders and other members will be proud of.

And you will have maps that will help your government in its dealings with outside agencies and industry. This is a certainty. When competent leaders, negotiators and litigators have quality research in hand, the power balance at the negotiating table or court shifts in your favour. The take-home message of this guidebook is very simple. Settle only for good quality land use and occupancy maps. Your nation and your grandchildren deserve nothing less.

Implementing effective land use and occupancy research does not have to be a complicated and hit-and-miss process ... you can have a winner every time.



*Kids being kids, in Pinehouse, on the Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan. Doing a good job with your use and occupancy research is ultimately related to notions about the well-being of your children and their descendants. Whatever we do in life, and how we do it, is linked to the kind of world and the nature of the rights we want our children to inherit.*