

The Hutterites in North America: confronting the digital age

John C. Lehr
Senior Scholar
University of Winnipeg

Who are the Hutterites?

- German-speaking pacifist Anabaptists
- Belief in "Community of goods."
- A product of the Reformation in Europe
- Persecuted for their beliefs
 - Carinthia
 - Ukraine
 - United States of America (1874-6)
 - Canada 1918-19

Hutterite migrations in Europe



Hutterite Surnames

1. Entz
2. Glanzer
3. Gross
4. Hofer
5. Kleinsasser
6. Maendel
7. Stahl
8. Tschetter
9. Waldner
10. Walter
11. Wipf
12. Decker
13. Wollman
14. Wurz

Since migration to the New World very few (if any) have joined and remained in the community.

The leute

- **Lehrerleut** [regarded as the most conservative leut]
- **Dariusleut**
- **Schmiedeleut** [regarded as the most liberal leut]
 - since mid 1990s
 - Group 1 (More liberal "Kleinsasser" colonies)
 - Group 2 (More conservative colonies)

The Hutterite colony

- Has about 70-150 people (10-12 families)
- Usually relies on agriculture.
- Most farm between 5000 – 8500 acres
- Family units reside separately but live, eat and work communally.

Starlight Colony, Manitoba



James Valley Colony



Maxwell colony, Manitoba



Crystal Spring Colony, Manitoba



Houses are single family homes



James Valley
(Schmiedeleut)

Hillcrest (Dariusleut)



The Hutterite colony:

- Is seen by Hutterites as an Ark in a secular and sinful sea.
- Thus the colony seeks social and physical isolation from the world
- Total isolation is not possible but partial isolation was achieved
 - Provides for all needs: food, clothing, meals and accommodations when travelling, etc. Schmiedeleut members receive a \$3.00 monthly allowance for discretionary spending, Dariusleut get \$20.00 but no meal allowance when off the colony.

The Regulations and Conference Letters from 1772 until the Present Time

- Only pertain to the Schmiedeleut.
- Written in (High) German



Ordnungen und Konferenz Briefen 28 December 2007

4) **Computers.** Auch die Computers müssen aus dem Häuser getan werden. In Haus sein sie nur erlaubt beim Haushalter und Weinzedel, und wo es mit Ältesten und Kirchen Rat zu gelassen wird. Die aber von den Amtsleut gebraucht, sollen in die Stall sein, und nicht mit D.V.D. attachments da Bames und Videos gebraucht werden, welches große Sünde mit sich bringt. In Haus sollen wir uns mit Weib und Kinder bemühen, und nicht sich freiheit nehmen ein Computer anschaffen, und die Eltern oder die Kinder auf den Computer spielen und zeit vergeiden. Wo kein Gehör oder Erfolg ist, soll untersucht und gestraft werden.

4) Computers. The computers must also be done away with. They shall only be allowed in the houses of the colony manager and farm manager and where it is permitted by the council of the eldest and the church. Those that are being used by the Amtsleut⁷⁹ shall be in the barn and not be used with games, video and DVD *attachments*, as they bring great sin with it. In our homes we shall engage our wives and children and not take the liberty to acquire a computer, because parents and children can then play on the computer and waste time. Where nobody listens to this or obeys this, the matter shall be investigated and punished.

And there are theological concerns too

The taking of pictures is also being practiced as if it were permitted, and it is practiced without thought or shyness, although God has strictly forbidden it and all those who overstep this, overstep God's order and cannot escape unscathed.

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Strategies for social isolation

- Language
- Dress codes
- Colony locations
 - Rural
 - Screened from view
 - Away from major highways
 - Seldom signed (never officially)
 - Not named on Canadian topographic maps although named on US maps.

Dress

- A kind of uniform that separates them from the “English”
- Represents Hutterite values
- Varies between the leute
- Changes only slowly



Women's dress (Schmiedeleut)



Male clothing (Schmiedeleut)



No belts.
No back pockets
No buttons
No zippers

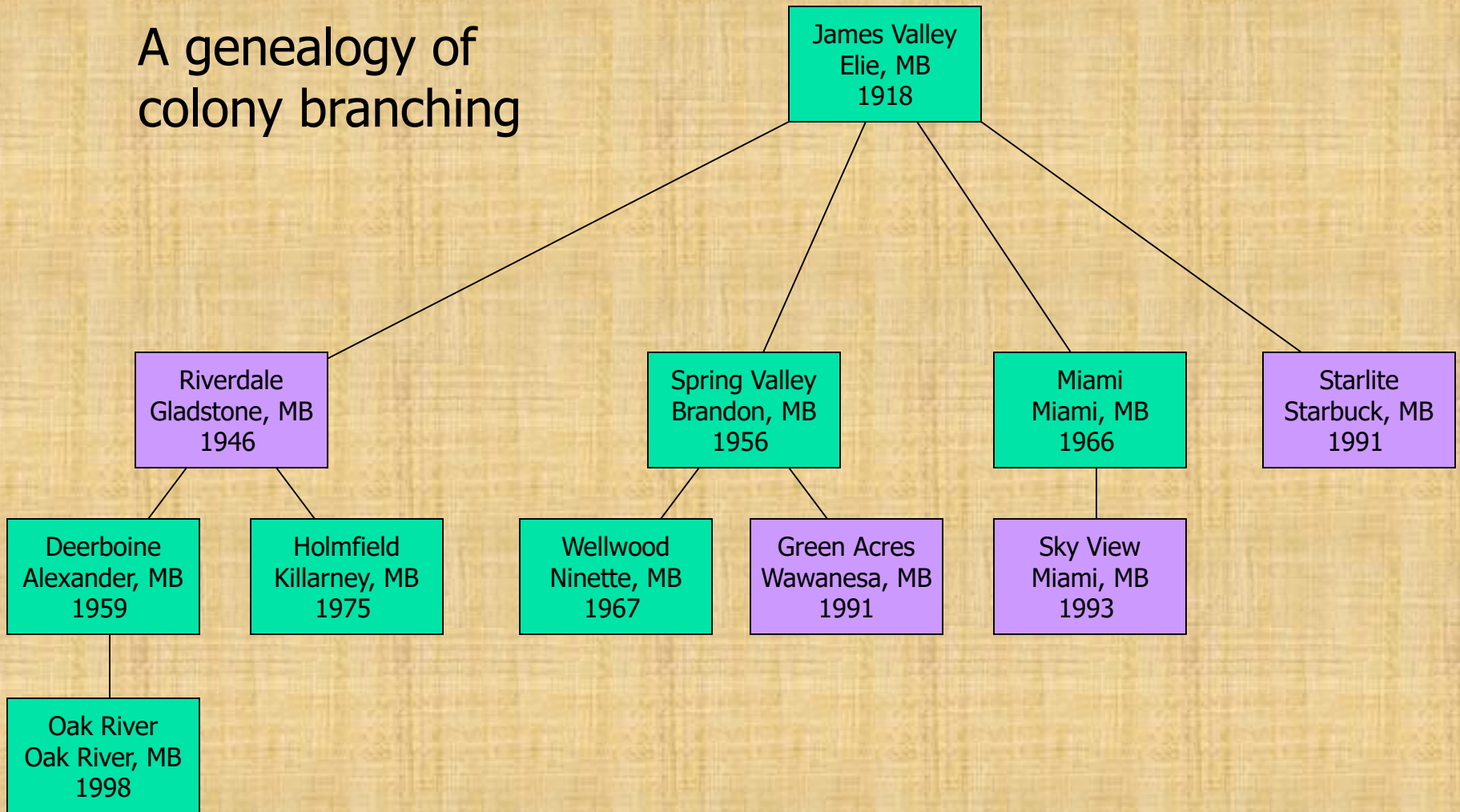
Expansion

- One of the world's highest birthrates
- Colonies become dysfunctional when population exceeds available jobs
- Expansion brings conflict with the outside world:
 - Land
 - Resentment by established "English" populations

Threats to the Hutterites

- Pressure to conform
 - Anglo Conformity
 - Military service
 - Allegations that they ruin rural communities
 - English rapidly adopted by most
 - Assimilation the goal of mainstream society

A genealogy of colony branching



Legal barriers to expansion.

- Alberta's Communal Property Act (1943-72)
 - Land sales to enemy aliens or Hutterites forbidden
 - No new colonies within 40 miles of any colony
 - No colony of more than 6,400 acres
 - Discharged soldiers have right of first refusal
- Manitoba's "gentleman's agreement." (1957-69)
 - New colonies' lands limited to 5,120 acres
 - No more than two colonies in any one municipality
 - A distance of at least 10 miles between colonies
- Saskatchewan's "gentleman's agreement." (1958-68)
 - No new colonies within 35 miles of any colony
 - No colony of more than 10,000 acres
 - Social and economic needs of local communities come first

1874

HUTTERITE COLONIES

Founded During Time Period

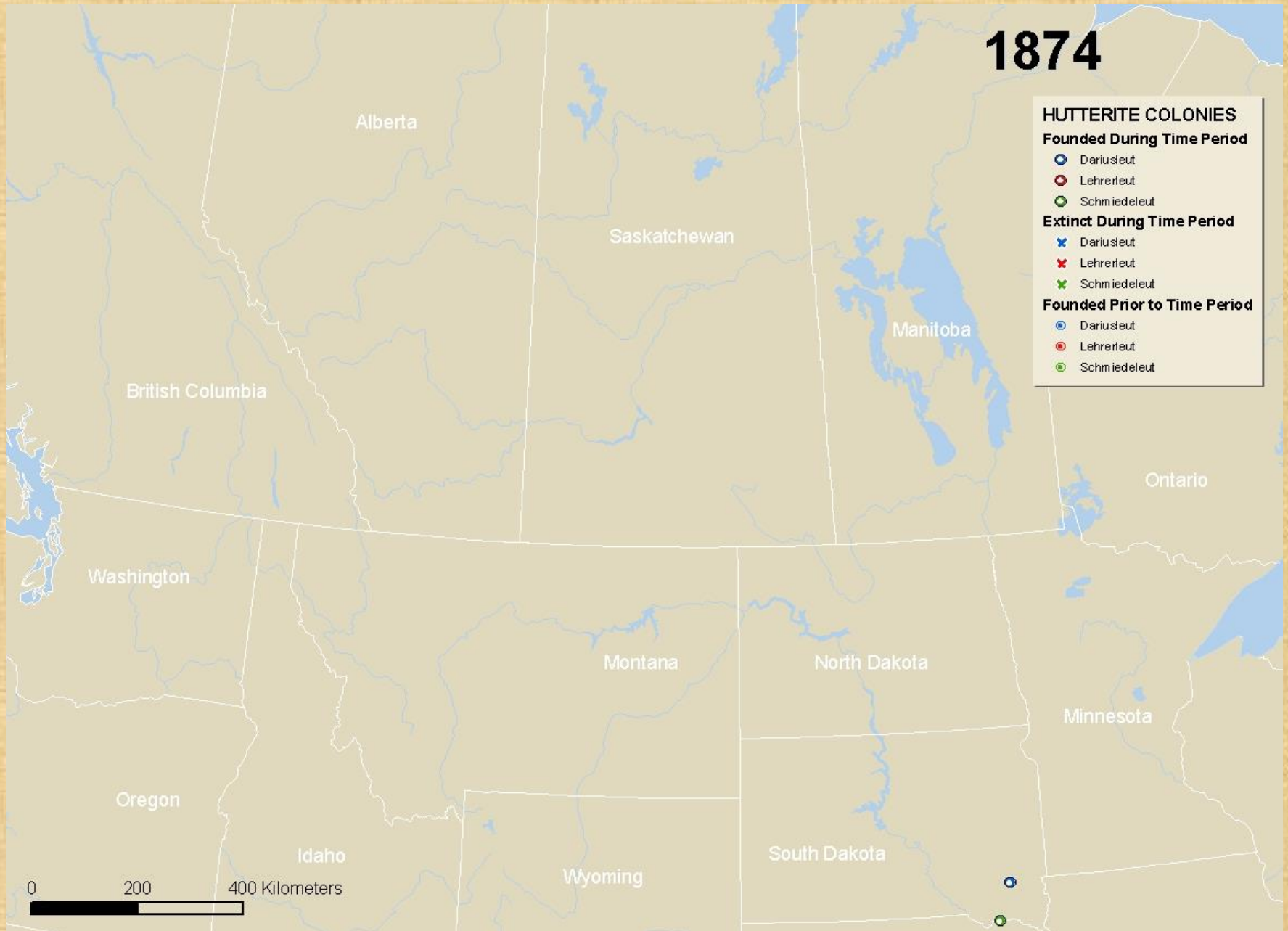
- Dariusleut
- Lehrereut
- Schmiedeleut

Extinct During Time Period

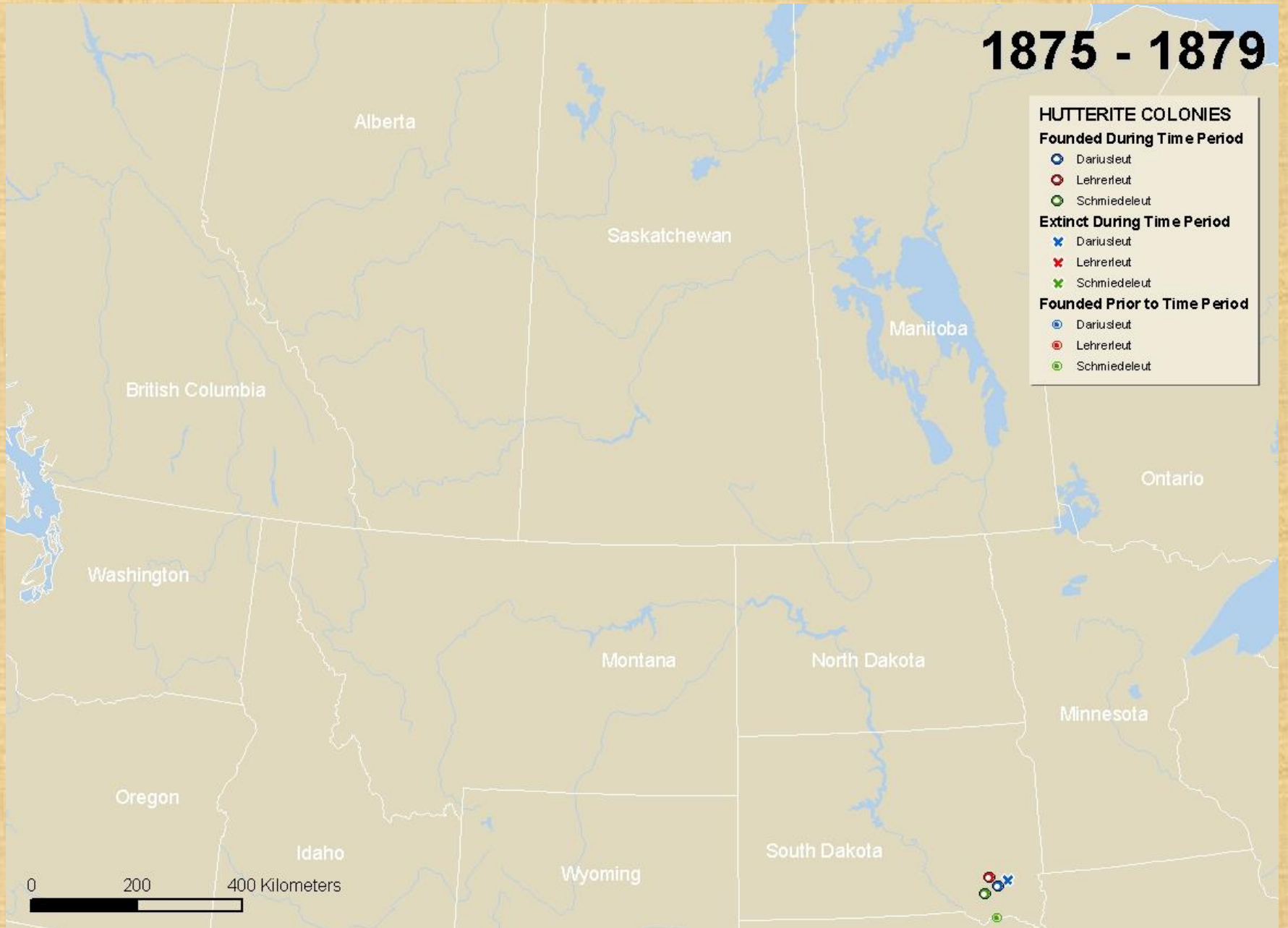
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Founded Prior to Time Period

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1875 - 1879



1880 - 1884

HUTTERITE COLONIES

Founded During Time Period

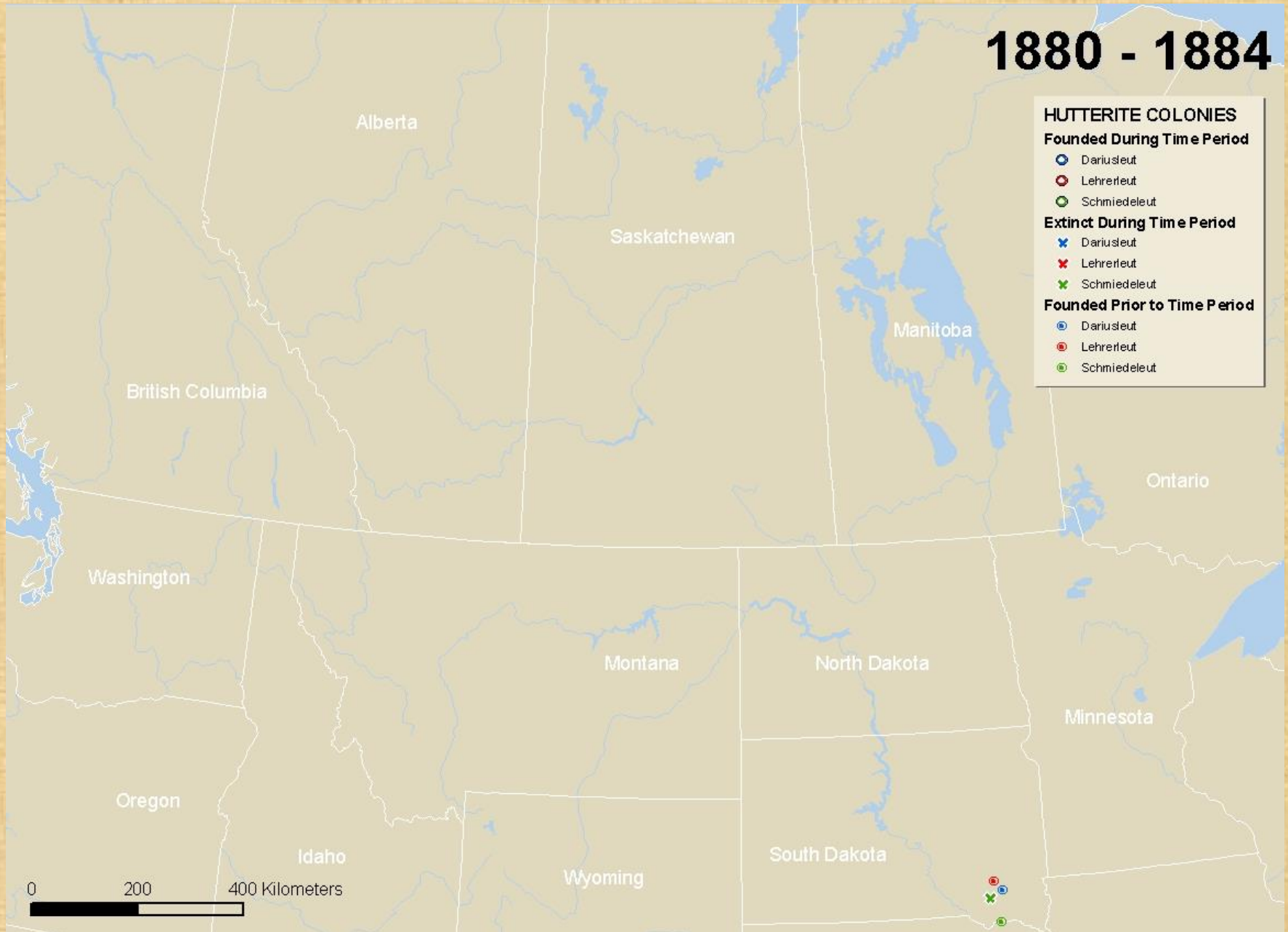
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Founded Prior to Time Period

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- Schmiedeleut



0 200 400 Kilometers

1885 - 1889

HUTTERITE COLONIES

Founded During Time Period

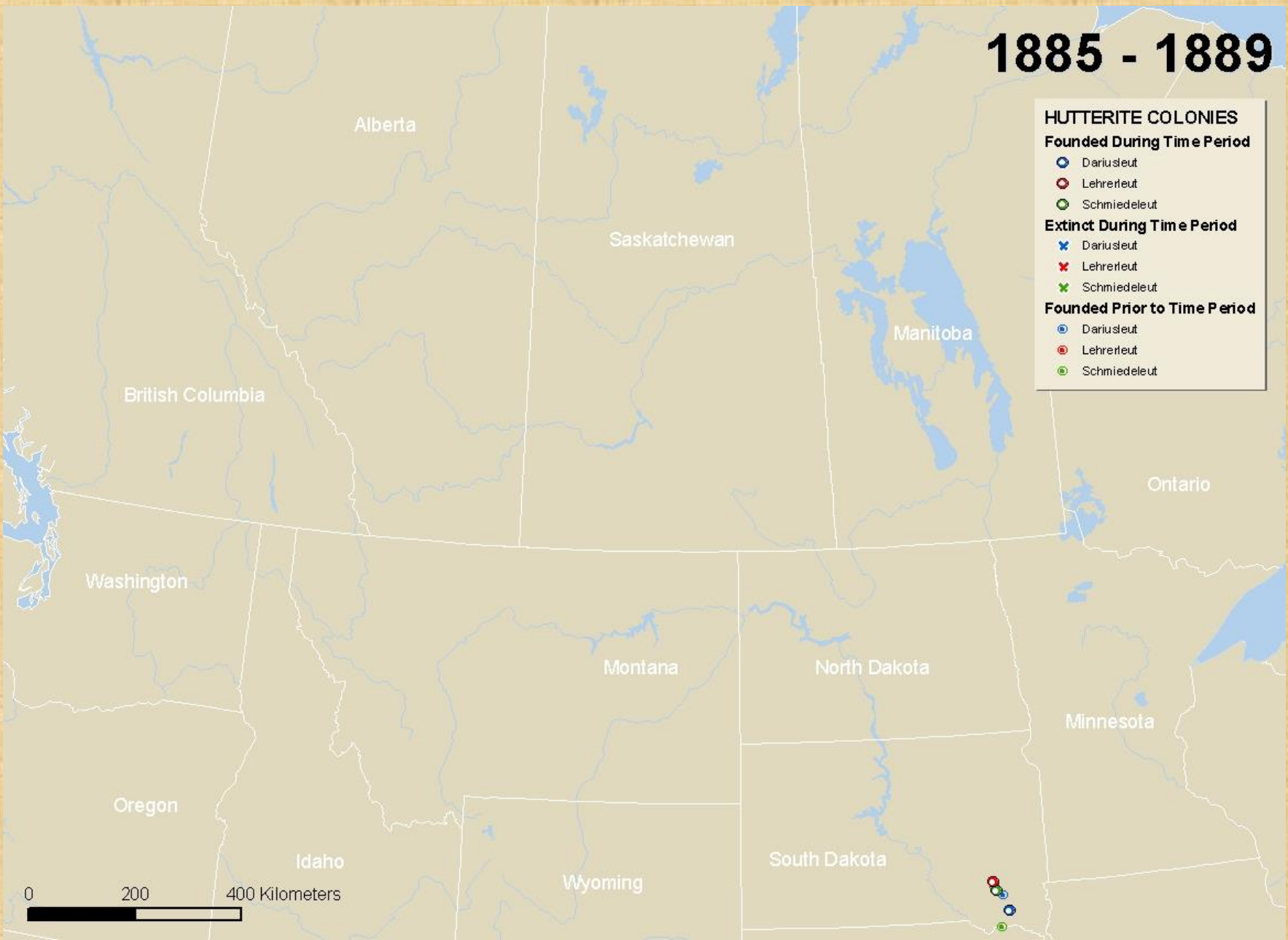
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- Schmiebeleut

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0 200 400 Kilometers

1890 - 1894

HUTTERITE COLONIES

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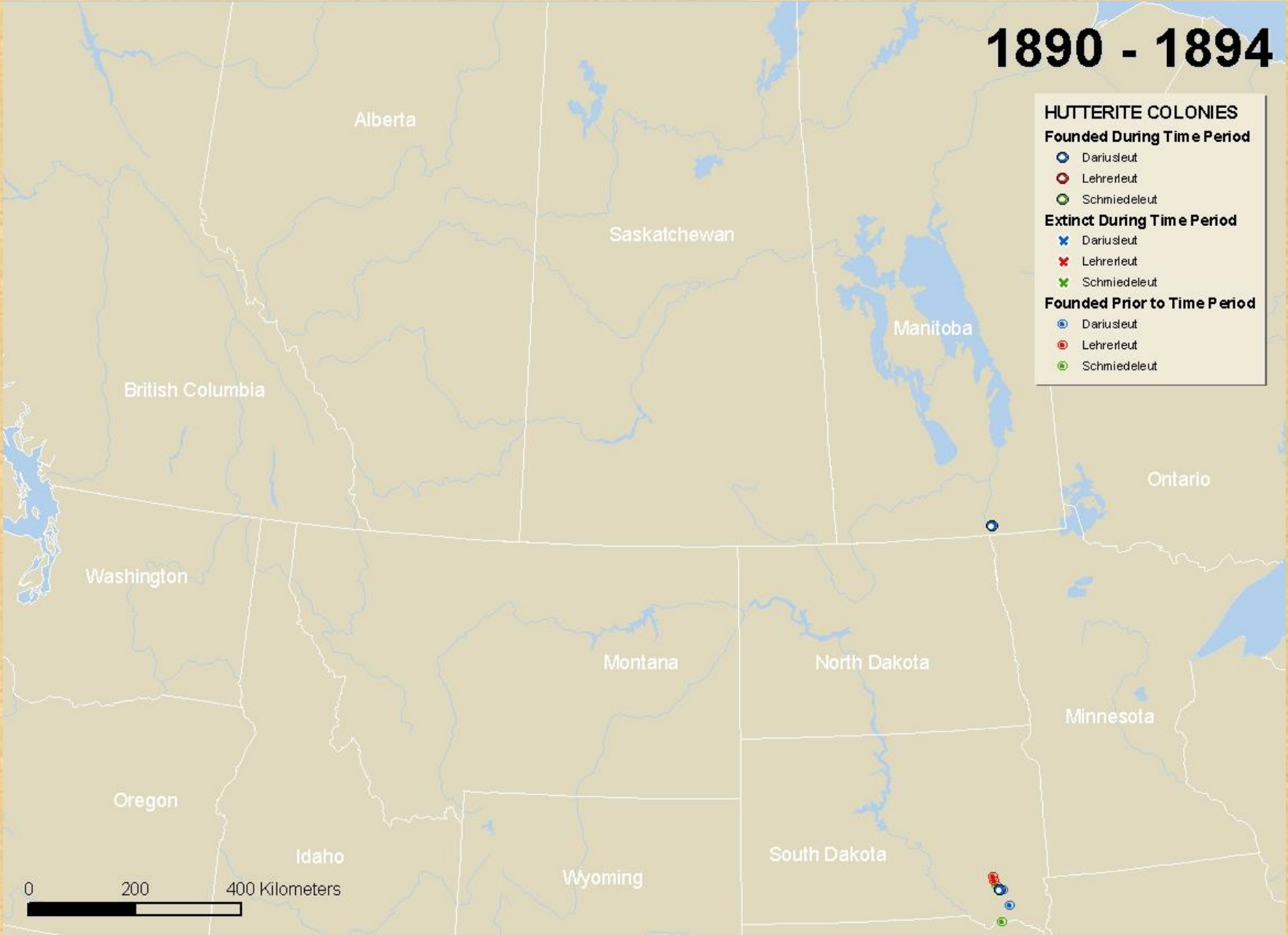
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0 200 400 Kilometers

1895 - 1899

HUTTERITE COLONIES

Founded During Time Period

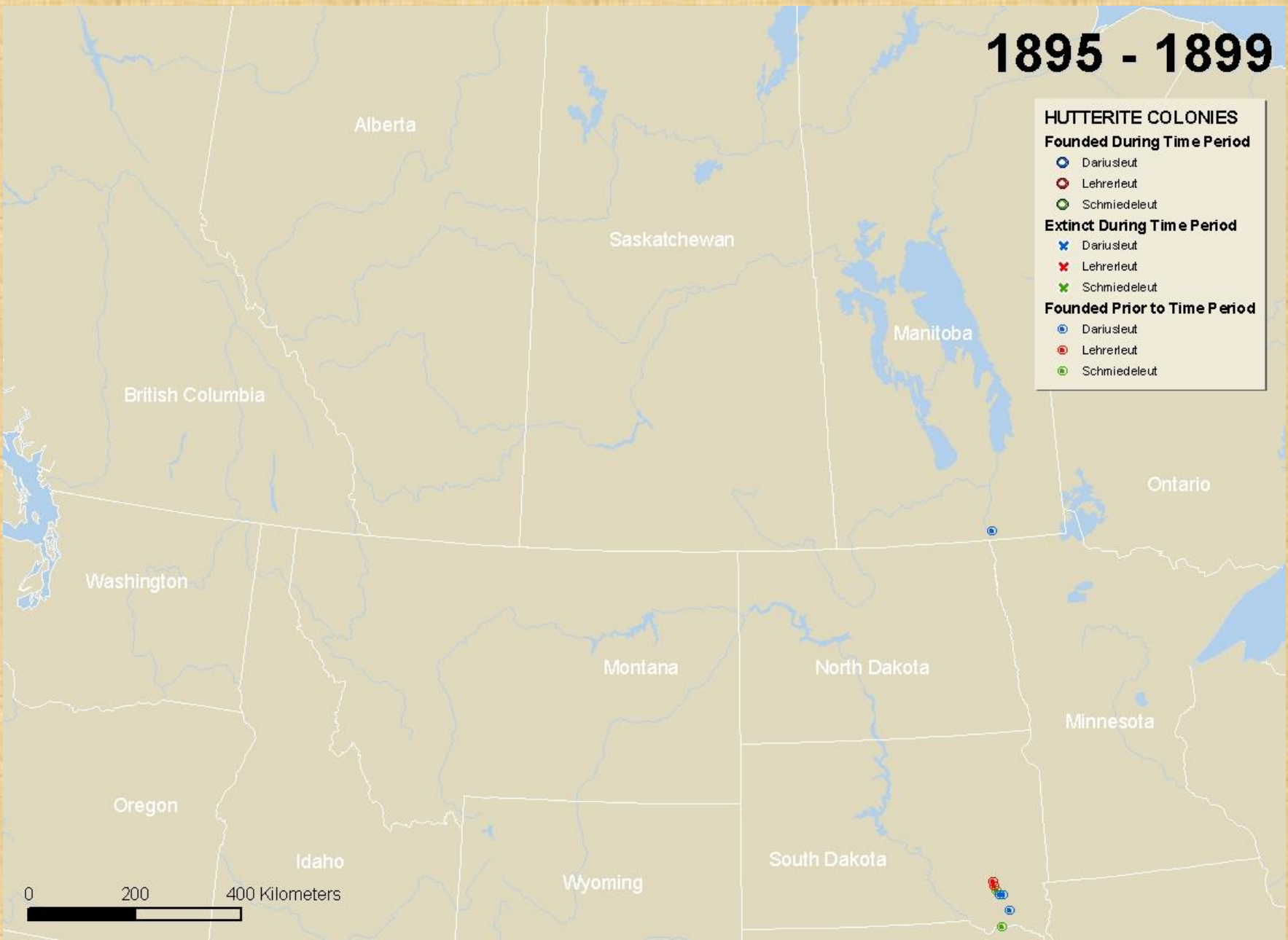
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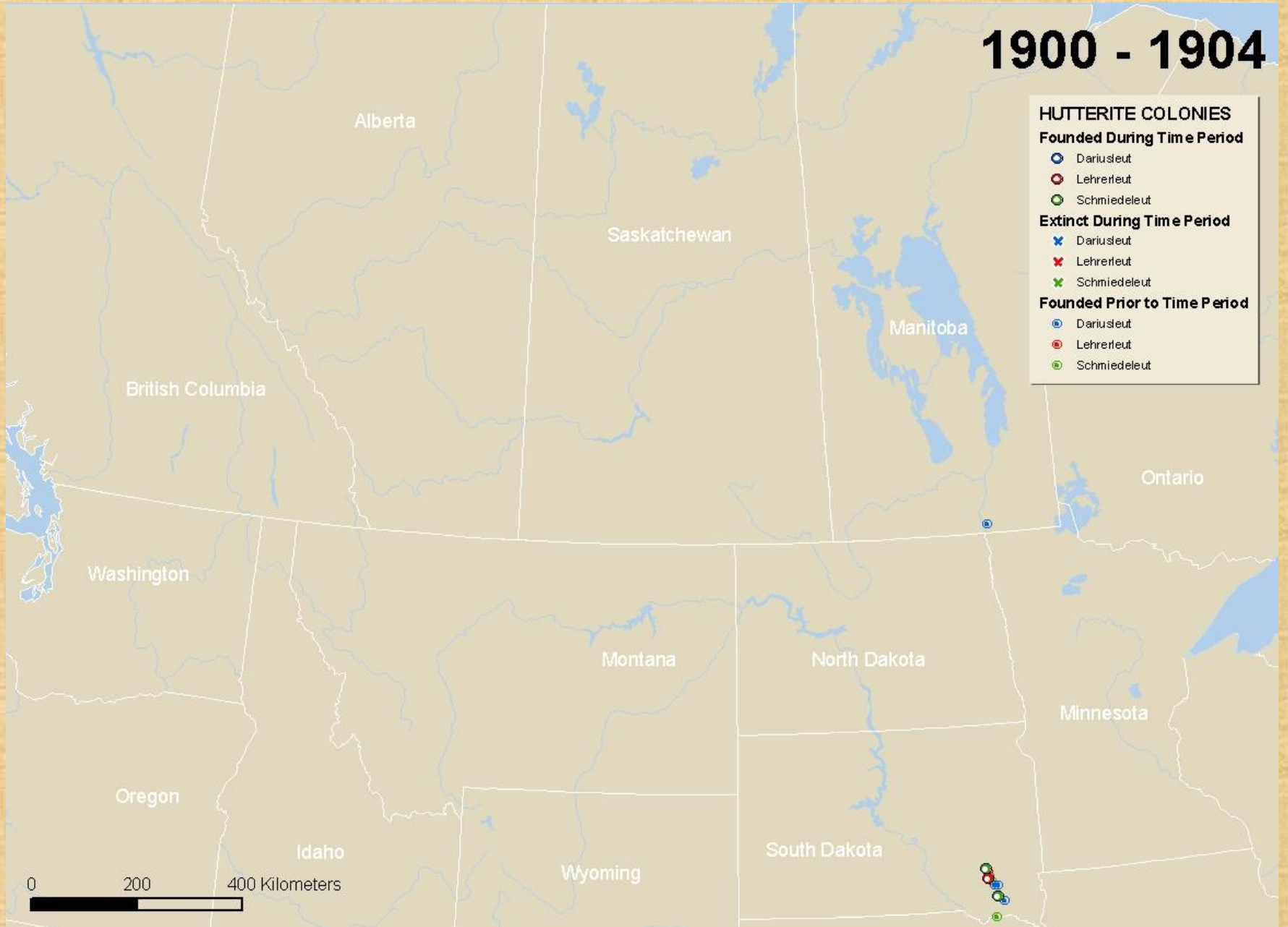
Founded Prior to Time Period

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0 200 400 Kilometers

1900 - 1904



1905 - 1909

HUTTERITE COLONIES

Founded During Time Period

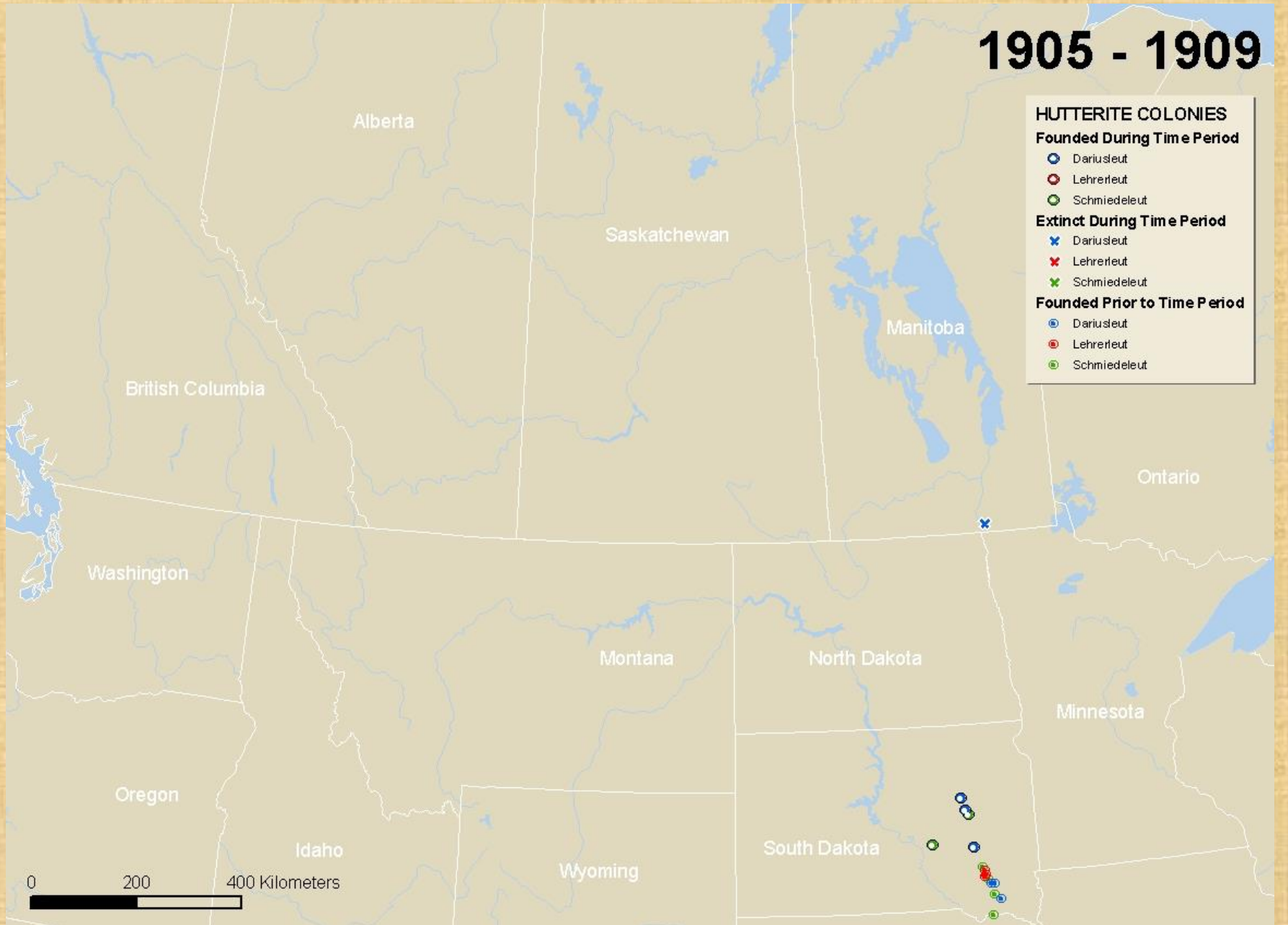
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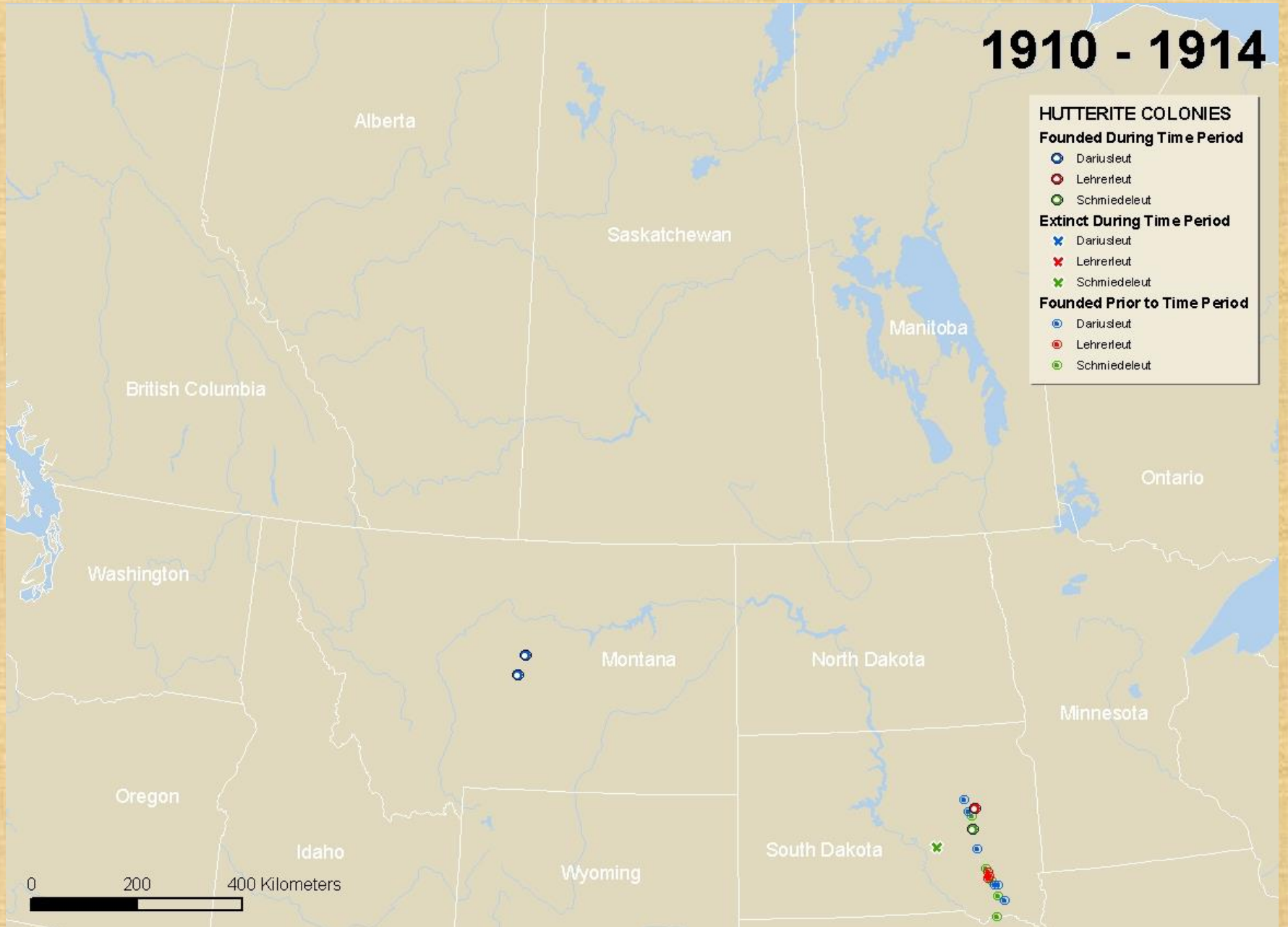
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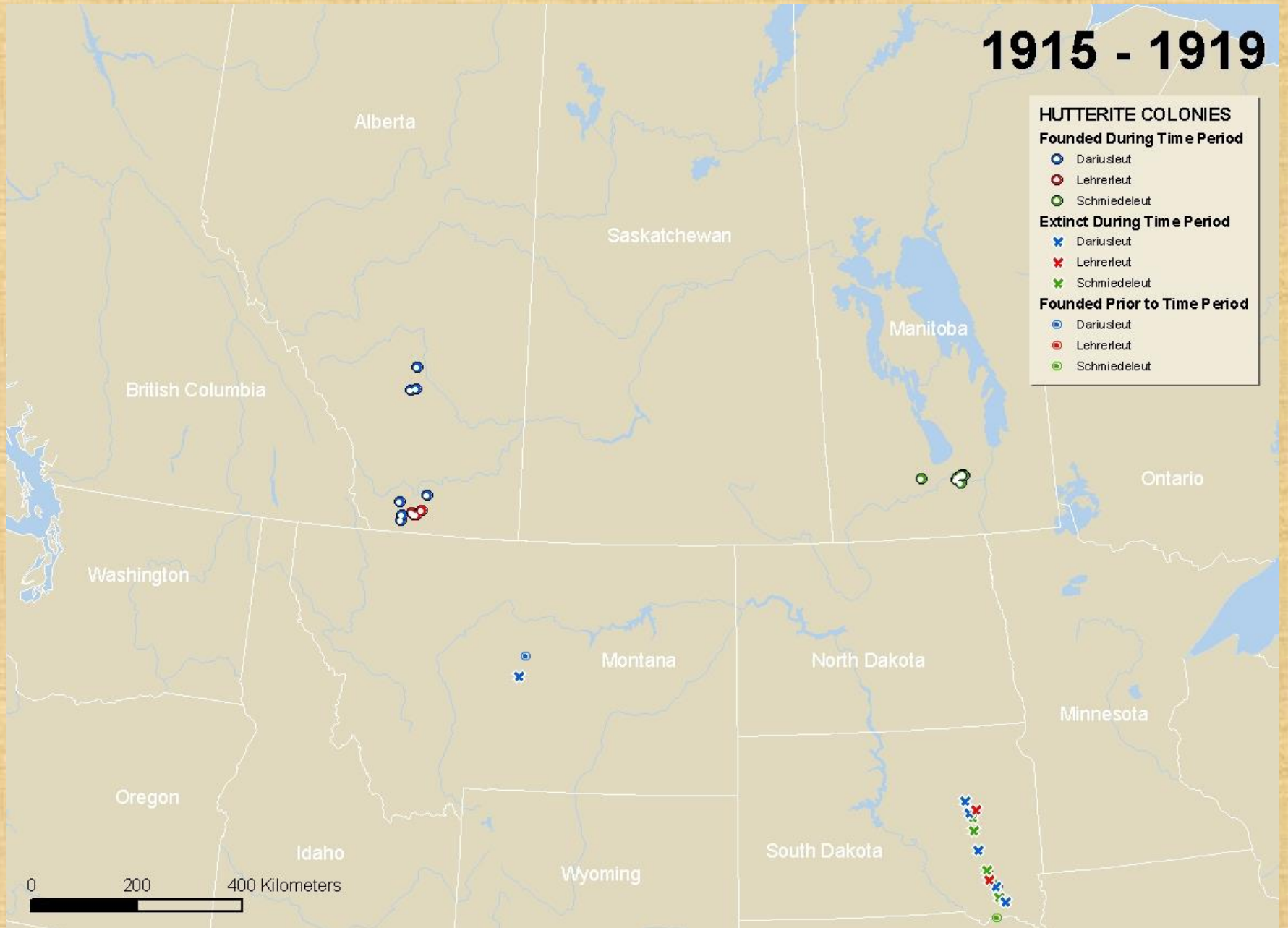
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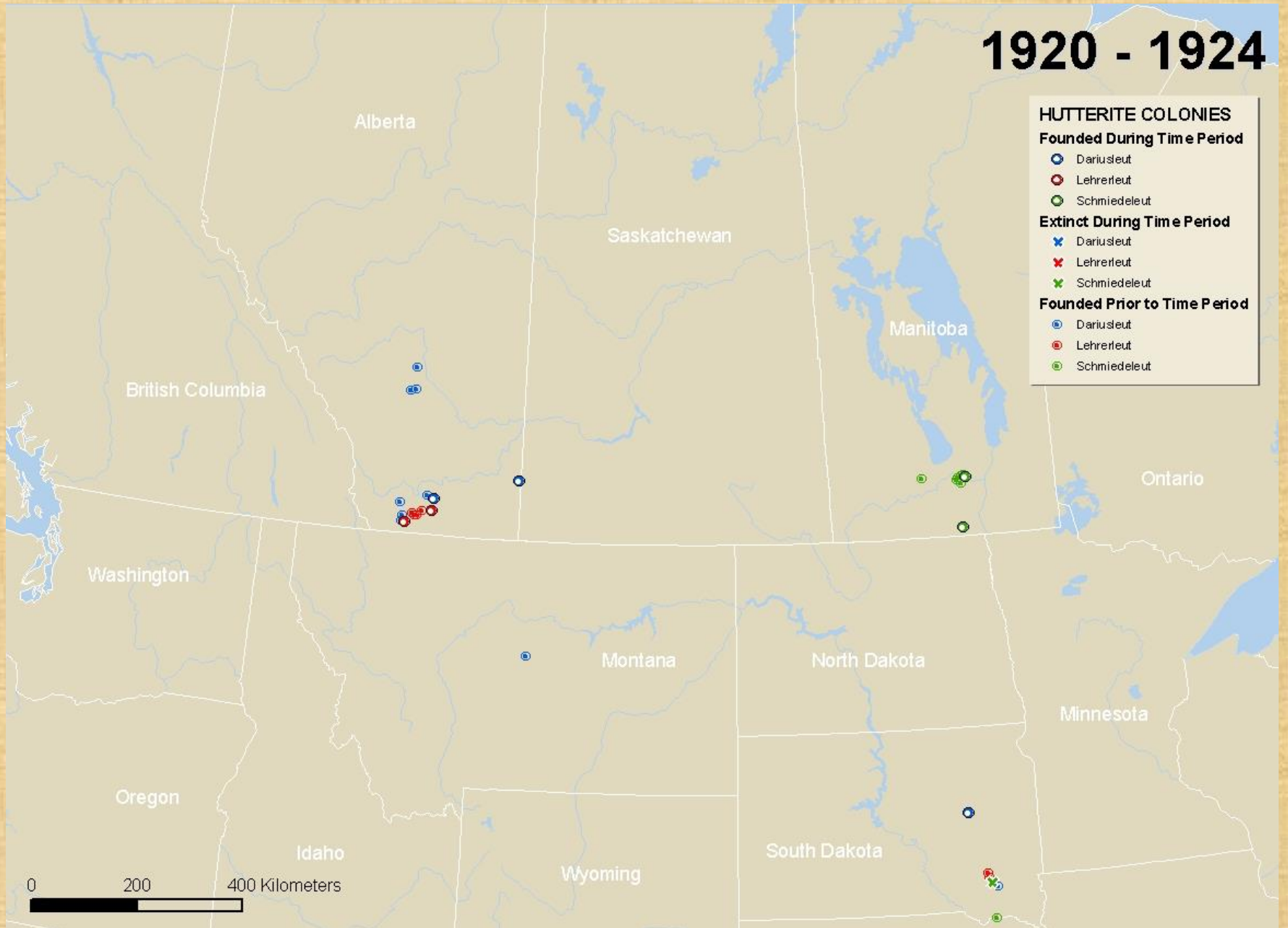
1910 - 1914



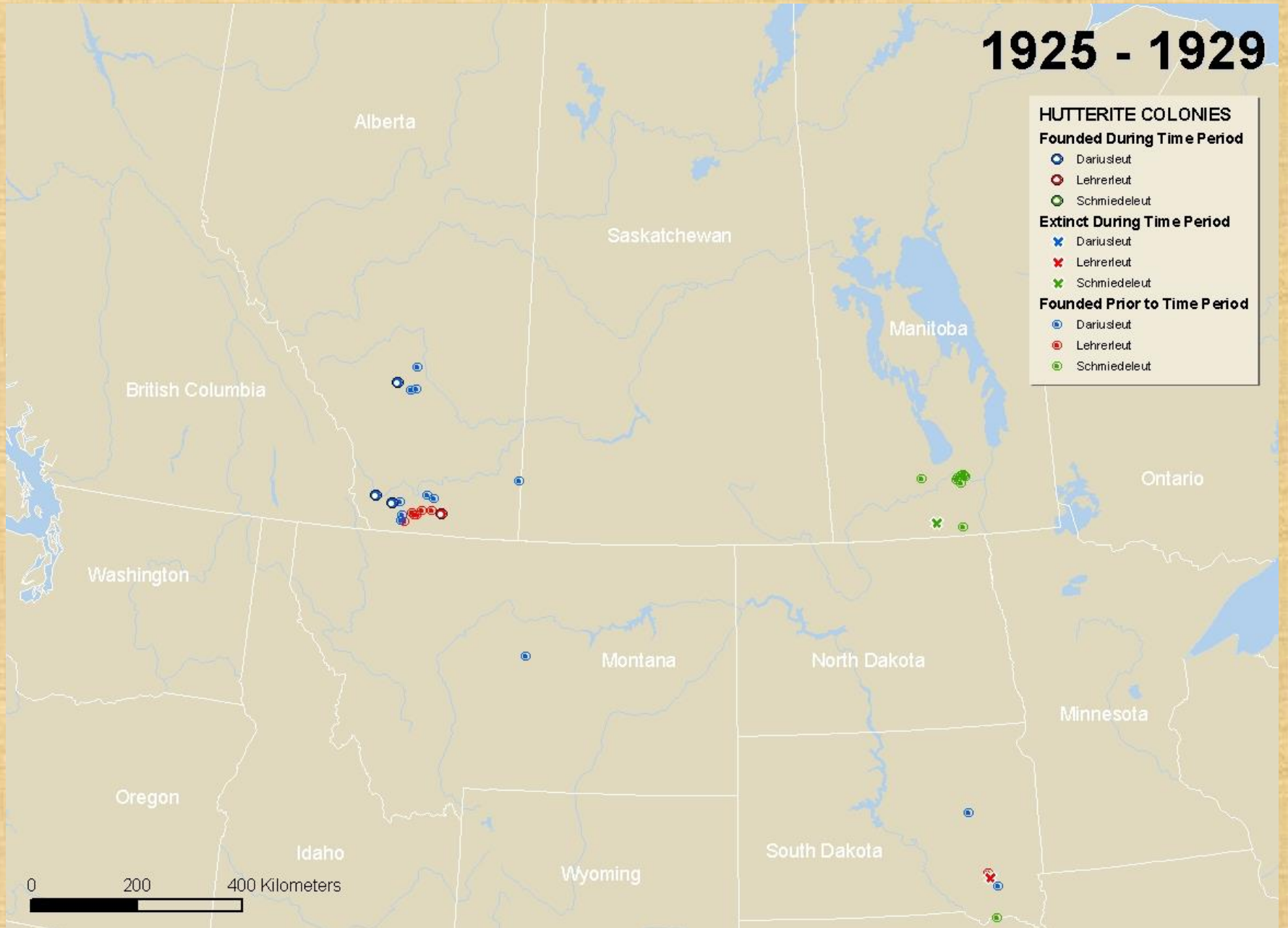
1915 - 1919



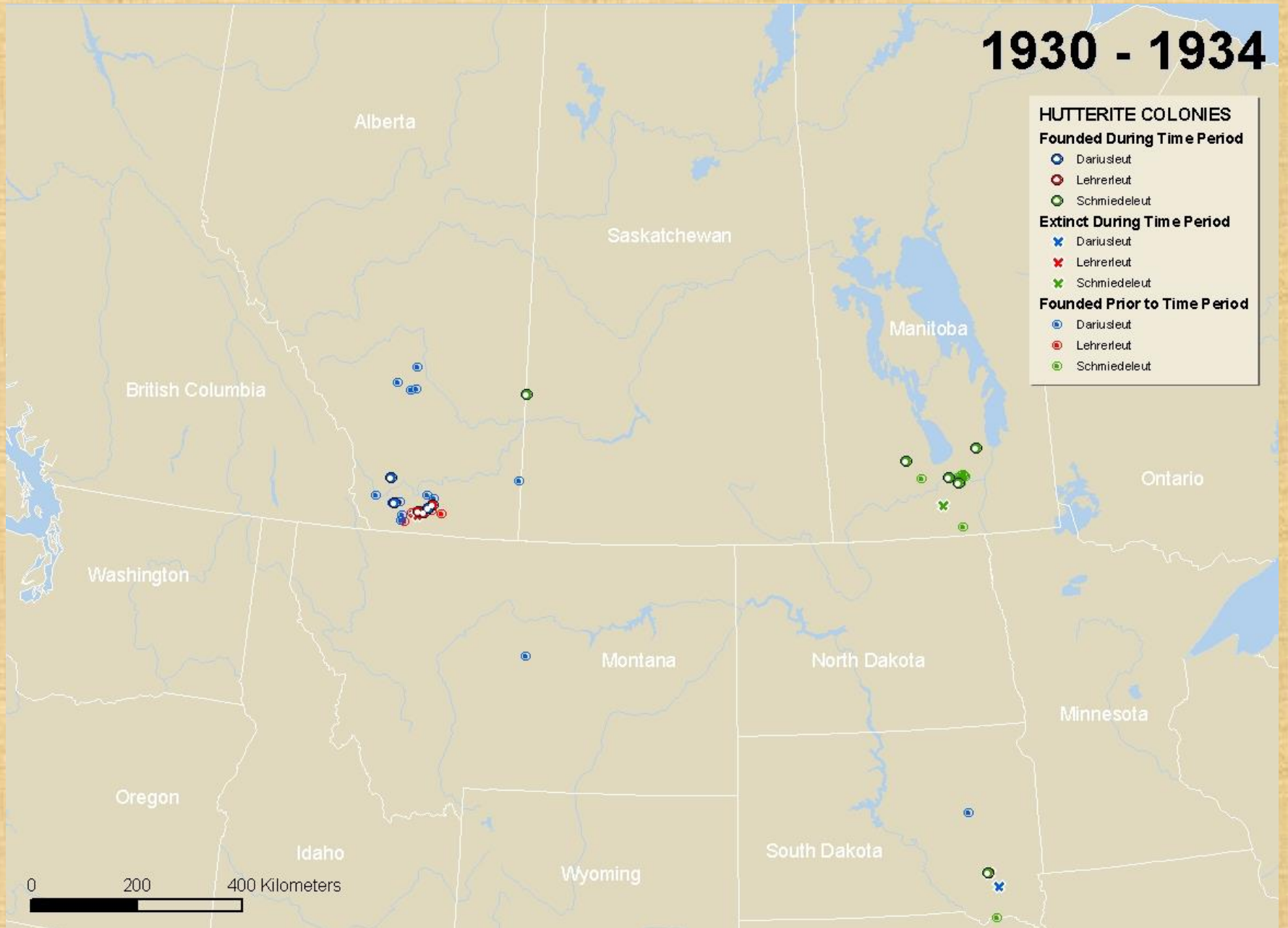
1920 - 1924



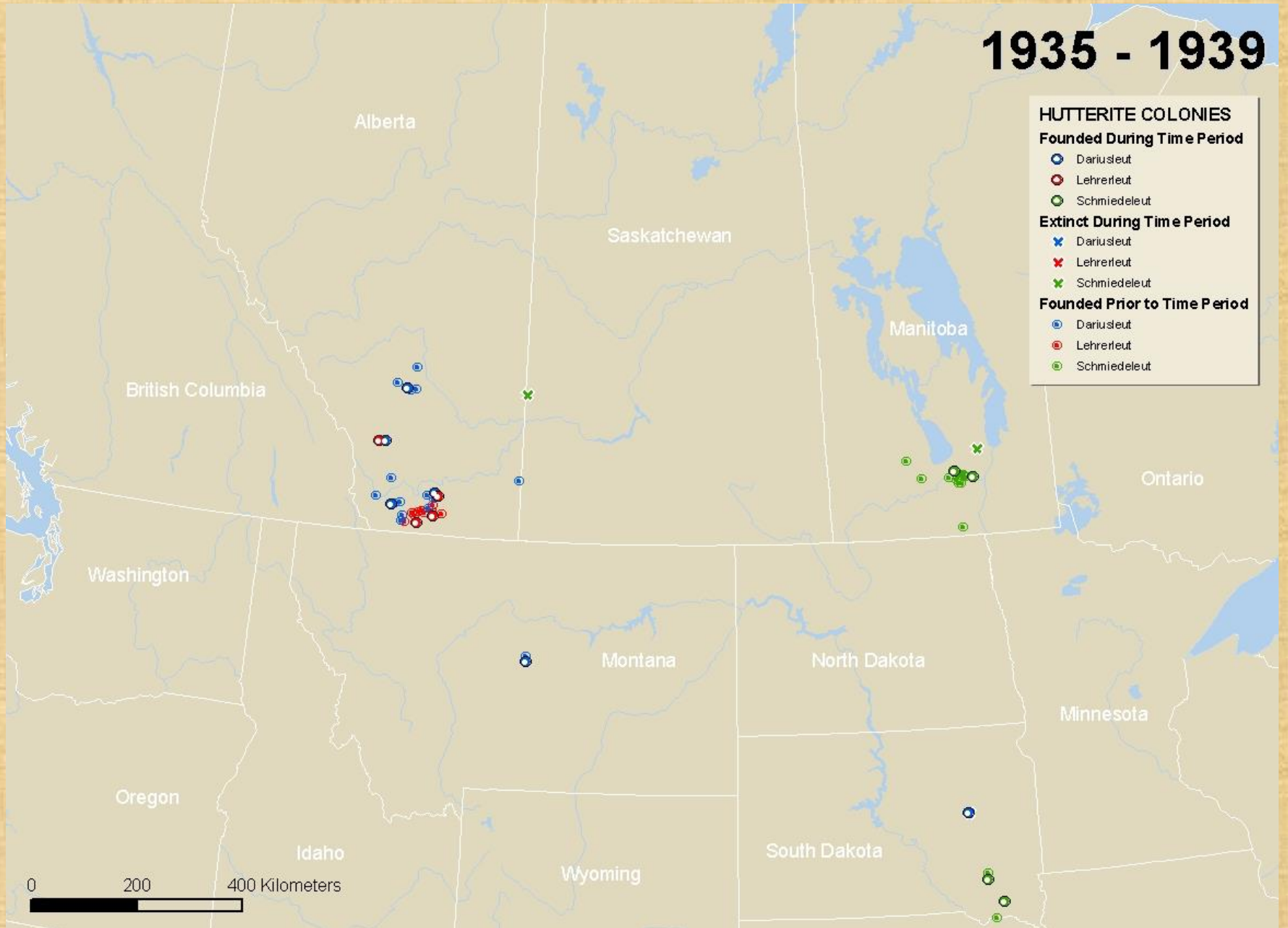
1925 - 1929



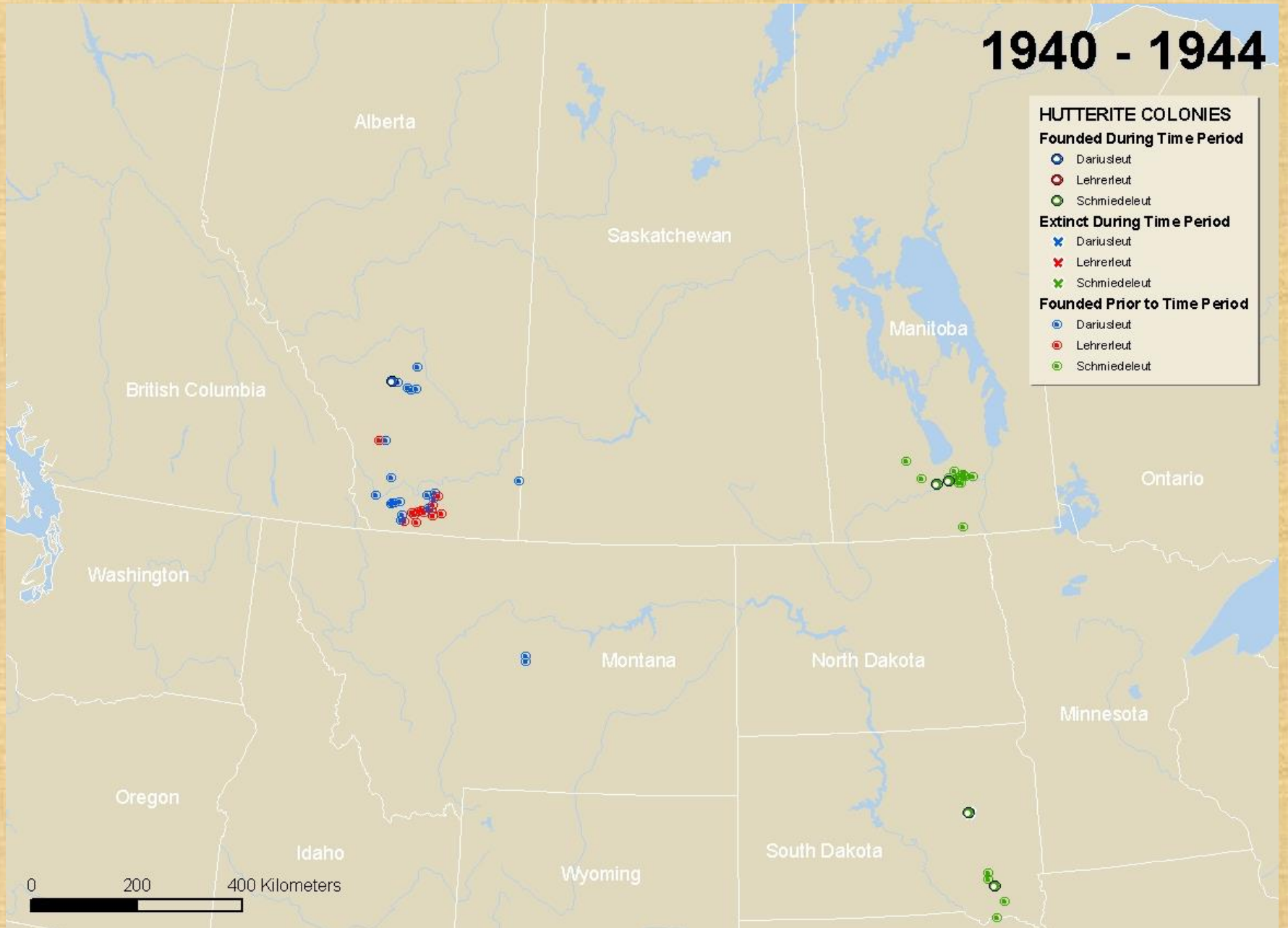
1930 - 1934



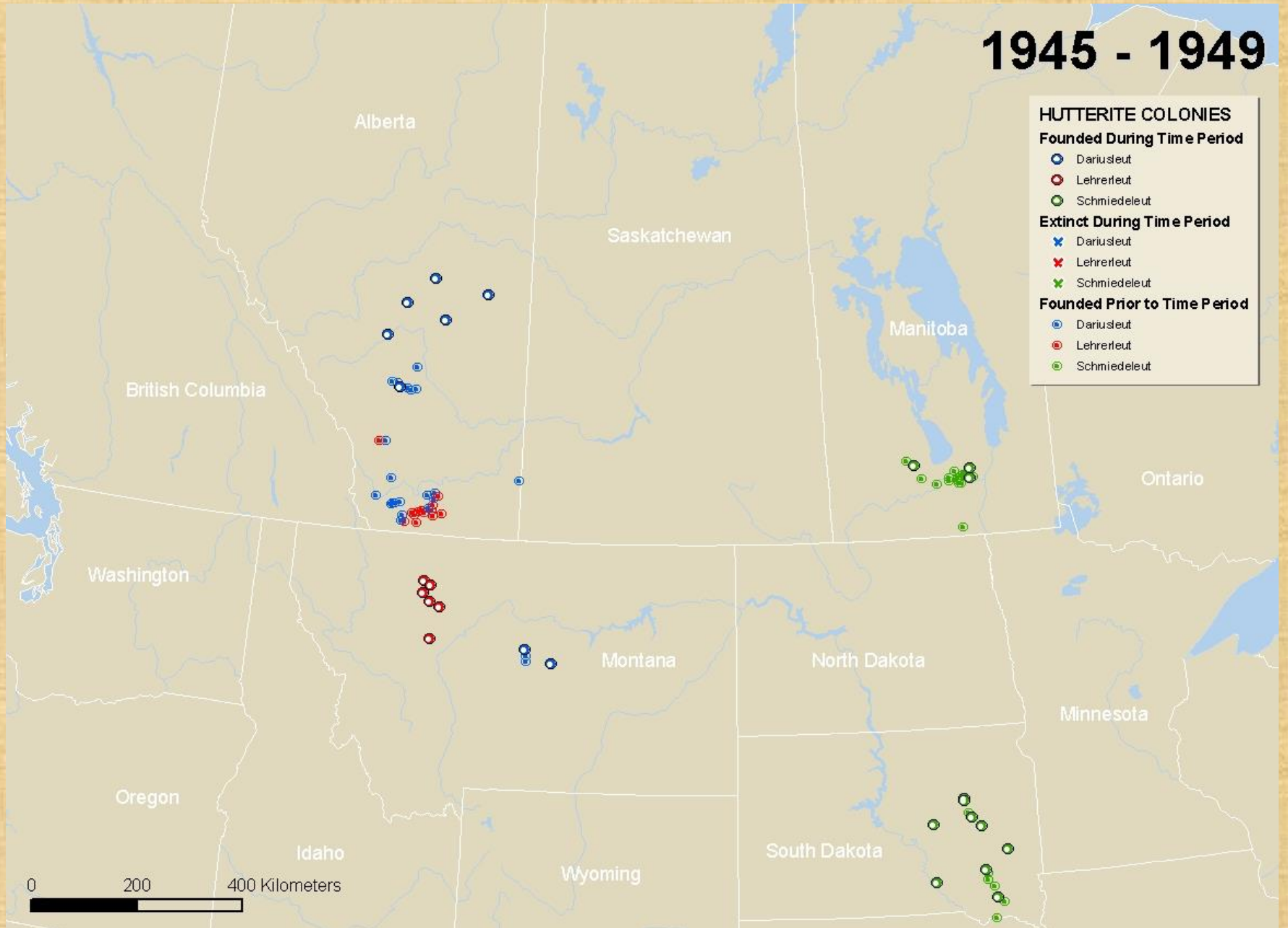
1935 - 1939



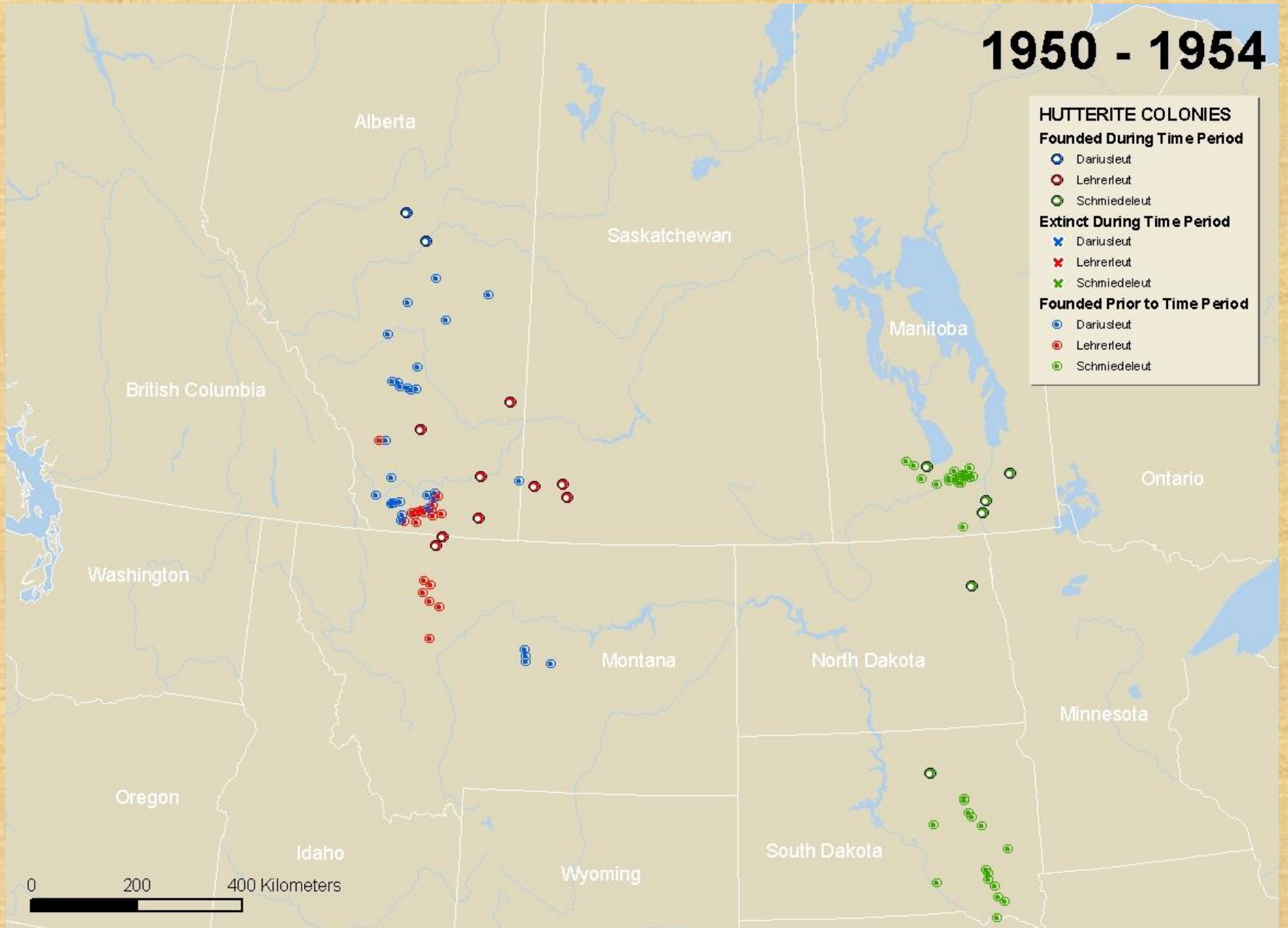
1940 - 1944



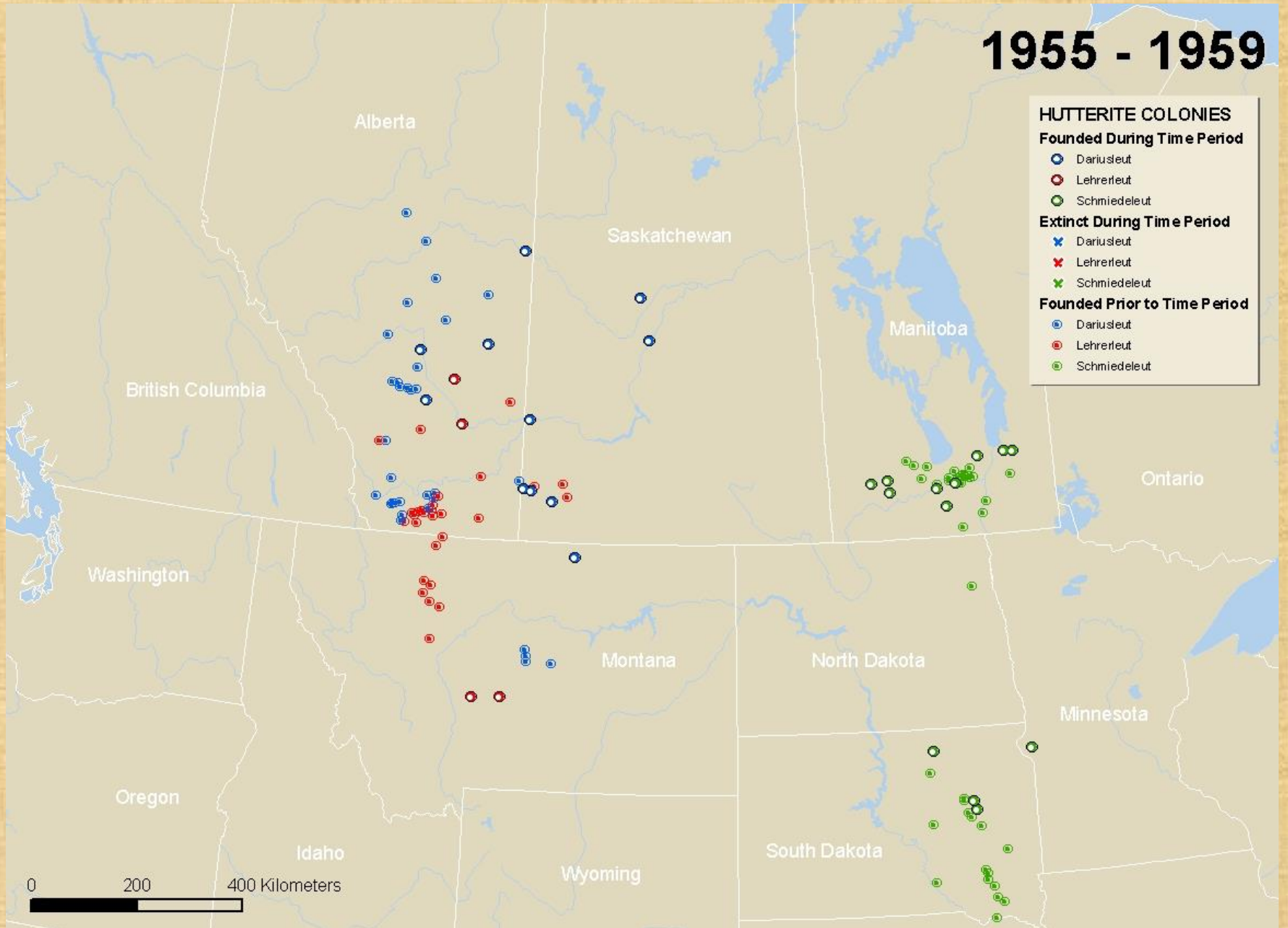
1945 - 1949



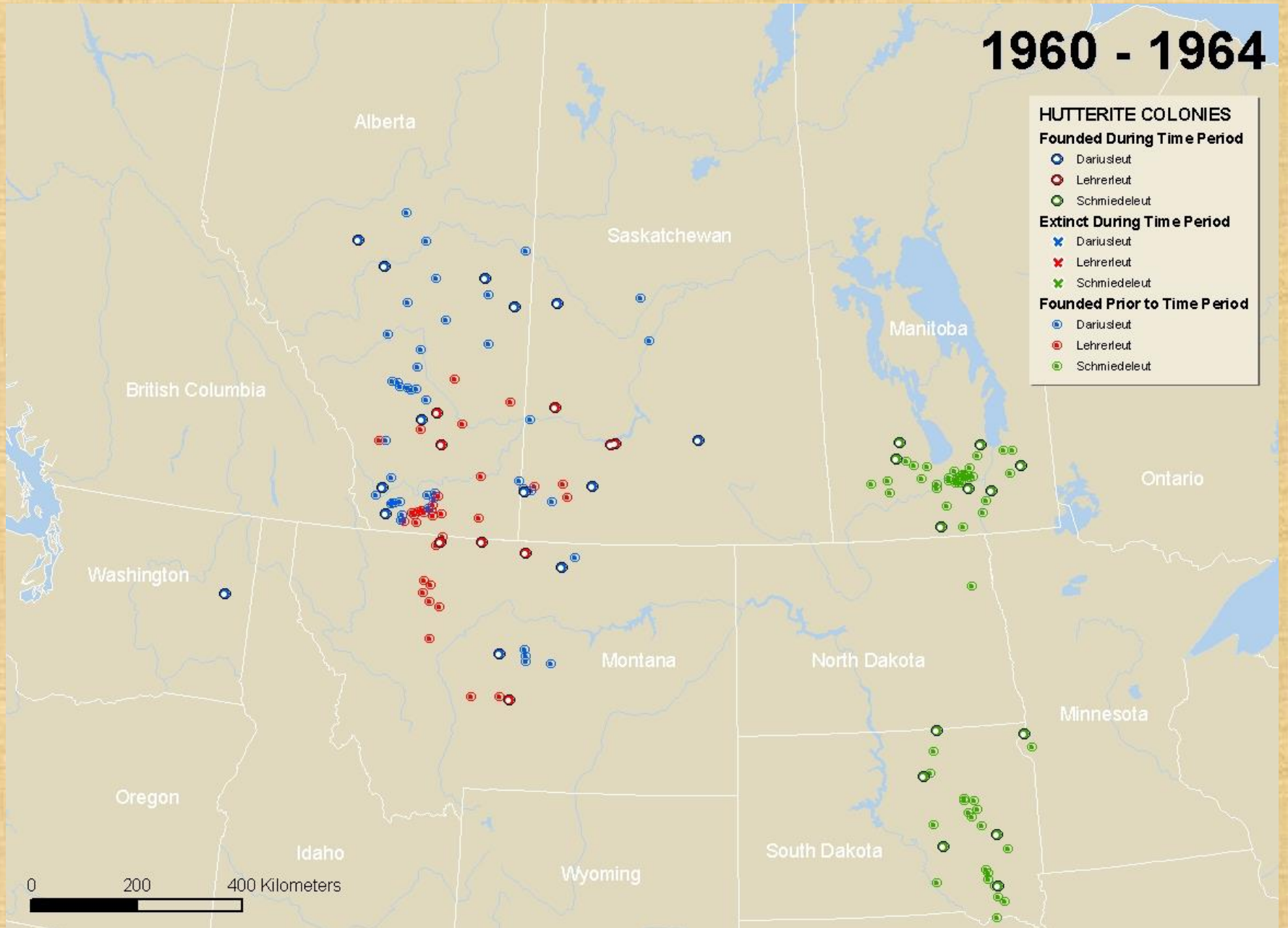
1950 - 1954



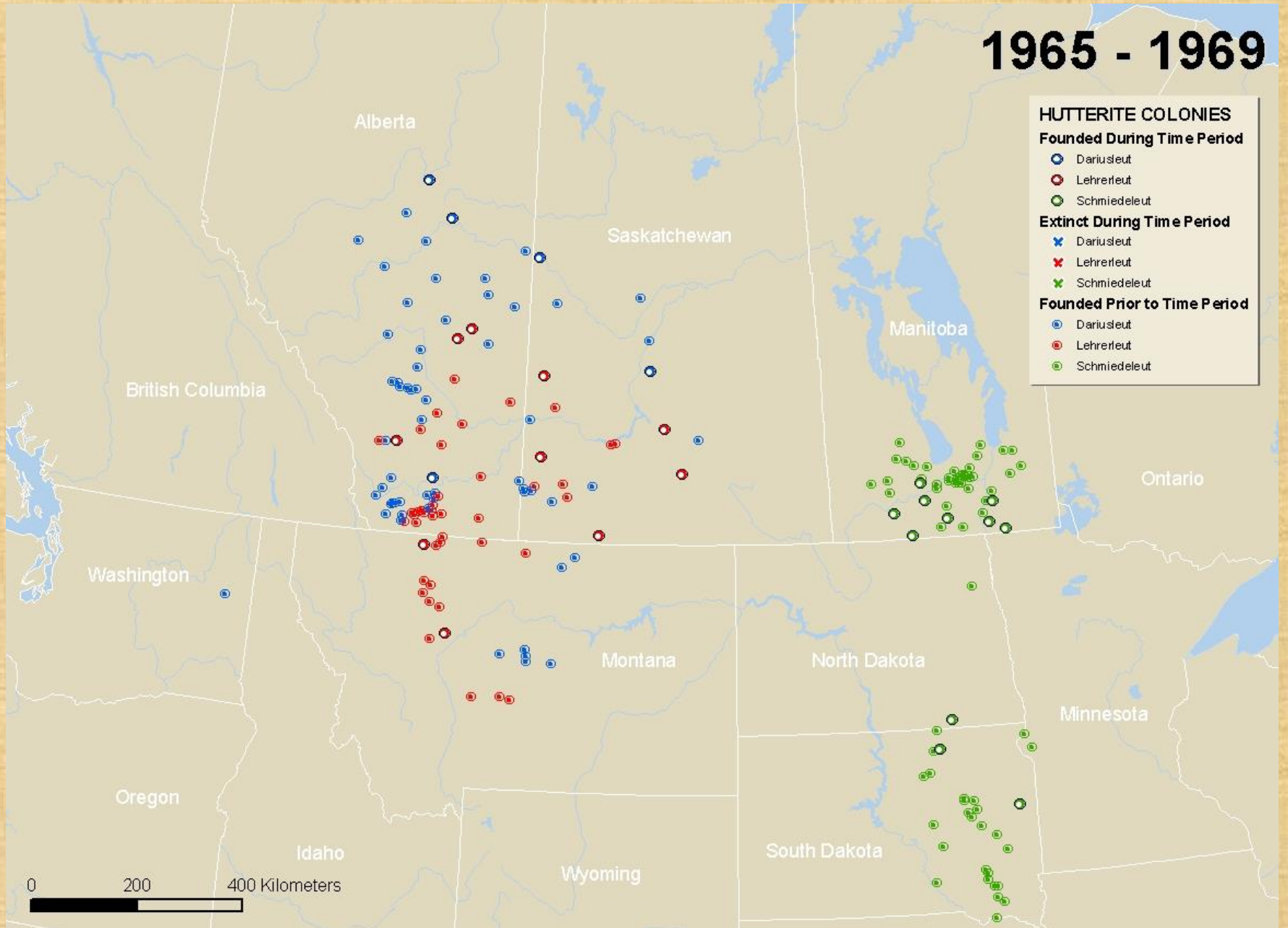
1955 - 1959



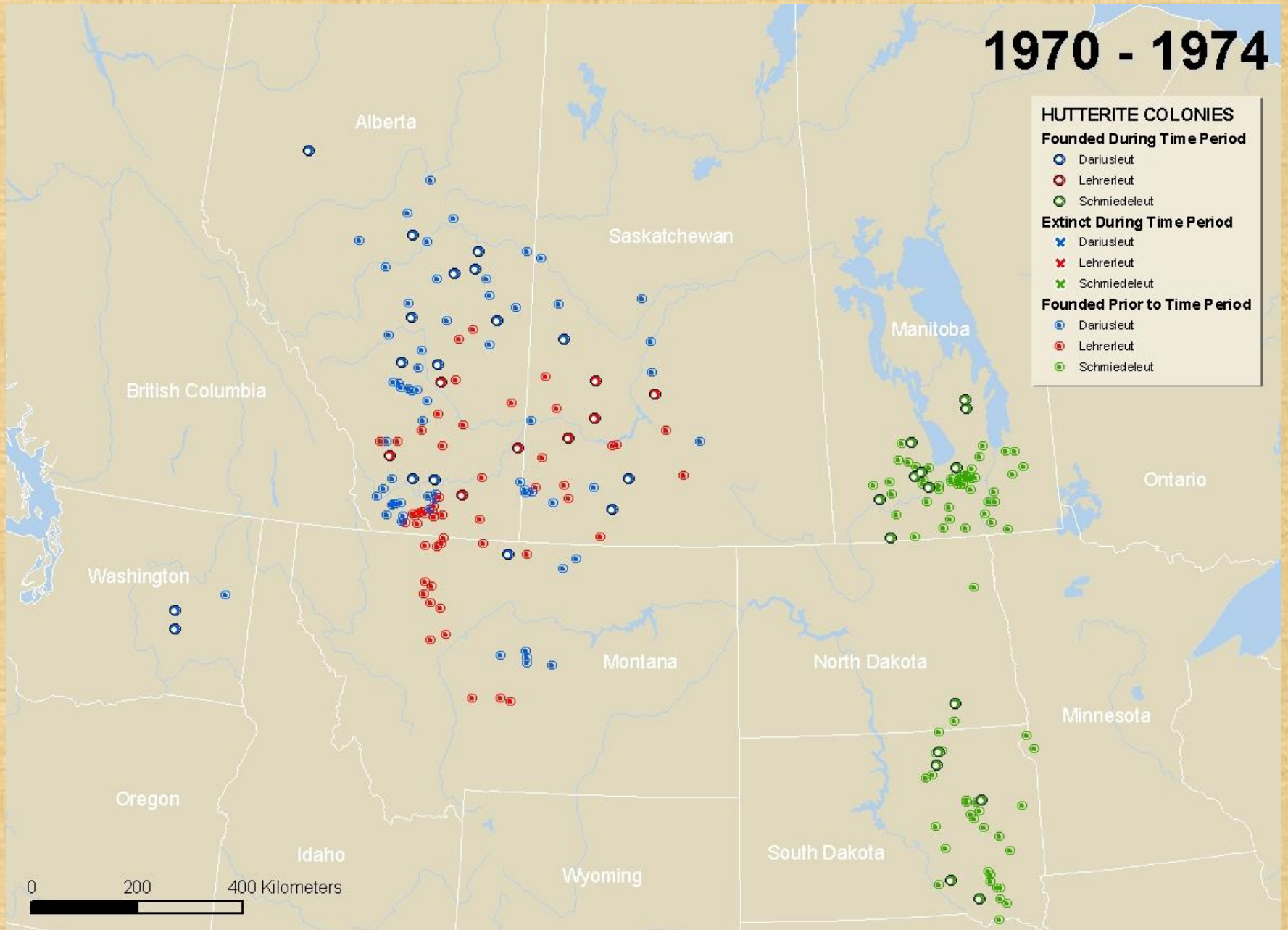
1960 - 1964



1965 - 1969



1970 - 1974



1975 - 1979

HUTTERITE COLONIES

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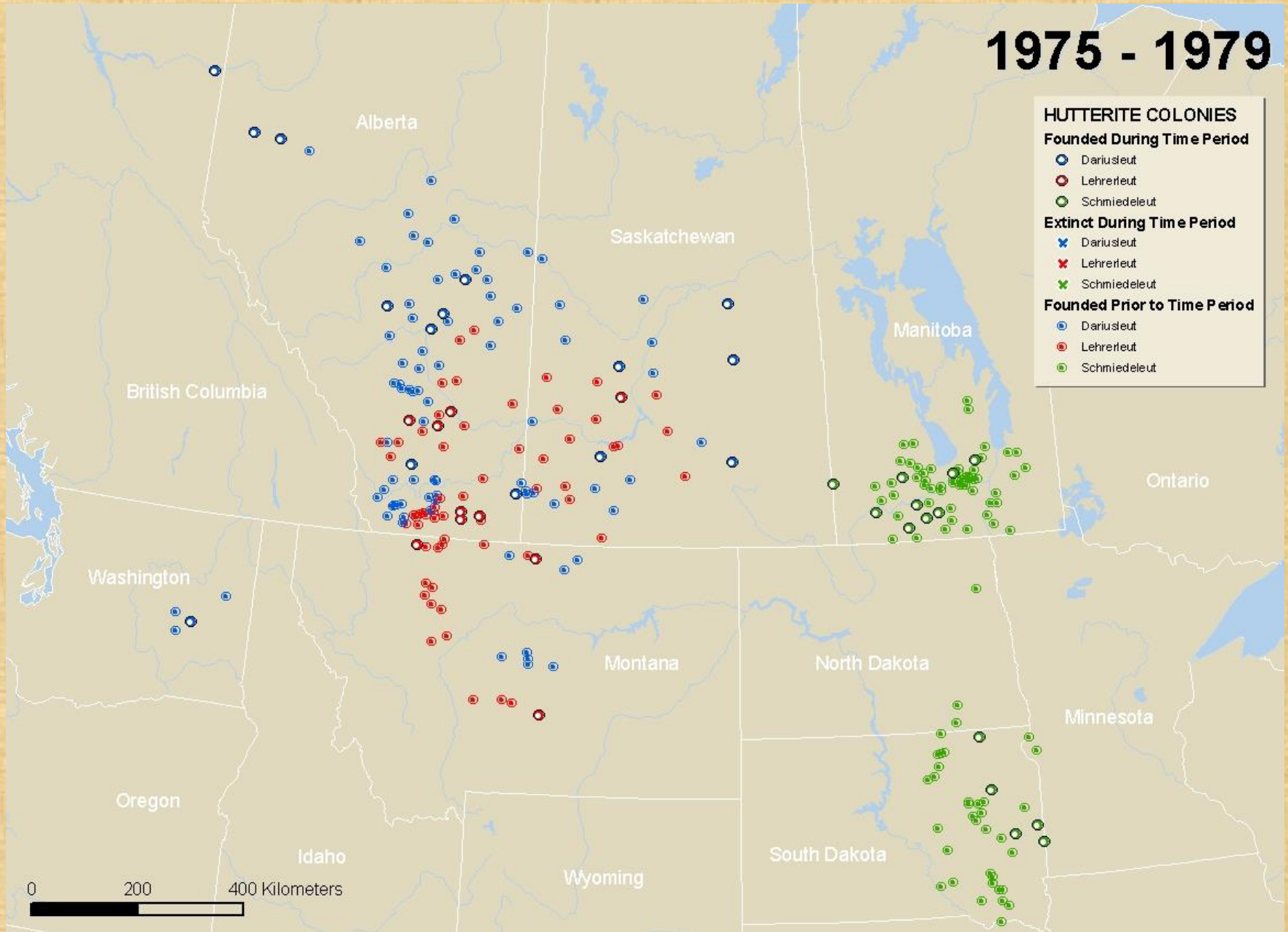
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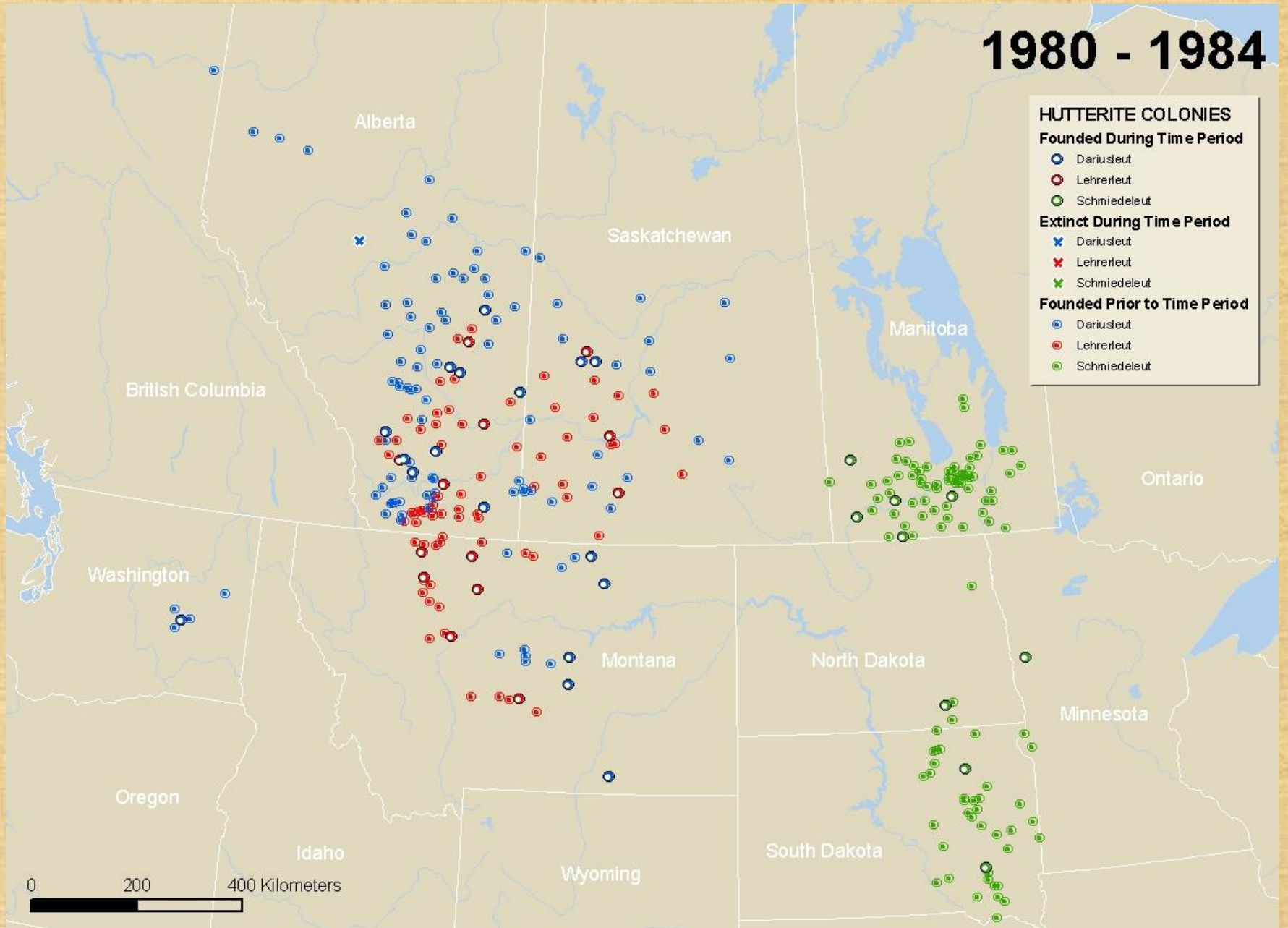
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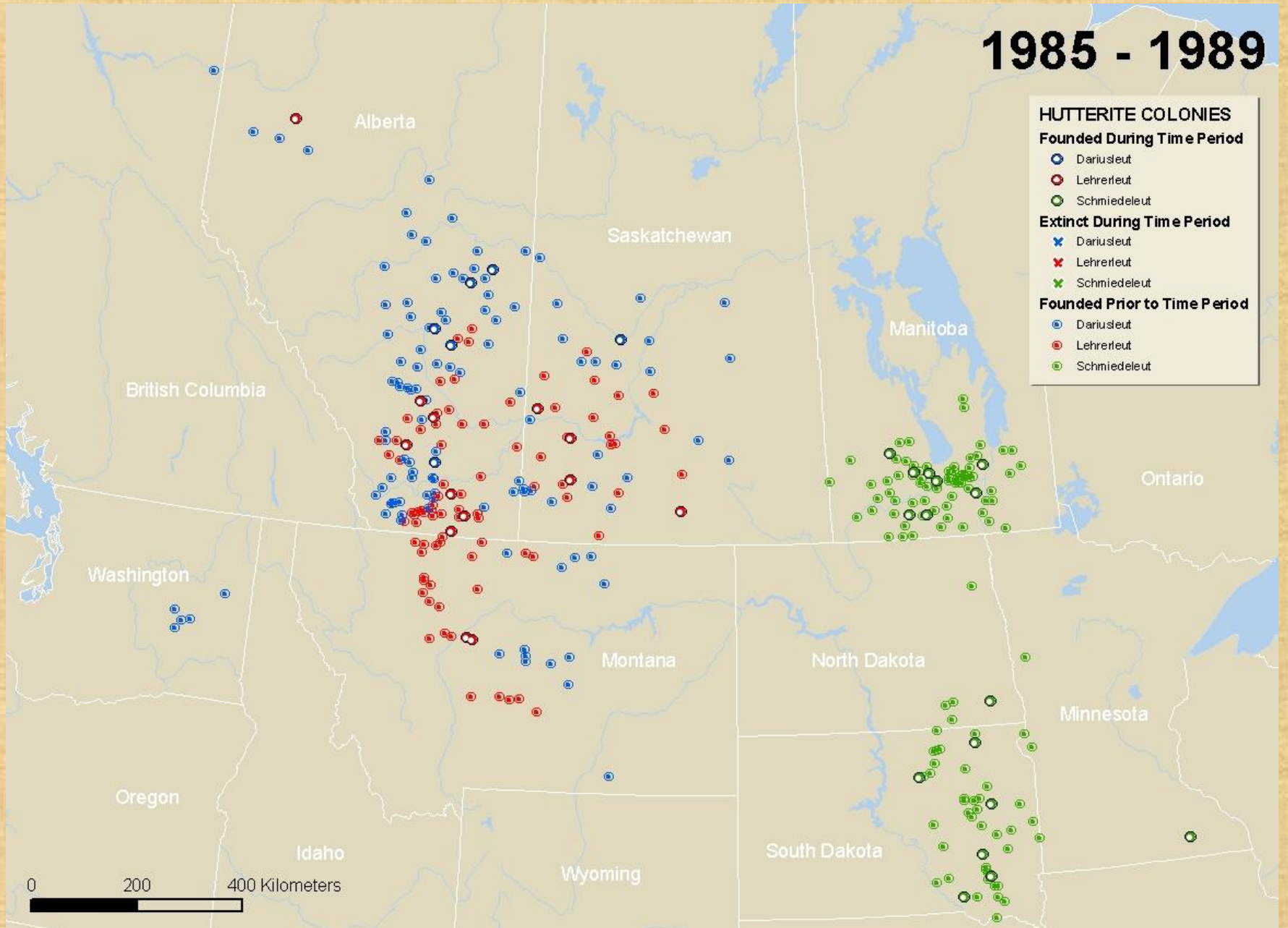


0 200 400 Kilometers

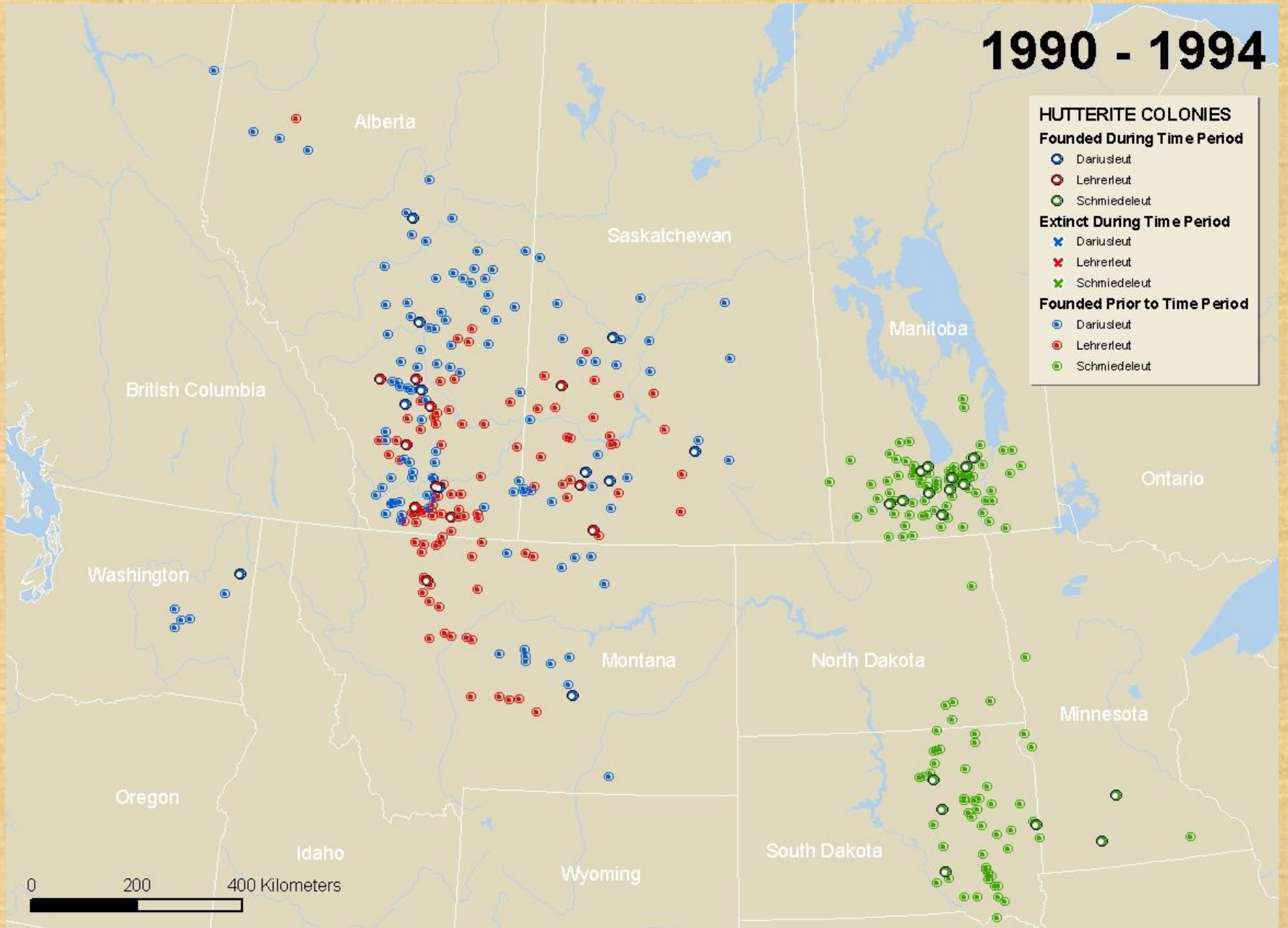
1980 - 1984



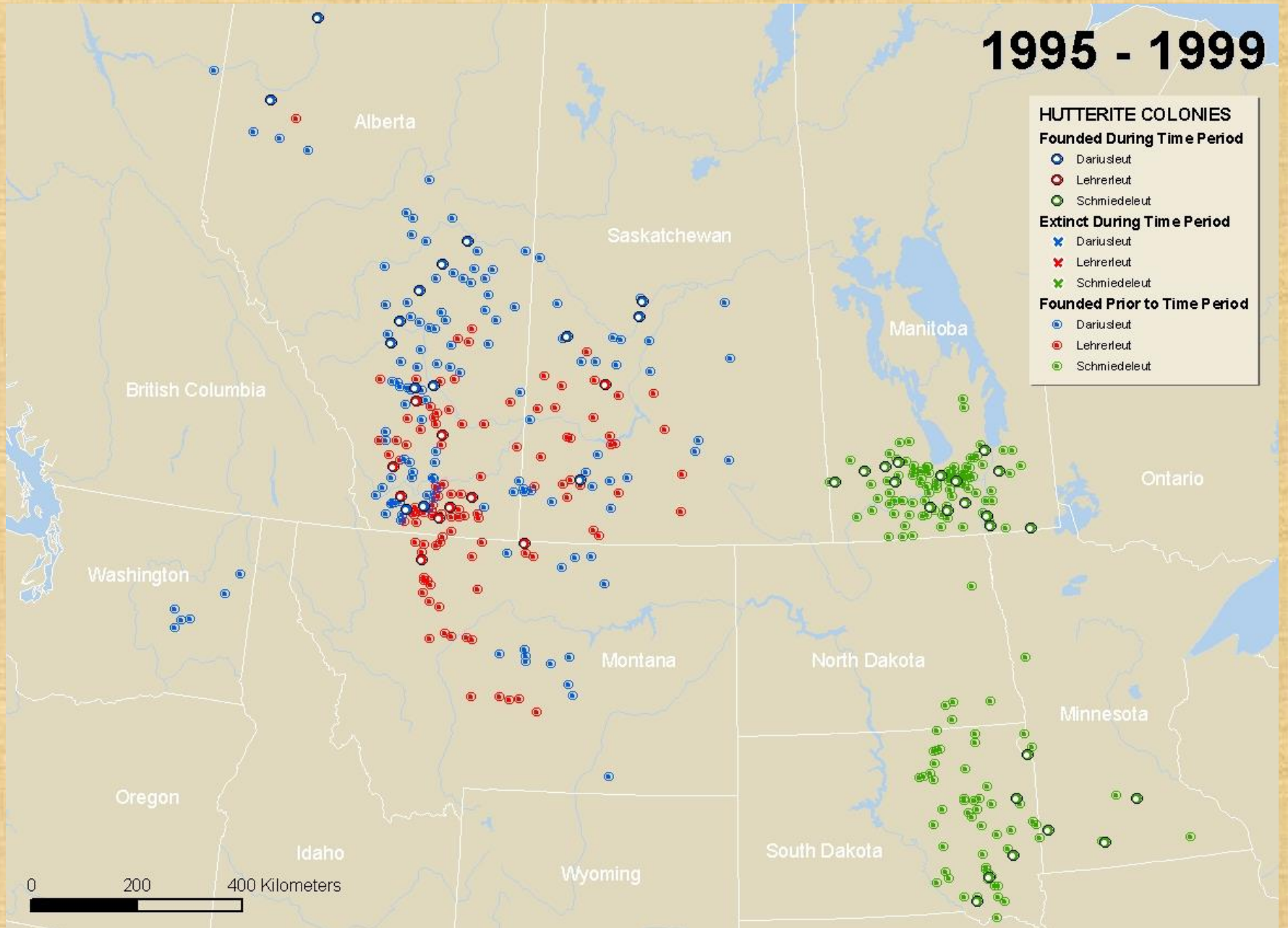
1985 - 1989



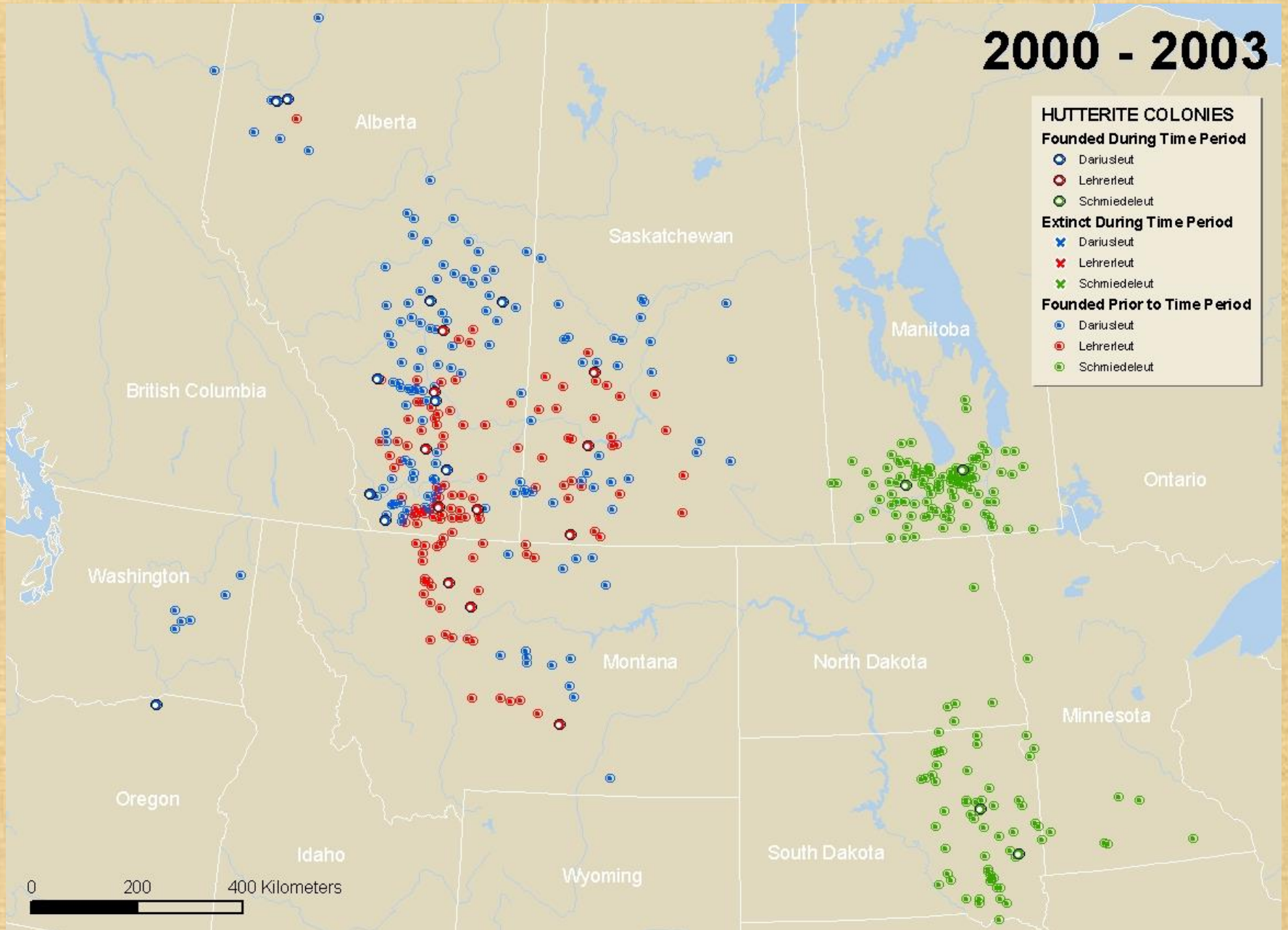
1990 - 1994

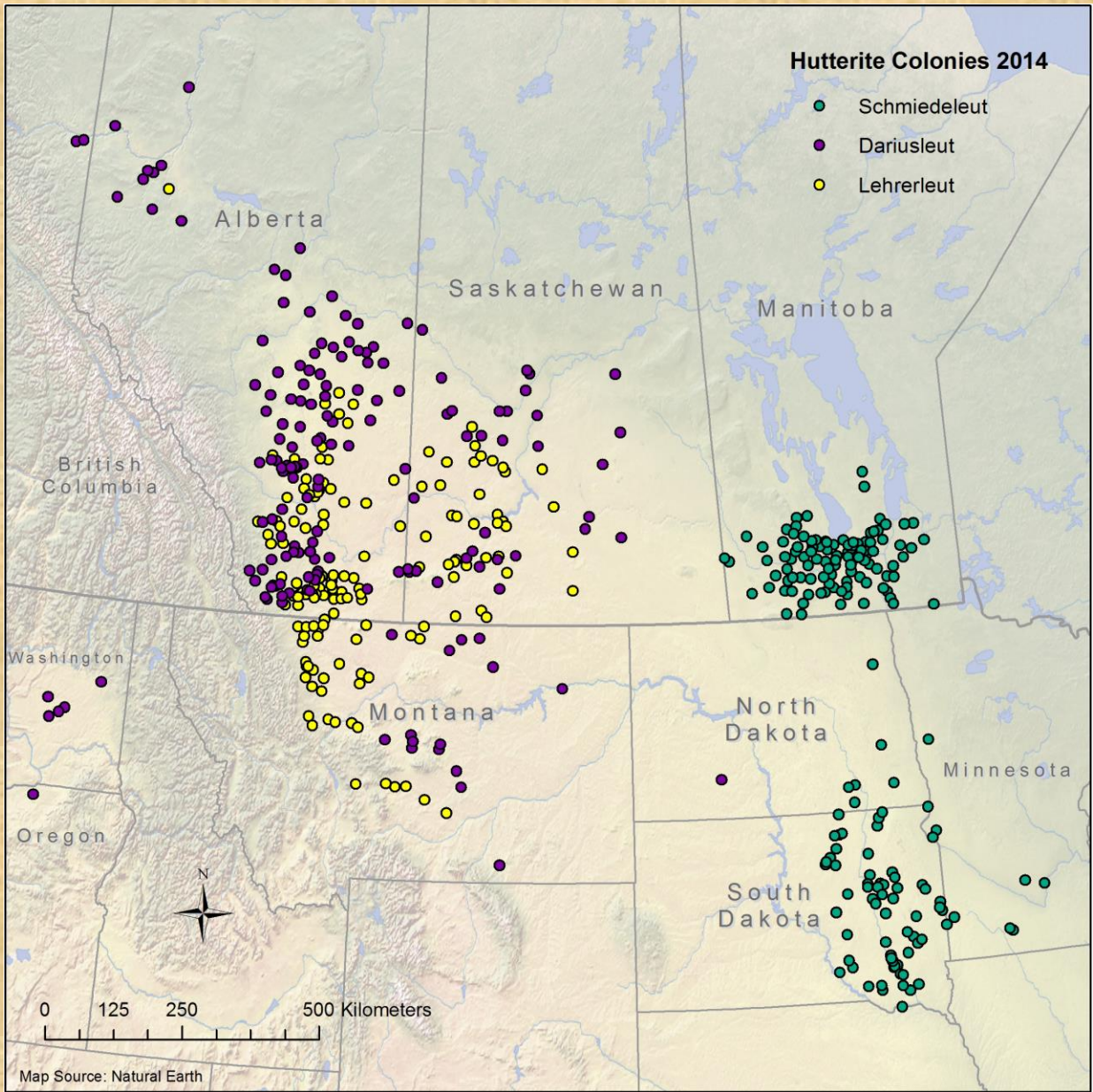


1995 - 1999



2000 - 2003





Problems with mainstream society

- Community resistance

- Fear of alien dominance
- Lack of interest in assimilation by Hutterites seen as major contrast with other ethnic groups

- Legislated barriers

- Alberta Communal Property Act
- Manitoba "Gentlemen's Agreement."
- Saskatchewan's "Gentlemen's Agreement."

New threats with Multiculturalism

- After 1967 -- Multiculturalism Policy:
- Change in attitudes creates new problems for Hutterites
- More difficult to retain separation from mainstream society
- The communications revolution
- Easier penetration of secular values

The greatest threat

- Evangelical churches offer promise of personal salvation without communal living.
- Defection rates increasing because of the easier transition to the outside world
 - More ex-Hutterites in outside world.
 - Defectors more likely to have outside contacts to help
 - Oil industry needs labour with Hutterite skill sets
 - Most who leave link up with ex-Hutterites or join similar Christian institutions that offer a sense of community

A simple life . . .



That embraces agricultural technology

Hutterite agriculture is highly mechanized. Their industries employ cutting edge technology



Colonies are now moving into industry

- High land prices.
- Agricultural quotas.
- Low returns on agricultural investment.
- Limited job opportunities with mechanized agriculture.



Gender and democracy

- Work is gendered: women in the domestic sphere; men in agriculture/industry.
- Only baptized men can vote on colony affairs.
- Nature of work redresses this imbalance to some extent.



The digital revolution

- Threatens Hutterites' separation from the outside world
- Radio, television, cellphones and internet access offer easy penetration of secular values into the colony
- Access to cellphones and internet is necessary to conduct business in the modern world
- Sales representatives offer inducements: hockey and football game tickets, liquor, restaurant meals, cash kickbacks etc.

Cell phones now commonly used

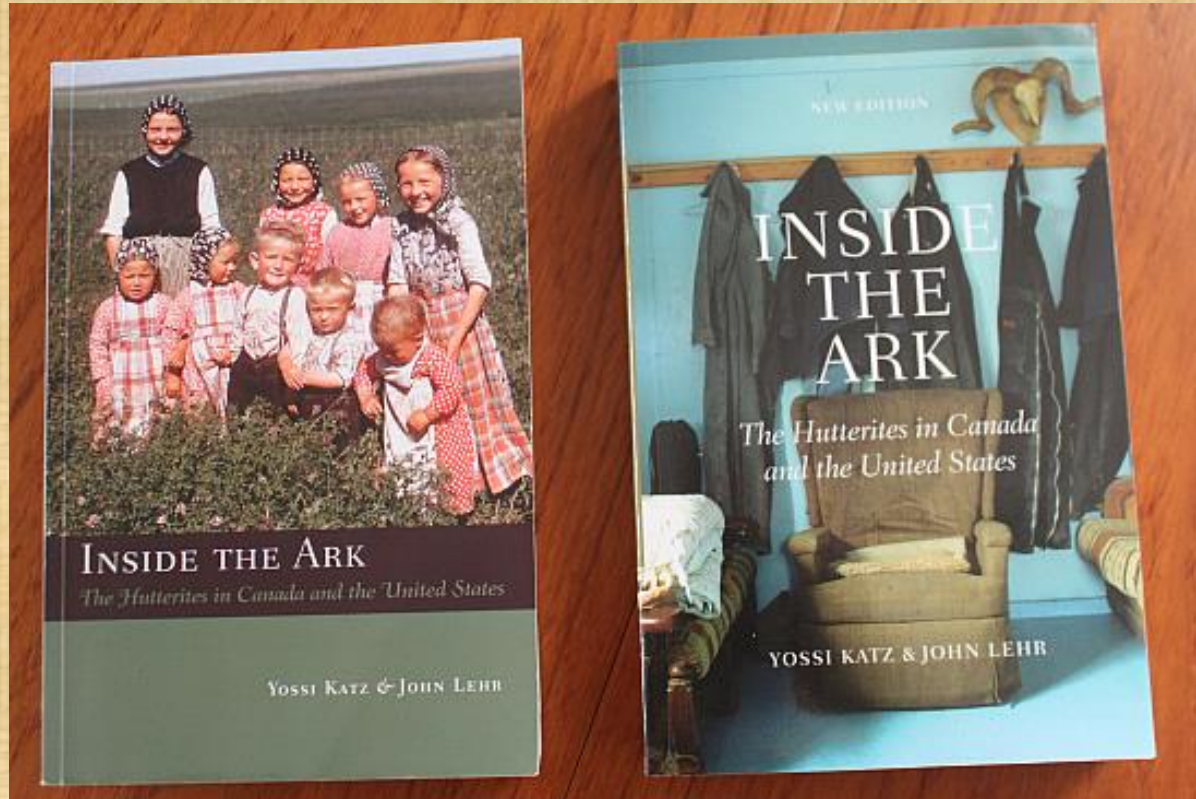
- Cell phones are now allowed – if they do not have a camera.
- Some colonies issue cell phones on a “sign out as needed” basis.
- I-phones are not officially allowed on most colonies.
- BUT – many have them.
- Implications?



Questions?



Answers:



Yossi Katz and John Lehr, *Inside the Ark: the Hutterites in Canada and the United States*, (2nd Edition) Regina: University of Regina Press, 2014.
ISBN 978-0-88977-358-5 (pbk)