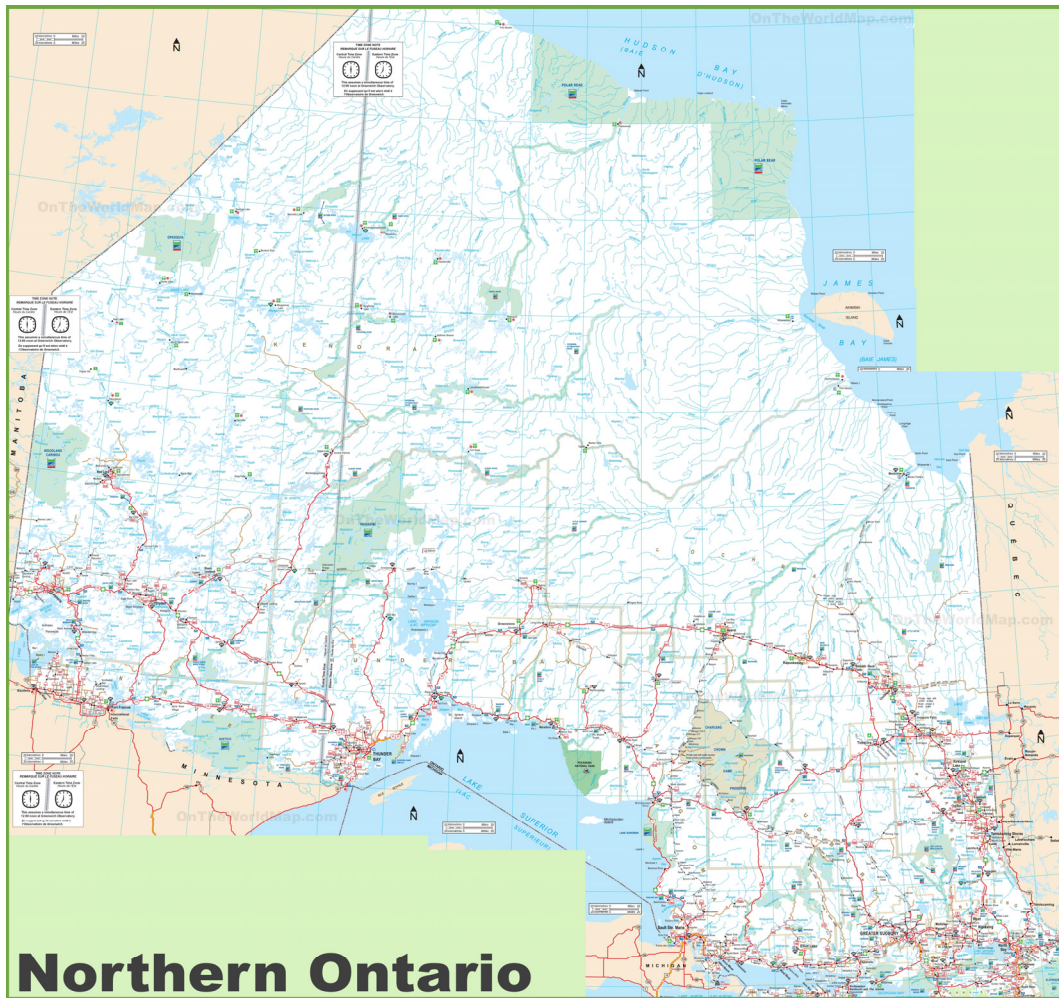


# NAMING LAKES IN NORTHERN ONTARIO (1983)

by Rutherford

From 1982-83, I worked for the Ontario Provincial Ministry of Natural Resources and was assured by a senior civil servant of the truth of the following:

The north of the Canadian province of Ontario has the highest concentration of freshwater lakes of any area on Earth, many of which, as late as the 1950s, were designated on official government documents only by their grid references. In the 1950s, it was decided that these lakes ought to be given proper names.



<http://ontheworldmap.com/canada/province/ontario/large-detailed-map-of-northern-ontario.html>

In a gesture to (what would later come to be called) Political Correctness, it was recognised that, as the First Nations peoples (or, more properly, the Great Turtle Islanders) already had names for these lakes, it would be both appropriate – and simpler – to record these as the official names rather than arbitrarily assign new ones. A civil servant was duly dispatched to the north of the province with instructions to visit each lake with a local First Nations guide, ask for the names used by the local nation, and transcribe these phonetically into English.

After spending several months travelling from one lake to another, asking the guides “So, what is the name of this lake?” and then recording phonetically the answer he was given, the bureaucrat eventually returned to Toronto with a comprehensive list of names which were then incorporated into the provincial maps.

As a result of this initiative, there are now two lakes in northern Ontario, the names of which translate back into English as “I don’t know the name of that lake” and “I don’t know the name of that one either”.