

Letter of D.H. Learmontt, Gogama, Ontario, to Dr. F.G. Speck, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 2 Oct 1928
Library, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pa, Frank G Speck Papers, 572.97 Sp 3, II F 4

There is little doubt that you have small expectation of getting the map you desired of the Mattagami Bands hunting grounds. Really it has been a much more difficult task than I anticipated, nor has it been very well done.

Mr [James] Miller gave the job up as hopeless and I had done the same until a day or two ago when I found a man who could supply at least part of the information required. So, since half a loaf is better than no bread I am now forwarding you the little that it has been possible to gather. When approached for information all of the Indians referred to the Chief as the only one capable of giving the facts. He claimed that he knew every inch of the old hunting lands, with all their boundaries, and promised to fill them in on the map supplied but never did so, bringing forward first one excuse and then another, until finally he returned to his winter hunting ground, having done nothing in the matter. Several times I had him in the office with the map you sent, but could get so little out of him that eventually I gave him a large sheet of paper and told him to draw an Indian map of the territory, thinking, that as is often the case with Indians, he found the township lines and other markings on the published map confusing. But in this I had no better luck. In the end I discovered that the old chap was afraid to give us any information about the hunting lands as he thought it some scheme of the "Americans" to steal their lands finally from the Indians.

A few days ago I had a little better luck with one of the younger men who marked on the map the outlines of as much of the hunting territories of the Mattagami Band as he knew. He was quite definite as to the Southern portion of the band's territories but not clear as to the North, except that the land on both banks of the Mattagami River as far north as the main line of the C.N.R. and some distance beyond, belonged to the Mattagami Band and is still in part hunted by members of the Band who no longer visit Gogama, but now trade at Timmins or Cochrane. Parts of the Southern section are also no longer hunted by Mattagami Indians, the original owners having died or removed to other localities.

Taking the territories as numbered:

1. Present hunting lands of Chief James Neveau [Naveau]. May not be original hunting land.
2. Present lands of Thos. Naveau.
3. Now hunted by Wm Blackbirch (Matatchewan Indian), acquired through marriage to daughter of Charles Neveau (dead)
4. Now hunted by Wm Neveau, but not his original lands. See 7
5. Sam Luke, acquired from his father Andrew Luke. At one time belonged to Chief James Neveau.
6. Joseph Moore.

7. William Neveau. This is his original hunting lands, but he has not hunted here for some years. Occasionally trapped by his son's Sidney and Louis.
8. Belonged to Mattagami band originally, but now trapped by whites. My informant could not recollect who it originally belonged to, but thinks it was Alex Langvin [Langevin].
9. Andrew Luke, a James Bay Cree who acquired it through his first wife.
- 10)
- 11) Use to belong to Andrew Luke and Old Chicken, now full of lumbermen and white trappers
12. Bob Marten (now dead)
13. Koheeny
14. At one time belonged to old Mattagami hunter now dead, now trapped by whites and wandering Indians.
15. Old Mattagami lands, still in part trapped by Mattagami Indians who no longer come south to Gogama.

Possession of lands passed from father to son but occasionally a hunter would present his son in law with part of his land.

But in regard to this, the inheritance of property, it seems to me that here, as was also the case at Waswanippi, as tradition weakened and tribal organisation broke up, the stronger willed and more selfish individuals have managed to oust their less "progressive" neighbours and grab more than their share of territory. In this manner, daughters with their husbands have in several instances supplanted their brothers. In this manner Blackbirch or rather his wife came into possession of territory No 3. Chief James Neveaus present lands may also have been acquired in the same way.

I am sorry that it is possible only to give you such scrappy information, but the only way to get the full details is to spend a month or two of the summer in a canoe trip through the country with some old Indian as guide. Then as one passed through the different hunting lands it would probably be possible to get fuller information.

As to birch bark baskets and such like, I have tried hard to get them but without success. I was anxious to get some for myself and a model birch bark canoe but could not get them at any price.

old Michel managed to get two bone snowshoe netting needles made for you, which are enclosed. Bone scrapers and such were not to be had.

As the lake has been in flood all summer I was never able to explore the beach where it is reported worked flints are yet to be found.

However do not hesitate to write for anything I may be able to do or get I'll do my best for you, and I am rather interested in your subjects myself, though I have less time to spend in them here than is usual at a H.B.C. Post. The book you sent me on the bear cult was very interesting, but I was a wee bit disappointed at not receiving the salutrean or Magdalenian flints which you said you might be able to send.