

Ethnohistory Field School Report 2015

Making Maps Speak The Soowahlie Community Mapping Project

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The Ethnohistory Field School is a collaboration of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Stó:lō Nation & Stó:lō Tribal Council, and the History Departments of the University of Victoria and University of Saskatchewan.



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I have to admit to being uncertain about how to begin this essay. When the Soowahlie Community Mapping Project was first proposed and then assigned to me and fellow 2013 field school students Dallas Posavad and Anne Janhunen, none of us had any idea just how big this project could become. Two years after the fact, I am still amazed at how big things are, and how much they continue to grow. I am also struck by how much I have learned in the process. When we first began, I knew very little about the Stó:lō community of Soowahlie. Now, with what seems like an archive's worth of manuscript sources, close to twenty hours of interview material with Soowahlie community members, dozens of pages of field notes, knowledge of a wide range of scholarly literature and some important and lasting relationships with amazing people from the community, I have a much greater appreciation of the richness and depth of Soowahlie's history and connection to place.

This is a discussion of where the Soowahlie Community Mapping Project has been over the last two years, and where it has the potential to go from this point forward. Soowahlie identities are deeply tied to the community's rich, storied and diverse environment. If, as geographer Denis Wood argues, maps make arguments and tell stories, then one of the main arguments our community map will make is about Soowahlie's identity: that it is embedded in a deep-abiding sense of place and a longstanding claim to a particular environment.¹ Maps, writes ethnogeographer Gwilym Eades, can be "active elements in the formations of Indigenous identities, and they can act as vehicles for the

¹ Denis Wood, *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (London: The Guilford Press, 2010), 48.

transmission of discrete representations of place-based cultural information.”² According to Wood and Eades, then, maps can be powerful storytelling media used to educate their audiences about the perspectives, experiences and knowledge that people have about their places. Maps are windows onto our ways of knowing about the places we inhabit. This project is testament to the importance of places to the Soowahlie community, and to Stó:lō people more broadly. It also reflects how maps may be windows onto our ways of knowing about the past. The project focuses, through a local lens, on intersections of place, shared histories, and cultural identities. By doing so, the Soowahlie Community Mapping Project will hopefully fit into conversations about reconciliation and decolonization in British Columbia and Canada more generally. Community mapping as a collaborative effort can not only situate local Indigenous connections to and knowledge of place as alive, complex and sophisticated, but by drawing on relationships that can potentially bridge gaps in native-newcomer and community-academia relations.

The Soowahlie Community Mapping Project

The Soowahlie Community Mapping Project, first proposed by former chiefs Otis Jasper and Larry Commodore, is a counter-mapping initiative. Geographers define counter-mapping as “using geographical techniques to augment awareness of unique relationships to inhabited landscapes, get territorial claims recognized by dominant settler societies, and challenge disadvantageous political circumstances.”³ Amidst the specific land claim in which Soowahlie is currently involved, Jasper and Commodore suggested that a map that reflects the community’s connection to their original land base, and shows the colonial

² Gwilym Lucas Eades, *Maps and Maps: Redrawing Culture, Place and Identity in Indigenous Communities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 19.

³ Anna J. Willow, “Doing Sovereignty in Native North America: Anishinaabe Counter-Mapping and the Struggle for Land-Based Self-Determination,” *Human Ecology* 41, no. 6: 872.

change that took place within it, could be a powerful tool. Chief Brenda Wallace endorsed the project as meaningful for future community development planning and cultural education programs. The intent was to build a database of both oral and archival source material that could tell a story about pre-reserve Soowahlie territory, the lands contained within the 1864 Douglas Reserve boundaries (4000 acres), and the current reserve (1140 acres). This material will then be catalogued and interpreted, and built into a digital, layered GIS map of the environment. This map will be accessible to community members, as well as, in part, to the public.

With help from both Stó:lō and University advisors, our team began by working out a research plan that involved speaking to as many community members as possible and scouring local archives. Speaking with former Soowahlie council member Gracie Kelly before interviews began, we learned some of the things that community members might be interested in seeing on the map. We received an overwhelmingly positive response from the Elders, youths and other community members who were interested in talking about why Soowahlie's territory was important to them, and what they knew about it. We interviewed numerous people individually, joined an Elders' meeting to group-interview eight Soowahlie Elders for a full afternoon, and hosted a community open house day at the band office. To all of our interviews, we brought large maps of various scales and asked people to locate, wherever possible, the places in Soowahlie territory associated with their knowledge and memories. We have about twenty-five filled maps; those who used them agreed to have their content included in the digital map or in future publications.



Fig. 1: One of our map-scales. This is an image of the current reserve boundaries, with some roads shown.

Following interviews and archival research, we set out a clearly defined plan for processing and interpreting the material. Our original project prospectus read, “We have determined that the best way to categorize our research approaches is through a tripartite, thematic division. We will divide the project into three categories.” One category focused on the history of land use and changes to Soowahlie’s environment and social relationships in the community that were in large part products of colonial encounters. One thing that might fall in this category would be a comparison of the Douglas reserve boundaries with those of the 1868 reserve and current reserve. The second category involved locating and recording what we called “storied spaces,” including sacred and xa:xa sites, sxwoxiyám sites, and habitats of such creatures as Sasquatch or water babies. Finally, we planned to map any other places that people felt were of historical or contemporary significance to the community, whether having cultural, social, economic and environmental value. One such place might be people’s hunting trails or recreation areas like swimming spots. With our

immensely rich source base, the interpretation and organization of our sources proves to be revealing of Soowahlie's connections to place, and the histories that have helped shape those connections.

Soowahlie: A Brief Overview

Soowahlie First Nation is a Stó:lō Tribal Council community located eight kilometres south of Chilliwack, British Columbia. The community's population is about 300, with nearly 200 people living on reserve. In a few ways, it stands out from neighbouring First Nation communities. First, its 1,140 acres is fairly large compared to other B.C. coastal reserves. Considering its proximity to the centre of Chilliwack and to other nearby, more "urban" reserves that have leased Certificate of Possession (CP) lots for residential or commercial development, Soowahlie bears a sense of remarkable, and sometimes beautiful, seclusion. In some places, the reserve is rich and dense with second-growth foliage, after having been clear-cut in the 1920s and 1930s. Many community members' residences are difficult to spot from a distance because of their leafy surroundings. The reserve encompasses high terrain on the hills northeast of Vedder Mountain and low floodplains on its east side, whose shape changes frequently due to shifts in the course of the Chilliwack River. In these floodplains, the terrain is in many places overgrown. Located on the hill on the northwest corner of the reserve is an old village site with pithouse depressions and burial mounds. Within the broader environment considered Soowahlie's is the popular freshwater Cultus Lake and surrounding woodland, as well as Sweltzer Creek. The Vedder Mountain, west of Cultus Lake, is an important storied place.

Environmentally diverse and quietly beautiful, Soowahlie's territory is also rich in material resources. Stó:lō stories also suggest that the community has always hunted and

fished in the Cultus Lake and Sweltzer Creek area. According to community members, diverse species of salmon used to spawn in the Creek. Berry-picking and cedar bark stripping still occurs in some places on reserve. Some stories also suggest that the environment not only abounds materially, but that a rich, stratified Stó:lō economy has also thrived in this area, based on access to local metaphysical resources. Cultus Lake used to contain spirit power, associated with the dangerous creature called slallicum that lives in it and takes the shape of a giant maggot. Access to the power contained there was privileged; only powerful “Indian doctors” were able to harness it.⁴ Those who incautiously approached the lake with bad intentions were drowned in the lake, and their flesh melted and consumed off their bones. The lake’s power was an important resource in Stó:lō spiritual economies.

Soowahlie’s reserve and traditional landbase are also home to beings that figure prominently in Stó:lō traditional stories. Water babies live in Sweltzer Creek; these beings exist in other water bodies in broader Stó:lō territory, including Chilliwack Lake and Kawkawa Lake. They are responsible for introducing the sxwó:yxwey mask into Stó:lō culture.⁵ Another creature, commonly called Sasquatch, has been sighted numerous times in Soowahlie. The home territory of Sasq’ets, as he is known in Halq’eméylem, is near the Harrison River community of Sts’ailes, a Stó:lō Tribal Council Community about 60 kilometres north of Soowahlie. Stories suggest that as Sasq’ets travels throughout Stó:lō territory, he leaves marks on the land, sometimes tearing bark off trees, sometimes creating new trails, and even sometimes showing himself to those who happen to be

⁴ Amy Cooper, “Amy Cooper at Soowahlie February 8, 1962” in *Oliver Wells Interview Collection (1959-1969)*, transcript, Stó:lō Nation Archives, 76-77.

⁵ Naxaxalhts’i (Sonny McHalsie), “We Have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us,” in *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, Bruce Miller, ed., (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 112-115.

nearby. Soowahlie is one place through which Sasq'ets is reputed to have left these kinds of marks. Stories about sightings within the reserve abound. Some community members say they have seen him, while Elders say they know exactly where his paths through Soowahlie are.

The Soowahlie Community Map will need to reflect both historical changes to the environment and to relationships that the community has had with it. The Soowahlie community is not unfamiliar with change. The very origins of Soowahlie are rooted in movement and displacement; indeed, the origin story of Cultus Lake is also one origin story of Soowahlie. After a deadly flood filled an inhabited basin, killing the people of an entire village (except one family) and creating Cultus Lake, the only survivor resettled beside the new lake with his family, and his settlement site became what is now called Soowahlie. Keith Carlson argues that “within Stó:lō historical consciousness, accounts of such devastating and depopulating disasters as floods, fires and famine explain and account for population movements and changes in group identities.”⁶ According to Amy Cooper in 1963, Soowahlie came to be after the marriage between a lone surviving woman of a devastating famine in a village near Cultus Lake and a Nooksack man who had travelled north. This joining of the “remnants” of two peoples was the foundation of a community.⁷ Some oral histories suggest that, where Soowahlie is now, there used to be two communities: one Nooksack, from across what is now the 49th parallel, and one Ts'elxwíqw. The two communities, according to Elder Larry Commodore, “spoke a different ‘lingo,” and

⁶ Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 87.

⁷ Amy Cooper, “Amy Cooper at Soowahlie February 8, 1962” in *Oliver Wells Interview Collection (1959-1969)*, transcript, Stó:lō Nation Archives, 76-77

were not always friendly towards each other.⁸ At some point in Soowahlie's history, the Nooksack village disappeared, either migrating out of the area or amalgamating with the Tsel'qwe'iqw village after some demographic disaster. These stories suggest that change and adaptation are important elements in the history of Soowahlie's relationship to the land, and thus its collective identity.

When explorers and settlers entered the Soowahlie environment in the late nineteenth century, bringing with them changes of a different kind, the necessity to adapt to change was not new to the community.

Among the first and most substantial changes involved the introduction of reserve boundaries. In response to incoming outsider populations in the area and in other Indigenous places around what became British Columbia, Governor James Douglas set out to set aside and protect Indigenous land bases that might otherwise be consumed by non- Stó:lō settlement. In 1864, consulting with leaders from the area, Douglas' surveyors laid out a 4,000-acre reserve for Soowahlie. The lands encompassed some of Vedder Crossing and



Fig. 2: The original McColl boundaries of Soowahlie reserve (1854) are shown in yellow. The current 1,140 acre reserve is designated by the red line. Image courtesy Stó:lō Nation Archives.

reached northward to present-day Sardis, and went as far south as the northern shore of

⁸ Larry Commodore, (Former Chief, Soowahlie Band), interview by Anne Janhunnen, Dallas Posavad and Sabina Trimble, Chilliwack, B.C., 28 May, 2013.

Cultus Lake. Following his time in office, demands from settlers and provincial leaders led to significant reductions in reserve acreage. In 1868, with the approval of government-instated chief Captain John, Joseph Trutch's administration reduced the reserve to 690 acres of what it considered to be all the "usable" land the community needed. Just a decade later in 1879, nearly 500 of those acres were repatriated to the reserve, making for the current 1140 acres of Soowahlie reserve space. This 1140 acres, along with access to the Grass and Tzcheacten reserves (shared with two other Stó:lō communities), replaced a much larger expanse of territory.

Throughout the twentieth century, the community responded to further encroachments on their land. Following reserve reductions, the Cultus Lake environment became, first, part of an extensive timber berth site, then a centerpiece of a well-populated and frequently visited vacation place in interior British Columbia. Early 20th century non-Stó:lō demands for a wilderness park to protect the well-loved lake and surrounding woodlands led to almost 2500 acres of land on all sides of the lake being designated municipal and provincial park land. Then, local settlers made requests for a public through road in the reserve to Cultus Lake. The Chilliwack Board of Trade stressed to the Department of Indian Affairs the importance of safe and accessible roads to accommodate increasing traffic to Cultus Lake and settlement in the area.⁹ A series of unilateral bureaucratic decisions to cut off reserve and traditional lands for road-building, park-expansion and other purposes occurred throughout the twentieth century, seemingly outside of the community's ability to prevent. In time, two through-roads to the two Cultus Lake Parks were constructed through Soowahlie lands. The main public access road, first

⁹ Indian Superintendent B.C., A.W. Vowell to Indian Agent, New Westminster District, 15 March 1889, Cultus Lake Park Development Collection: Correspondence, Stó:lō Nation Archives.

called Mount Baker Trail and now called Cultus Lake Road, was built upon just over six acres of cutoff Soowahlie land in 1934, with no compensation to the community except a one-time payment of \$75 and an assurance that “it is considered that this road is of sufficient benefit to the reserve to justify its transfer without compensation.”¹⁰

Other encroachments have shifted the shape and nature of Soowahlie territory. The CNR built tracks through the reserve in the early twentieth century, which in part accommodated logging operations that occurred extensively in Soowahlie territory, and within the reserve boundaries, starting in 1926. In the 1940s, the Department of National Defence (DND) appropriated about a ninth of the reserve under the auspices of the War Measures Act. There is still unexploded ordnance in the now repatriated section of the reserve. In 1941, the DND made an agreement with the Department of Indian Affairs to lease a gravel road on reserve, strictly for military use. Soowahlie received \$1 per year for the transaction. Three decades later, chief and council renegotiated with the DND to increase the per annum payment to \$100. Another public access road leading to Chilliwack Lake, runs southeast through the northwest corner of the reserve; lands were appropriated for this road in 1957. In April 1970, the Crown granted Vedder Crushing Co. Ltd. the right to use and occupy land and remove and process gravel from the reserve.¹¹ In a history of interactions between Soowahlie and newcomers, changes to the land have occurred often with little or no consultation with the community, and have served to restrict the Soowahlie’s longstanding relationships to place.

¹⁰ Canada, Department of Indian Affairs Surveys, P.C. 2932, 19 November, 1934.

¹¹ Stó:lo Tribal Council, *Soowahlie Band: List of Land Transactions Documents on File at the Stó:lo Tribal Council Office*, 4 August 1988, SNA.

Yet, the community has adapted and responded in numerous ways to restrictions and cutoffs. Soowahlie has a rich and long history of resident engagement in diverse social and economic endeavours that might, to some, be considered colonial activity. One means of responding to colonial administration and new forms of control over their relationships to the land was to participate on reserve in new systems, but in ways that made sense within a Stó:lō cultural framework. Some such activities include orchard growing (mostly berries, pears and apples), logging, fishing, farming (dairy, equestrian and wheat), and working in the gravel quarries. Soowahlie Elders remember family orchards and expanses of farmland that used to operate in current CP lots. In addition, a long history of resistance and protest, surfacing in roadblocks on Cultus Lake Road, suggest that the community has resisted colonial encroachments publically and deliberately. Further, the persistence of stories about family connections to the broader, cutoff Soowahlie land base, and stories about the Stó:lō features of the environment suggest that, in Soowahlie collective consciousness, the environment remains Stó:lō even in the face of massive colonial change.

This long and rich past, and the many place-making stories it has produced, form the substance of the Soowahlie Community Map. Histories of change and continuity, stories suggesting the persistent Stó:lō-ness of the environment, diverse economic activity and family histories in this broadly-interpreted geographical area will make for potentially endless layers for our map. They also can form the basis for important ethnohistorical analyses of place-making and collective community identities. The following sections explore related scholarly literature inspiring our process, problems and practicalities associated with our research plan, and possible avenues of interpretation that can inform the structure and content of the map.

The Soowahlie Mapping Project in Dialogue

The mapping project draws on a broad and interdisciplinary range of scholarship to inform its approach and analysis. Scholars of space and place, including anthropologists, geographers and literary critics, reflect on the multiple and often conflicting ways in which people interpret their environments, and thus imbue them with meaning. We also refer to works by scholars of Stó:lō culture and history, while historians and ethnohistorians of broader Indigenous and colonial pasts in Canada expose this very localized mapping project to a more general scholarly conversation. Recent works of collaborative history have also inspired our participatory and collaborative research process. Finally, geographers have long been discussing the power of maps and the potential of counter-mapping. These conversations are important to our project.

Scholarship on place-making will help us to frame the Soowahlie Community Map as a series of layers reflecting diverse ways of understanding the environment and the past, rather than as a mirror image of features of the earth “as they actually are” or of the community’s past “as it actually happened.” Space and place theorists argue that humans transform geographical spaces into meaningful places as they inhabit, pass through, build upon, and talk about them. These scholars suggest that “when places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination.”¹² Such anthropologists as Keith Basso, Stephen Feld, Margaret Rodman and others comment on “the inseparability of the lives various peoples live and the settings in

¹² Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places, Wisdom Sits in Places*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 107.

which they live them,” the diverse ways in which “person and place pour into each other.”¹³ Space and place theory brings an important approach to the Soowahlie Mapping Project. Recognizing, along with these scholars, that “places produce meaning and that meaning can be grounded in place,” we seek to trace and analyze the many ways in which that meaning-production has occurred in the Soowahlie environment.¹⁴

Some scholars also emphasize that place is a controversial thing. As with Soowahlie, where numerous peoples may conceive of place differently, voices (and thus claims to places) often conflict. Ted Chamberlin argues that place is “a nest of contradictions.”¹⁵ Other geographers suggest that places are neither inert nor passive, but bound up within the complex and diverse “interlocking cultural processes [...] political processes [...] and economic processes.”¹⁶ Multiple types of place-making, among both Stó:lō and non-Stó:lō people, characterize the Soowahlie environment. We intend to represent and highlight many voices and thus construct a more complex picture of the importance of place to the many people who know and live in Soowahlie territory.

Stories will also be an important component of the map. Scholarship on storytelling suggests that stories are an important means of place-making in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. Soowahlie-born scholar Jo-Ann Archibald writes that storytelling, or storywork, is a legitimate and important form of Stó:lō knowledge-making that should be

¹³ Clifford Geertz, “Afterword,” in *Senses of Place*, Stephen Feld and Keith H. Basso, eds., (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 260.

¹⁴ Margaret Rodman, “Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality,” in *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga, eds., (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003),

¹⁵ J. Edward Chamberlin, *If This is Your Land, Where are Your Stories? Finding Common Ground* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004), 3.

¹⁶ James S. Duncan and David Ley, “Introduction: Representing the Place of Culture,” in *place/culture/representation*, eds. James S. Duncan and David Ley (New York: Routledge, 1993), 11.

taken seriously.¹⁷ Stories about diverse Soowahlie places will be situated within Stó:lō environmental knowledge systems and are reflective of local ways of knowing place. Ahousaht legal scholar Johnnie Mack's work also suggests that Indigenous peoples have told stories about places to assert their claims to lands in response to colonial change. Both colonial land policy in Canada and Indigenous responses, he argues, thereto are fundamentally bound up in story.¹⁸ Further, knowledge-holder Naxaxalhts'i discusses stories as central to Stó:lō identities and epistemologies, and as expressions of Stó:lō rights to traditional places. Stories, to Naxaxalhts'i, are evidence of a long-abiding and unceded claim to places and resources that have been cutoff through a history of colonialism.¹⁹ As such, stories about Soowahlie will factor centrally into the project.

Recent collaborative scholarship in Indigenous history also provides an important framework for the map research, as we seek to focus on dialogue, negotiation and relationship-building. The project was built on the relationships already in existence between Soowahlie leaders, community members, the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, and the Universities of Victoria and Saskatchewan, and so its starting place was one of collaboration. Suggested by members of the community, the mapping project was carried out in that spirit. Tla'amin Elder Elsie Paul and historian Paige Raibmon's *Written as I Remember It* outlines an approach to collaborative work that ethnohistorians can and should attend to. Especially important, I think, is Raibmon's discussion of "transformational listening." This, she argues, requires that the researcher be

¹⁷ Jo-Ann Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiiem), *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Johnny Mack, "Hoquotist: Reorienting through Storied Practice," in *Storied Communities: Narratives of Contact and Arrival in Constituting Political Community*, Eds. Hester Lessard, Rebecca Johnson, Jeremy Webber (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 287-303.

¹⁹ Naxaxalhts'i. "We Have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us."

self-reflexive and aware of her positionality, and to strive for “continual openness to learning something new and unknown.”²⁰ Taking such an approach is the best way to do more transparent, reflexive and shared ethnohistorical research for the Soowahlie Mapping Project. “Transformational listening” in this context means hearing and acknowledging multiple, varied and often conflicting perspectives and stories about the same place. Bringing this kind of listening into the mapping project means to me that even when we try to listen for every story and every voice we can possibly find, there will always be more voices, and thus always room for expansion.

Work in geography also informs the theoretical and methodological bases of this project. Some geographers who call themselves critical cartographers have been discussing the power of maps for decades now. Geographer Denis Wood argues, “maps selectively link places in the world...to other kinds of things... for the purpose of underwriting the reproduction (or the contestation) of the social relations of power.”²¹ He, among others, argues that maps are by no mean reproductions of things in the world as they actually are. They are more reflective, rather, of the knowledge-systems and political motives of their makers. Historically, maps have been used to construct states and restrict potential challenges to them. Cole Harris and others argue that in colonized places such as British Columbia, colonizing administrations exerted power over Indigenous peoples and their lands through “an enveloping array of technologies, assumptions and channels” such as maps.²² Locating Indigenous peoples “within the Western grid of intelligibility” also

²⁰ Elsie Paul, with Paige Raibmon and Harmony Johnson, *Written as I Remember It: Teachings (?ems ta?aw) from the Life of a Sliammon Elder* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 5.

²¹ Wood, *Rethinking*, 20.

²² Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 269.

“securely positions them as unequivocal citizens...of modern nation-states” or as subjects to colonial power structures.²³ These colonial processes are “intricately caught up in the inscription of cartographic power both upon the land...and upon the bodies of [Indigenous] people.”²⁴ Maps have been an important tool for the “resettlement, relocation and reserves” spatially constricting Indigenous lives “under both external and internal colonial rule.”²⁵

And yet, the power of maps has more lately been harnessed by scholars and Indigenous communities to respond to colonial change and reassert Indigenous claims to colonized places. Numerous geographers and anthropologists engaged in what is called counter-mapping, discussing the potentials and problems of decolonizing the map in this way. Joel Wainwright and Joe Bryan argue that Indigenous counter-mapping initiatives began first as weapons in land claims cases in the Americas. Lawyers in Indigenous land claims cases “need maps and affidavits about cultural land use patterns...in order to render their clients legible as indigenous peoples and rights-bearing subjects before the law.”²⁶ Maps have been central in the late twentieth century to Indigenous fights for recognition and reclamation within Western legal frameworks.

Other counter-mapping initiatives have the potential to challenge power imbalances by claiming and constructing maps in new ways, to better historicize, Indigenize and thus decolonize places. Maps, writes Anna Willow, “can be used to challenge dominant ways of conceiving the landscape and the socio-political interests they represent.”²⁷ In recent projects, cartographers, anthropologists and Indigenous communities have collaborated to

²³ Willow, “Doing Sovereignty,” 873.

²⁴ Eades, *Maps and Memes*, 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Joel Wainwright and Joe Bryan, “Cartography, Territory, Property: Postcolonial Reflections on Indigenous Counter-mapping in Nicaragua and Belize,” *Cultural Geographies* 16, no. 2 (2009): 154.

²⁷ Willow, “Doing Sovereignty,” 872.

rewrite from Indigenous perspectives. Among the most striking and successful of these projects (and also one of the earliest, and most obviously relevant to my own mapping project) is the groundbreaking, co-created *Stó:lō Historical Atlas* edited by Keith Carlson and produced in collaboration with knowledge-holder Sonny McHalsie and archaeologist Dave Schaepe, numerous Stó:lō community members and Elders, students of the ethnohistory field school and a multidisciplinary host of other scholars.²⁸ The volume consists of a compelling mix of large atlas plates combining geographic, historical and ethnographic analyses and presentations of the Stó:lō world; archaeological and historical timelines; striking graphics that include historical and contemporary photographs and art; and text that is equally academic and approachable.

Atlas plates situate on large representations of Stó:lō places, important stories attached to particular places, as told by the Elders and knowledge-keepers with whom Carlson and McHalsie, as well as students, spent years collaborating. They also geo-rectify historical change, both before and after settler contact, in the Stó:lō world. The work opens with an introduction emphasizing the importance of understanding relationships in order to understand the Stó:lō: “first and foremost,” it says, “it will become clear that to understand Stó:lō culture and history, one must appreciate the relationships that built them. The Stó:lō have developed relationships with the water, land and air, and these relationships have changed over time.” Further, the maps express histories of both change and continuity, reflecting the authors’ conviction that “the world has never been static” for the Stó:lō. To represent on maps the relationships among Stó:lō people, between them and the physical and spiritual worlds, and between continuity and change, the atlas plates

²⁸ Keith Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

build relationships between community and academia, between oral and archival research, between written and oral word, between images and text and among the tools and guiding principles of geography, ethnography and history. The maps or atlas plates become embedded in a much larger project that surrounds them, at the heart of which is instilling in readers a better and broader understanding of Stó:lō histories culture. In the same way, the Soowahlie Community Mapping Project hinges on similar kinds of relationship-building to present, in map form, a new ethnohistory of Soowahlie people's relationships to place.

Irène Hirt describes a Mapuche mapping initiative that incorporated dreaming as a source of geographical information.²⁹ She sees this project as a way to “appropriate the state’s techniques and modes of representation and reinforce the legitimacy of Indigenous claims” by redefining the ontological framework of those very techniques.³⁰ “Considering Indigenous forms of knowledge” in this way, writes Hirt, “allows for the inclusion of dimensions of Indigenous territorialities, such as the sacred or the spiritual, into the making of the map.”³¹ In collaboration with UVic Anthropology student Amy Becker, Stz’uminus First Nation is working on a “digital place names map embedded with place-based stories” told by Hulq’im’inum Elders.³² The research involves having Stz’uminus youth video- and audio-record Elders telling stories about Hul’qumi’num places and place names. The researchers will then embed these in a publically accessible GIS map. Becker sees the project presenting “a more integrated view of Indigenous perspectives of the

²⁹ Irène Hirt, “Mapping Dreams/Dreaming Maps: Bridging Indigenous and Western Geographical Knowledge,” *Cartographica* 47, no. 2 (2012): 106.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

³² Amy Becker, “The Stz’uminus Storied Places Project: A Community-Based Digital Mapping Project to Mobilize Indigenous Place Names and Place-based Stories,” *The Arbutus Review* 5, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 4.

environment, unifying the many layers of knowledge associated with place names in an easy-to-use interactive mapping platform.”³³ The Soowahlie Mapping Project is guided by a similar approach and point of view.

Some scholars warn about potential pitfalls and apparent contradictions of using maps to reclaim and decolonize. Wainwright and Willow argue that using maps to claim places and sovereignty within a Western legal framework is restrictive and contradictory. Maps create boundaries. They freeze Indigenous land use and relationships in time and space. When used for the courts, they do not, and cannot, account for changes to land use patterns, historically-situated knowledge, and the kinds of stories and songs that make environments significant to Indigenous peoples, beyond their economic value. This kind of mapping restricts Indigenous land usage within non-Indigenous paradigms centred on property value. Willow suggests, “counter-mapping necessarily and simultaneously impedes as well as enhances the sovereignty process.”³⁴ Locating sacred and private places on public or government maps also entails the risks of “cooptation and misuse of decontextualized information by outsiders, contestations with neighboring communities that hinder the formation of political alliances, and the replacement of direct experiential knowledge of the landscape with detached data,” according to Willow.³⁵

Wood expresses similar concerns about counter-mapping in land claims cases. “No matter the backward leaning efforts to make maps that are authentically Indigenous,” he writes:

the results have to be able to play in state court systems and therefore have to look, feel, and taste like state-sponsored maps...Indigenous mappers find

³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁴ Willow, “Doing Sovereignty,” 872.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 882.

that in the end they have to locate themselves on the invader's map anyway, for, to say it again, it's only in the invader's court that their land claim can be heard where, win or lose, *their mere presence validates the state's claims to authority.*"³⁶

Counter-mapping, writes Wood, is rooted in practices and forms that are, by their very nature, colonial. He refers to counter-mapping projects as "reactionary," and "cooptive" of non-Indigenous, inherently power-laden tools."³⁷ Trapped in these contradictions, Wood argues, counter-mapping can do little to overturn state hegemony. Rather, he suggests, the main "contribution of Indigenous mapping to cartographic critique" can only be "that of calling into question the authority of the state's maps."³⁸

While I agree with Wood that contradictions exist, I am unsatisfied with his conclusion that Indigenous counter-mapping is cooptive and reactionary. Certainly, Indigenous mapping occurs within culturally-specific sets of cartographic rules and shapes that have been historically used for dispossessing Indigenous peoples. Yet, the Soowahlie Mapping Project, the *Stó:lō Historical Atlas*, the Stz'uminus Storied Places Project and the Mapuche dream-mapping project take those very tools and turn them against the status quo. I am inclined to think that there is power in using maps to express the persistence of Indigenous senses of and attachments to colonized places. Even (or perhaps especially) through "Western" media such as maps, we should be straining to challenge the taken-for-granted lines on colonizing maps that have erased Indigenous peoples and place-based knowledge from the picture. Furthermore, using Western-style mapping techniques to communicate Indigenous knowledge about place does not solely serve the purpose of fitting into dominant knowledge regimes and bowing to colonial or state legal systems.

³⁶ Wood, *Rethinking*, 139.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

Such a conclusion stems from the idea that the only path to decolonization, and the most valid way of challenging the state, is in the courts. But counter-mapping projects show that the most powerful challenges to neo-colonial regimes need not only take shape on higher political, economic, judicial ground. There is power in knowledge and education.

In a sense, then, the Soowahlie Mapping Project, and Indigenous counter-mapping more generally, is an active attempt to translate Indigenous ways of being and knowing into a media form familiar to settler peoples. Does this detract from or alter the shape and form of Indigenous ways of knowing? Wood might argue so, but I disagree. Just as there is value in translating Indigenous language stories into English to educate broader audiences, there is also value in rethinking Western cartography in terms of Indigenous ways of knowing. Non-Indigenous peoples, as well as younger Indigenous generations, are familiar with Western-style maps (as they are used to reading books or emails, rather than learning things strictly through orality). As such, translating persistent Indigenous place-knowledge, as best as possible, into Western languages and formats through counter-mapping can be an invaluable means of educating, both across cultural and genealogical boundaries. The broader the audience, the more powerful the project's potential impact.

Problems and Practicalities

A number of concerns and issues have arisen throughout the various stages of this project. While we initially acknowledged that with our tripartite division, "categories" could overlap and be conflated, it was not until much later, when reviewing material, that we discovered just how problematic it could be to organize things in this way. While our three categories might be useful for building keyword- and theme-searchable layers for the digital map, such clean-cut divisions of Soowahlie place-making knowledge can obscure

just how complex that knowledge can be. Our categories are not reflective of the non-linear, richly diverse and inter-subjective conversations that we shared with people. When asked questions about specific subjects (Department of National Defence encroachments in Soowahlie, for example), community members often turned to related, but otherwise “categorized” subjects, such as Sasquatch trails, which pass through DND-appropriated lands. Such overlaps reflect how, in Soowahlie collective consciousness, seemingly disparate subjects like colonial encroachments and metaphysical creatures in fact are all part of a larger, interrelated picture. They reflect dynamic and complex relationships to place underlying Soowahlie’s history and identity. Taking such complications into account in our interpretation and analysis of map content, while also maintaining a community-approved organizing structure, will hopefully make for a rich and highly interpretable source base and map.

Other practicalities and problems have to do with the fluid, changing and sometimes-conflicting nature of place-making knowledge, even in very small communities like Soowahlie. This point relates particularly to memories, and to Indigenous storytelling, which, according to storytelling scholars like Jo-Ann Archibald, Julie Cruikshank and Johnnie Mack, may adapt and shift according to context, storyteller, audience or purpose for telling. Some memories (“I saw Sasquatch in this particular spot”) or historical moments (the Douglas Reserve was reduced under the authority of Joseph Trutch’s administration) can be unproblematically represented on the map. Other stories, however, may have multiple versions. Sometimes these conflict. There are, for example, several different stories accounting for the origins of the community. As Archibald suggests, when Stó:lō Elders disagree about versions of a story or memory, they do not “openly voice it but

show difference by introducing a different type of story by saying ‘well, in my family, this is what I heard.’”³⁹ Thus, the stories that we record and include in the map are by no means static or wholly representative of a broad, unchanging Stó:lō, or even Soowahlie, view of things. Maps have been historically understood as representing physical, unchanging realities on the ground. By contrast, the Soowahlie Mapping Project, grounded in Indigenous storytelling, will make room for the adaptive features of storytelling, and for multiple versions of stories. As such, this map will, like the stories upon which it is built, be considered to have a “social life,” like the storytelling Julie Cruikshank analyzes.⁴⁰ It should never be considered final or complete, but ongoing: a process, rather than a final product.

Another issue arising from our approach, or any initiative involving the recording of privileged or sacred knowledge, had to do with privacy. One Elder at the Elders’ Meeting finished telling the story about Cultus Lake’s origins by emphasizing how many stories there are about the lake, and how many stories may have been lost because they have not been shared. In response, Elder Myra Sam quietly said, “but some things we’re not supposed to talk about – that’s why.”⁴¹ Sam was quiet for most of that meeting. Her short statement, and her silence, were charged with important meaning. Knowledge is powerful, and many of the stories associated with certain places in Soowahlie territory are considered to be sacred, private and not shareable with outsiders. While not all community members agree on the levels of sacredness of knowledge, we recognize the concern that, when digitized or publicized, private knowledge becomes public, and thus is

³⁹ Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*, 64.

⁴⁰ Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

⁴¹ Myra Sam, interview at Soowahlie Elders’ Meeting with Anne Janhunen, Dallas Posavad and Sabina Trimble, Soowahlie Reserve, May 28, 2013.

at risk of misinterpretation, misunderstanding or misuse. As such, where people were willing to share stories of a private nature, or point out important, sacred places like bathing sites for the map, we include these (if they want us to), but only on a restricted-access basis. Some knowledge will be accessible with a broader public, some only to the community, and some perhaps only to certain families. Such an approach, we hope, respectfully takes into account issues of privacy and privilege while also ensuring that the map can be a teaching tool for a broad audience.

Many Stories, Many Places: Interpreting for the Soowahlie Map

When asked what they thought should be included in the digital map, Soowahlie community members gave many kinds of answers. An initial meeting with Gracie Kelly, before research went underway, yielded a long list of places and subjects that people from the community are interested in locating and knowing about. Some things Kelly pointed to included interest in environmental damage caused by the gravel quarries on reserve; stories about Cultus Lake; farming and agriculture on the reserve; traditional plant use; and learning about “what was ours traditionally, ” and how that has changed.⁴² During our interviews and time in the archives, we learned diverse perspectives on these subjects. Our research shed light on the range and diversity of both Stó:lō and settler interpretations of Soowahlie land. The following are potential avenues for analyses that can inform the map’s layout and content.

One common point of focus for many of our interviewees was, as Gracie Kelly phrased it, “what was ours traditionally?” and how that land base has shifted over time? Discussing colonial-era reserve cutoffs and encroachments led also to conversations about

⁴² Author’s field notes, 16 May 2013.

ensuing tensions between the community and outsiders. These conversations situated contemporary Stó:lō/settler tensions within a much bigger historical context of colonialism. Elder Pearl Commodore, for example, felt it was most important to focus on the tensions caused by through-roads to Cultus Lake in the reserve. Referring to the effects of a road that was supposed to be shared by Soowahlie and the Cultus Lake Park, Commodore says “the land has been cut off.”⁴³

I know that at my place, there’s a road that used to go down to a dump, and just across the highway from that road is a great big tree, and apparently that was the boundaries of the reserve originally. And the cultus lake road went past it, like on our side, so it’s like a cut off [...] half of that road belonged to the reserve, and the other half was Parks Board, and now they’re using the whole thing.⁴⁴

According to Commodore, if someone were to “dig down deep down in that road, you can see the marker,” showing that the road is on Soowahlie’s land, as designated by the Douglas Reserve boundaries.⁴⁵ In her view, the land was reduced in 1868 without the assent of Soowahlie. Park roads and their justifications, Commodore’s statement suggests, deliberately overlook Stó:lō claims to the land. Elder Larry Commodore also refers to dissent over the public through-road, Cultus Lake Road, which cuts across lands in the northwest corner of the reserve. “They took it from us,” Commodore says, “they said it was to our benefit but it was just because they needed access to Cultus Lake.”⁴⁶ His statement corroborates the attitudes reflected in the 1934 Indian Lands Registry document justifying the appropriation without compensation. Roads intended to connect a broader public within Soowahlie’s broader territory are seen by the community as products of the

⁴³ Pearl Commodore, Soowahlie Elders’ Meeting with Anne Janhunen, Dallas Posavad and Sabina Trimble, Soowahlie Reserve, 28 May 2013.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Larry Commodore, interview, 28 May 2013.

mindsets overlooking its claims to place. Roads, often seen as unproblematic “static geographic entit[ies] that could be represented on maps as [...] line[s] connecting” places, are, however, laden with power.⁴⁷ In the Soowahlie Mapping Project, seemingly “static geographic entities” such as roads and reserve lines can be historicized and problematized, taking into account the perspectives of Soowahlie community members.

Another point of discussion was the DND-appropriated section of the reserve. “They took that as part of the War Measures Act,” Bruce Sam says, because “Canada needed land.” Sam says that this land was supposed to be returned to the community after use, but that the repatriation took a long time. “Once they got it, they wouldn’t give it up,” he states.⁴⁸ When the land was finally restored to Soowahlie, it was littered with unexploded ordnance from the shooting range. River flooding spread ordnance around the reserve, and into farmlands, creating safety hazards and damaging crops. During his time in office in the 1990s, Sam worked with another chief from Tsuu T’ina, a southern Alberta reserve that underwent the same colonial appropriation, to clear out that section of the reserve. Including such stories in the map will situate Soowahlie’s history within a broader context of colonialism in twentieth century Canada and North America.

Place-names, and their transformations from Stó:lō to colonial, also came up in our research. One of the more uncomfortable moments I experienced when working in Soowahlie in 2013 also seems to me to be among the most meaningful and revealing. It happened the very first time I ever interviewed someone. Two Elders had agreed to speak with us, only on the recommendation of a family member. The interview got off to a bit of

⁴⁷ William Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcoton Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 93.

⁴⁸ Bruce Sam, (Former Chief, Soowahlie Band), interview with Sabina Trimble, Soowahlie Reserve, B.C., 29 May, 2013.

an awkward start, but we eventually got to the topic of Cultus Lake. One of the Elders was talking about how the lake's name changed from Swílcha to Cultus, summing up the story pointedly by saying (and she said this while looking and pointing at me), "we used to have everything named and spelled properly, but when *you* got here, you changed all the names."⁴⁹ Her comment has since suggested to me, first, that places like Cultus Lake continue today to bear different meaning to different people, and that conflicting stories may also be reminders of tense and sometimes violent histories of contact and colonization. Her statement indicates that even when seemingly dominant, settler stories about places persist in popular memory, histories of loss and profound change also make for different kinds of stories. Visually mapping the effects of loss and change – whether to the size of a reserve or to the names given to places – will make for a visceral learning experience for our audiences.

While much of our research focused on illicit and unwanted change wrought to Soowahlie land through colonization, many people also wanted to speak of the resiliency of the Soowahlie community and the unabridged Stó:lō -ness of supposedly colonized places. Discussing some economic activities on reserve, including dairy and hay farming and orchard growing, Bruce Sam and Larry Commodore reflected on the extremely rich and ongoing relationships Soowahlie people have with their lands. Commodore referred to the DIA in the 1930s encouraging the community to grow orchards; his grandfather owned one. Commodore remembers apples, pears and cherries growing where the campsite on reserve currently is, as well as near to the location of the old band hall.⁵⁰ Bruce Sam paints a portrait of the reserve in the 1950s-70s as a farming community. "We were basically

⁴⁹ Author's field notes, 21 May 2013.

⁵⁰ Larry Commodore, interview, 28 May 2013.

dairy farmers,” he says, and “we were good at what we were doing.”⁵¹ During his interviews, he pointed to places on the reserve where community members kept horses, dairy cows and even grew hay. A lens on such activity can open the eyes of map-users to the persistent and diverse kinds of economic activity that has occurred on the reserve. Where colonial change seemed to have severely restricted Soowahlie’s relationships with places, Commodore’s and Sam’s stories suggest the resiliency and adaptiveness of the community.

Some of our conversations led to stories that shed light in a different way on the unchanging Stó:lō-ness of ostensibly colonized lands. For example, many Soowahlie community members pointed to places where they have seen Sasq’ets. According to Bruce Sam, his trail in Soowahlie actually passes through the DND-appropriated piece of the reserve. The presence of Sasq’ets in Soowahlie, and especially in that cutoff space, is a reminder of what keeps colonized lands inherently, and persistently Stó:lō. Tracing his path through the community’s lands on the map is one way to express how, even as colonial impingements effectively redefined Stó:lō places as colonized land, Sasq’ets trails overlay and constantly redefine colonial cutoffs. Living stories about Sasq’ets in Soowahlie are thus examples of the community’s active assertions of sovereignty over their lands. These stories resituate an ostensibly colonized world within a Stó:lō epistemological framework.

While the above examples suggest only a few avenues of interpretation that may follow from research for this mapping project, our interviews and archival research have been revealing in countless ways. Stories and knowledge of Soowahlie people, and information contained in manuscript sources, express the ancient and persistent relationships that the community maintains with their lands and resources. Further, they

⁵¹ Bruce Sam, interview, 29 May 2013.

shed light on the many divergent and often conflicting perspectives that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have of Soowahlie's traditional and reserve territories. The database that will comprise Soowahlie map has the potential for interesting analysis and interpretation from a local level that can shed light on much broader environmental, gender, colonial and Stó:lō histories. We will seek to make room for many possible interpretations of the Soowahlie environment, in order to represent histories of change and continuity and reflect on culturally-specific knowledge about places.

Conclusion: Making Maps Speak

Denis Wood theorizes mapmaking as “a lot more like talking, like writing,” than it is a science.⁵² The Soowahlie Community Mapping Project is an attempt to speak through maps, or make maps speak, in order to question taken-for-granted boundaries and assumptions represented in traditional cartography. Much of the research informing this project points to the potential of a collaborative mapping project to speak across cultural, generational and disciplinary boundaries. Map-making and history-writing are, in theory, very similar processes. Both maps and history, when done well, are understood by their practitioners, not as mirrors or replications of actualities, but *representations* of something that can never be remade, reconstructed or mirrored in all its fullness. As such, historiography and cartography are processes of storytelling. The stories are guided both by the imaginative and political backgrounds of their authors, as well as (when done well) a commitment to balanced, studious and extensive research. Representations are necessarily social products and are subject to challenge and revision. The Soowahlie Community Mapping Project, then, is not just an alternative medium for academic history writing about

⁵² Wood, *Rethinking*, 120.

Soowahlie place-making. Rather, constructing a map and writing about history are, I think, two very similar and yet distinct processes that can go hand-in-hand. In this project, they become intertwined to make a creative ethnohistorical/cartographic argument about how Stó:lō histories and cultures are deeply entwined with their environments. Map-building and ethnohistory can complement each other in this attempt to make places and history speak to, and about, each other.

In my field notes from a conversation I had with Gracie Kelly on 23 May 2015, I summarized some of her words that, to me, encompass the guiding philosophy of this project. She pointed out that outsiders who are uneducated about Indigenous peoples, communities and histories, only ever focus on the “bad things,” as she put it, which the media sensationalizes: violence, poverty on reserves, corruption, unemployment. Kelly emphasized that outsiders need to start learning the “good things that people do, too,” and all of the good work happening in places like Soowahlie, as people strive to maintain their connections to the land and keep the community growing and healthy. She said, “if they just knew the history – what we have always done as Stó:lō people and what was done to us,” then they might understand better and have more compassion.⁵³

In an opinion piece for the *Chilliwack Progress* in 2000, Kelly made a similar point. Disagreeing with chief and council’s plans to blockade Cultus Lake Road, she stressed instead the importance of talking and listening to build bridges in the community’s cracked and contentious histories. “I am only one voice,” she wrote, “but this time I hope that I have some good listeners.”⁵⁴ She suggested that there were better ways to get points across to the public, including community planning, educational outreach programs and increased

⁵³ Author’s field notes, 23 May 2015.

⁵⁴ Gracie Kelly, “One Voice,” *Chilliwack Progress*, 12 September, 2000, *Chilliwack Archives Online*.

communication on and off reserve. “I believe,” she wrote, “in having a voice on what benefits our community,” and “I believe in education, justice, youth, leaders and community development.”⁵⁵ Her opinion piece reflects the view of some Soowahlie community members that educating both Stó:lō and non-Stó:lō people by making knowledge and stories public is an important and alternative form of activism and decolonization.

Gracie’s remarks suggest to me that the Soowahlie Mapping Project can be a part of broader processes of Indigenous-newcomer reconciliation. Representing many voices and stories that reflect Stó:lō ways of knowing and place-making is an important way of decolonizing maps. Doing so challenges power imbalances that have led to cutoffs and disempowerment in the community’s history. The map’s many layers are revealing of the mutually constitutive relationship between the environment and Soowahlie’s history and collective identity. Further, it points to the many meaningful ways this community, and all human beings, perceive and story the places they inhabit. Discussing many ways of knowing in one local environment can be a way of speaking across cultural boundaries. Perhaps the many layers of knowledge and interpretation that will become this living map can have the potential to peel back layers of taken-for-granted misunderstanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

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