Visualizing Urban Indigenous Water Knowledge

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Outline

• Indigenous ways of knowing water
• Indigenous storytelling as methodology
• Visual methodologies and Indigenous research
• Urban Indigenous community in Coast Salish Metro Vancouver
• Urban Indigenous water governance
• Proposed Research Partners
A BASIC GUIDE TO NAMES

Listed below are the First Nations Peoples as they are generally known today with a phonetic guide to a common pronunciation. Newcomers to these phonetic pronunciations may still find a huge gap between what they say and what they hear a native speaker saying. The best way to learn these names is to listen closely when in the presence of someone more familiar, and perhaps even ask for a quick lesson. Also included here are names formerly given these groups, and the language families to which they belong.

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<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Have Been Called</th>
<th>Language Family</th>
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<tr>
<td>Haida</td>
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*Adapted from Cheryl Dufour’s “A Tla’amin Guide to Aboriginal Art” with the permission of the publisher, Whitecap Books.*

**Although Coast Salish is not the traditional First Nations name for this people occupying this region, it is the term used in this map to encompass a number of First Nations of this region including Klahana, Lax Kw’alaams, Sechelt, Squamish, Stz’uminus, Tsilhqot’in, and others.”
Progress on lifting Long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserves

ALL long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserves lifted by MARCH 2021

87 long-term drinking water advisories lifted since November 2015

57 long-term drinking water advisories remain

Projects underway or completed as of March 31, 2019

434 water and wastewater projects to repair, upgrade or build infrastructure

62 supporting initiatives like water operator training

65 feasibility studies to determine infrastructure needs

Updated October 19, 2019

www.canada.ca/water-on-reserve
Indigenous Ways of Knowing Water
German filmmaker asks, "What does the river mean to you?" I explained it was the artery of Mother Earth.

-Cecil Paul as told to Briony Penn
Indigenous Ways of Knowing Water

“It's a life giver, because it gives life to the salmon, it gives us life when we drink it, and it gives life to the plants and vegetation around it. And spiritually it's strong. . . . So, it's a very important element that we show total respect to, and that's why we hold water ceremonies and why we hold it in such high regard and want to protect it.” - page 221

Heal the People, Heal the Land: An Interview with Freda Hudson by Ann Spice
Nipi is the Cree word for water... Nipi is thus properly understood as meaning "I am Life." Water is lifeblood, animating us as human beings, and all that is around us... Water is as much a process as it is an entity... Water is a living, cultural and spiritual entity that defies reduction to a mere resource... There are people in Cree society who hold special responsibilities for water... women are life-givers... related roles in gender-specific ceremony, song, dance and oral knowledge... Collective responsibilities... water can shape identity much as it shapes land and rock... page 172
Indigenous Storytelling as Methodology

• Communicate Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies
• Decolonizing spaces for resurgence
• Holistic interconnectedness, collaboration, reciprocity, spirituality, and humility
• John Borrows: “one cannot understand First Nations law unless there is an appreciation of how each story correlates with other stories” (1)
Arts-Based Methods and Indigenous Research

• Photovoice is the most used method of arts-based research methodology used with Indigenous studies

• Participants take photos and tell their story behind the photo
  – Reflect on their strengths
  – Promote critical dialogue in groups
  – Reach policy makers
PhotoVoice and Indigenous Research

• Has been seen as culturally relevant for sharing stories, oral traditions, visual nature of culture

Photograph 5 - taken at Mulliku/Travestan Falls, far north Queensland. Photographer shows part of the welcome to country ceremony.
Photograph 7: Taken at Mulliku/Traveston Falls far north Queensland.
Photographer explains: I couldn’t believe my eyes, I’ve never seen anything like it, so beautiful, I think to myself, what a place to be here […] then below I seen a beautiful rainbow pop out…it’s the old people, their spirit, in a spiritual way [the old people] were glad to see us, they were happy, it means in language ‘wawu (spirit) maninka’ they got happy to see us there you know and that little bit of showers of blessing came towards us and nice cool breeze, it was beautiful (Interview 1.2)
PhotoVoice and Indigenous Research

• Adaptations and “Indigenization”? Decolonization?

• Theoretical framework considerations?
  – Indigenous Post-Colonial Theory (2)
  – Strengths-based approach
  – Indigenous scholars drawing on their own experience
  – Centres Indigenous conceptions of time and space
  – Indigenous Standpoint theory (3)

• Lacking in studies with urban Indigenous people regarding environmental issues
PhotoVoice and Indigenous Research

• Too popular? What about other arts-based methods? Modalities and ways of knowing
  – Music
  – Dance
  – Literary Arts (slam poetry, rap, creative writing, creative non-fiction)
VERONICA ROSE WAECHTER
Reflections, 2019
alder, red cedar bark, abalone, acrylic

Reflections aims to honour and celebrate both the sacred and nurturing womxn of this earth and the water which all of life depends on. For Indigenous people, wealth is often measured by our amount of relations, and our ties to the waterways are inseparable. Historically as a nurturer and creator, womxn weave together stories, family lines, and medicines. This contemporary mask acknowledges the matriarchs who have and continue to protect and provide a balance for the communities and ecosystems alike. The design motifs come from an appreciation of the Skeena River where I continue to live, learn and grow from, and where my ancestors also survived from. The mask serves as an indication of the power and beauty of these waters we relate ourselves to, but it also hints toward the fragility and vulnerability of these relationships that society continuously disregards.

Veronica Rose Waechter (Gitxsan) grew up in Terrace, BC, on Tsimshian territory. She attended the Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art, and in 2018, she graduated from Emily Carr University of Art + Design with a BFA, and soon after began working on totem pole carving with Gerry Skeena in different locations around Vancouver.
Jerilynn Webster, aka JB the First Lady
Nuxalk & Onondaga Nations
Hip hop and spoken word artist, beat-boxer, cultural dancer and youth educator.

Title: Q ɬta:γθ n
Artist: Ronnie Dean Harris - Tsleil-Waututh (səl̓ilwətaʔɬ)
Coast Salish Metro Vancouver Area Urban Indigenous

- Home to 3rd largest urban Indigenous population in Canada (4)
- 2016 Census Metropolitan Area of Vancouver population was 61,460 (ibid)
- 67% are “first generation” residents (5)
- 35% have lived in Vancouver +20 years (ibid)
Coast Salish Metro
Vancouver Area Urban Indigenous

• Home to many different Indigenous groups with First Nations making up the majority, 58%
• Many different urban Indigenous service organizations
• Wide variety of cultural activities and vibrant community
• Active involvement in various land and water protection activities as well as political activities such as Idle No More, opposition of Kinder Morgan pipeline, Site C dam opposition, Walk for Reconciliation
Coast Salish Metro Vancouver Area Urban Indigenous

Unist'ot'en Rally, 2019

Hobiyee Ts’aamiks 2019
5. soʔaʔqʷ

"And a few people raked herring at soʔaʔqʷ (Kitsilano Point)."

Spoken by Vanessa Campbell
Señą́w is a village located near what is now Vanier Park in the Kitsilano neighbourhood of Vancouver. Squamish people would travel to this spot and to l'yálmez (Jericho Beach) every summer to go fishing and enjoy other summer activities. Around the year 1860, a permanent village was established at Señą́w. Chepdm Slyam (Chief George) and his people built houses, a long house, orchards, and garden plots there. Many Squamish families moved there to live permanently, including August Jack Khatsahlano who was a famous Squamish chief and historian.

Señą́w was made an official Indian Reserve in 1876 (Kitsilano Indian Reserve 6) but as the city grew and the land became more desirable, the government wanted the land and for the Squamish people to leave. The Squamish people did not want to leave but the government threatened them, saying that if they did not move, they would be forcibly removed or even killed. In 1913, the last Squamish families of Señą́w were forced onto a barge and moved to the Squamish River area. In the 1970s, the Squamish Nation started a legal process to get the land back again, and in 2001 they won back 11.7 acres in the area.
Urban Indigenous Water Governance

• What does it look like? What forms can it take?
  – Rooted in Coast Salish laws?
  – A “seat at the table”? 
  – NOT just another “stakeholder”
  – Expressions of sovereignty?
  – Direct action to support sacred responsibility
  – Arts-based methods can help capture and communicate these forms
Proposed Research Partners

Currently developing partnerships:

• Native Education College

• Nisga’a Ts’amsiks Vancouver Society
  – Approximately 1,000 Vancouver-area members
We are a non-profit community organization that works to enhance the social, economic, physical, cultural and spiritual well-being of the 1,400 Nisga’a Citizens that reside in the Vancouver and Vancouver Island area. We are grateful to be able to live in the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples.
Canoe Journey
• Cultural protocol
• Oral histories
• Dance
• Music
• Games
• Kinship
• Data gathering with USGS
“Despite persistent colonial efforts to stamp out Indigenous cultures and communities... today there is a renaissance of Indigenous traditions and values in large part because of the Tribal Canoe Journey.”
~ Julian Brave NoiseCat (Secwepemc/St'at'imc), Canadian Geographic

Figure 1. The Salish Sea with 2008 (black), 2009 (red), 2010 (yellow), 2011 (green), 2012 (grey), 2013 (purple), and 2014 (blue) monitoring routes and reporting regions. The final landing for the 2014 Tribal Journey water quality monitoring was at Comox, British Columbia Canada (white star).
Questions?