

First Nations Place Names from Cadboro Bay to Millstream

by

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COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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Abstract

This thesis built a database of 100 First Nations place names from Cadboro Bay to Millstream to answer: What are the First Nations place names for Victoria, British Columbia? Maps are essential tools in the on-going colonization of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Today, many First Nations prioritize restoring place names and using them on maps as an act of sovereignty. Conversely, multiple levels of settler government incorporate Indigenous place name restoration into their obligations to fulfill UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. Collaborations between First Nations and settler organizations have built many public online maps with Indigenous place names for both sets of goals. No such map exists for the research area despite the First Nations-built monuments to Lək̓ʷəŋən and SENĆOTEN place names. By developing an experimental design grown from the essential Indigenous academic principles of respect, relationality, and reciprocity, the settler researcher gathered public First Nations place name information into a simple spreadsheet. The database visualized as a map represented the breadth of publicly available information on First Nations place names. This research took place from and within the traditional territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən Peoples which includes the Songhees and X̱w̱sépsəm (Esquimalt) First Nations, and WSÁNEĆ Peoples encompassing the W̱SÍ, KEM, W̱JOŁŁP, STÁUTW, and BOKÉĆEN First Nations.

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To my friends and family, for knowing that I could do something like this even when it seemed the deck was stacked against me. And finally, to Rob, for appreciating the way I say "map."

Dedication

To my daughters, Audrey, Laurel, and Penelope.

We can do hard things. Together.

I love you.

Introduction

“This essay had a simple purpose when it was begun: to publish a list of the Indian place names of the Victoria area.... It has grown, in the course of writing, into something more complicated than that.” Wilson Duff, 1969, *The Fort Victoria Treaties*.

This research was conducted in and about the land of the Ləkʷəŋən-speaking Peoples and the ƳSÁNEĆ Peoples, in what is commonly called Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The following land acknowledgement and positionality statement will introduce the land, the People, and myself, the researcher. The context section begins to describe some of the background to this research and its connection to Truth and Reconciliation in Canada. Lastly, I discuss my choices around First Nations’ spelling and orthography.

Land Acknowledgement

This thesis was written on land and at sea, under rainfall and sunshine, to the sounds of children’s laughter and birdsong. These are the lands and waters of the Ləkʷəŋən-speaking Peoples, the Songhees and Xʷsépsəm (Esquimalt) First Nations, and the ƳSÁNEĆ Peoples, the ƳJOŁŁP, ƳŚÍ,ƳEM, STÁUTƳ, and BOƳÉĆEN First Nations. As ancestral stewards of this land, these Peoples have maintained their names for these lands since time immemorial and carried these names throughout colonization. I thank these First Nations for their enduring effort and care for their cultures and land; this thesis attempts to amplify their artistic-scholarly-cultural-community work. It is thanks to these Peoples that we, as settlers, can come to know our role in colonial history and work toward a decolonial future.

Positionality Statement

The land I call home as a settler is in one of the only areas in British Columbia under historic treaty, though the legality of the treaty is highly questionable. I am an uninvited guest in the traditional territory of the Songhees and X^wsépsəm First Nations, benefitting from the Canadian social system with legal status as permanent resident settler born in the unceded land of the Fernandēño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, today known as the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles, California, USA. My father's family comes from a long ancestry of mixed Indigenous, Spanish, and African peoples via Mexico, while my mother's family immigrated to the USA from the Mediterranean Basin and Eastern Europe in the mid-20th century.

I am privileged to travel the world with a US passport. As a permanent resident of Canada and US citizen, I can live and work freely on two-thirds of Turtle Island, from the Arctic Circle to the Rio Grande. I also have hereditary rights to gain citizenship in Mexico; if I were to exercise this privilege, I could freely live, work, and vote anywhere across the entire continent. These privileges to exist and participate in democracy seemingly wherever I please across Turtle Island were withheld by the colonial governments of Canada, the US, and Mexico from the Indigenous Peoples of this continent for centuries. Furthermore, I can maneuver away from threatening governments, with the privilege to return to my homeland whenever I please—or safely stay away.

For my undergraduate studies at New York University, I crafted an interdisciplinary degree about the history of religious colonization, with time spent studying in Italy and Ghana. In my professional career, I have been an editor of travel guidebooks since the early 2000s. It is my job to tell people where to go, what to see and do, and how to spend their American dollars

while on vacation. This responsibility connects my work with the lives and wellbeing of the people in the destinations; I take this responsibility seriously.

Thanks to my career working with travel guidebooks, I tend to view places where I live and visit with an eye to understanding how they might fit into a guidebook. When I moved to Victoria and began learning about the city, I would walk around the Inner Harbour and dream that I might write a travel guide to the capital some day. Imagining my guidebook, I knew it would include lots of Indigenous history, points of interest, and businesses. I also thought it would be an important feature to include a map of downtown that uses First Nations place names. My next big thought was, “What are the First Nations place names for Victoria anyway?” And so, my Googling began. Assuming there was certainly a map of Victoria that uses First Nations place names, I googled and googled and came up with a scattering of place names in many different online sources—but no singular map or resource with the information all together. And so, this thesis was born.

Though originally intended to create a tourist map with First Nations place names, this thesis has evolved as my understanding of my positionality, Indigenous research methodologies, and ethics has grown. Instead of focusing on educating outsiders coming onto the land, the thesis takes several steps back to focus on reciprocity to First Nations and respect for their best judgement on how (and if) the information gathered here could be shared with the public.

My intention is for my thesis to have real applicability and relevance for the Canadian work of Truth and Reconciliation. My work attempts to convey my learning not only about First Nations history and culture for the Victoria area, but also the reality of ongoing colonization and the complexities of engaging with decolonial work as a settler.

Context

The vibrant village Sḡíčəŋəł once spread across a sandy shoreline with longhouses tucked among the trees. Today, this stretch is known as Willows Beach, a popular beach in Victoria, capital of British Columbia, attracting residents and visitors to one of the city’s wealthiest and oldest neighbourhoods. However, “Sḡíčəŋəł” does not appear on any map, despite the beach’s appeal and historic significance. Keen visitors might stop to read a small monument to the village on site and find references to it on the Oak Bay Municipality’s website. Dozens of First Nations place names for landmarks and waterways in the Victoria area persist through similar treatment—consider Míqən, aka Beacon Hill Park, or Xwszyq’əm, aka James Bay. Inspired by the First Nations monuments to history and place seen around the city, my research question was: What are the First Nations place names between Cadboro Bay and Millstream?

To answer the research question, this thesis had two main objectives: to gather public information about First Nations place names for the region and to visualize this data as a map. The purpose of these objectives was to demonstrate the breadth and availability of First Nation place name knowledge and be a resource for Indigenous Peoples to support their own goals for language revitalization, cultural growth, and other priorities. Furthermore, a simple database such as the one created for this thesis could represent a first step toward creating a map of Victoria with First Nations language as a public project.

Imposing foreign names on Indigenous land is a colonization tactic that attempts to erase the connection between Indigenous Peoples and the land (Beck, 2022). Maps of the research area—from Cadboro Bay to Millstream—mostly carry colonial names with little connection to the history of the land since time immemorial. How many “James Bays” exist across the

colonized English-speaking world? Yet there is only one Xws3yq'əm, or “place of mud,” referring to the tidal mudflats where numerous creeks met the ocean. In 1904, these flats were filled to build the foundations of the Empress Hotel, a colonial structure representing the British Empire's breadth and wealth. As a colonial symbol, the Empress remains one of Victoria's top tourist accommodations and attractions.

Colonial place names communicate ownership, venerate colonial historical figures, and impose colonial meaning on the land. Settlers live in and perpetuate this reality by understanding themselves as being in “Victoria, British Columbia,” a colonial city. Tourists entering a destination also receive this colonial story through curated stories about the place—for example, they go on walking tours, visit history museums, and seek out monuments—typically sponsored or funded by the colonial government and run by settler tourism businesses. These touchstones of a tourist's experience tell the colonial story that visitors are in Victoria, when in fact they are on First Nations land long called Q'əmasəŋ. Indeed, this colonial heritage can be part of the attraction of colonial cities for tourists, who understand destinations through a colonial lens.

In the Canadian context, favouring colonial narratives in tourism inhibits the major national project of Truth and Reconciliation (Stanley, 2020). The tourism industry's role in Truth and Reconciliation often focuses on Indigenous business development, robust consultation with and integration of Indigenous Peoples into industry decision making, and repatriation of Indigenous objects held by public and private entities, such as museums and art galleries. This is important and necessary work for the tourism industry. However, the tourism industry is also a storytelling industry that perpetuates colonial stories through tourism messaging and marketing; thus, the industry is obligated to critically examine how destinations are presented to tourists.

Maps are important tools in colonization and tourism. Maps visualize land and orient readers to the landscape using Western epistemology and assumptions about space and measurement, while also communicating the priorities of the mapmaker. Government maps will convey government priorities; Indigenous maps will convey Indigenous priorities. Using Indigenous place names on Western maps has a long history on Turtle Island (Lucchesi, 2018) and includes contemporary innovations and discussions about how (and if we should) incorporate Indigenous language into Western cartography (Lucchesi, 2020).

A growing movement among First Nations and Indigenous organizations across Canada is creating digital maps of their territories using their place names and embedding stories, photographs, audio files, and other interactive materials (Thomas & Paynter, 2010). Despite some public signage and monuments to First Nations places in Victoria, no such map exists for the area. This thesis explores how to build a database that could be the foundation of a map of Victoria using First Nations place names as an information resource—first and foremost—for First Nations. The literature review examines the connections between Indigenous Peoples’ historic engagement with wayfinding and Western cartography and then details how to change place names through official and unofficial channels as part of Truth and Reconciliation. As a counterpoint, Indigenous critique of Western cartography challenges whether using Indigenous language on maps is effective or simply colonial window dressing. The literature review draws the connection between place names, language revitalization, and tourism broadly. Within the tourism context of Victoria, existing First Nations language signage and monuments show that First Nations place names are already part of Victoria’s settler tourism landscape, though they are not well-promoted or even thoroughly understood.

The limitations and methodologies sections describe the processes used to develop the First Nations place names database. Being aware of my positionality as a settler researcher, I discuss the ethical obligations and protocols for working with First Nations data as a non-Indigenous person and describe my practice to align this thesis with Indigenous academic principles of relationality, respect, and reciprocity as explained by Gladue (2020). Finally, the database is presented as screenshots of the map visualization, which demonstrates the breadth of information about First Nations place names in the research area available to the public. Discussion of the data dives into some connections between First Nations and colonial place names, as well as many opportunities for future research.

Orthography

This thesis contains a multitude of First Nations words and concepts expressed through place names. Though the Lək'wəṇən and SENĆOTEN languages are related, they have their own orthographies. In deference to each First Nation's preferred way of expressing their language publicly in print, I have prioritized spellings demonstrated by the First Nations' public-facing materials, such as websites, monuments, and online dictionaries. As a result, this thesis and its database use a mix of Lək'wəṇən, SENĆOTEN, and occasionally English orthographies.

The names of the First Nations are written in their orthographies. Among the six First Nations' whose land is involved in this thesis, some use English orthography for their names, while others use First Nations' orthography, and others are in a transitional process of switching to First Nations orthography. To remain consistent with the objective of this thesis to promote Indigenous language revitalization, First Nations names are written with their orthographies.

However, the exception is Songhees First Nation, who refer to themselves as one Nation of the Ləkʷəŋən-speaking Peoples, together with the Xʷsépsəm.

Literature Review

This research is positioned within the national discussion of Truth and Reconciliation in three essential ways. First, the right to Indigenous place names is enshrined within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) Article 13.1 (United Nations, 2007) and supported by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015), two foundational frameworks for Truth and Reconciliation. Second, place names reflect our land-based identities as humans (Beck, 2022). In Canada, there is a growing social expectation in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation for settlers to give land acknowledgements to open an event by positioning the speaker within an Indigenous land context. To write a land acknowledgement, one must first know whose land they occupy, which in turn can also include the names for the land. Maps with Indigenous place names provide essential orientation for land acknowledgements. To quote Beck (2022, p. 119): "The use of Indigenous names fosters a climate in which reconciliation or a form of restitution can be made on the part of settler states." Third, reclaiming, restoring, and revitalizing Indigenous place names is directly connected with Indigenous sovereignty by using cartography to demonstrate evidence of continual Indigenous ancestral-linguistic ties to land (Thomas & Paynter, 2010). Though cartography itself is a Western construct that perpetuates colonial systems, it is the dominant way that humans understand land in two-dimensional form. Representing land with Indigenous language gives representational space to identities that are counter to colonial supremacy (Beck, 2022; Rose-Redwood, 2016) and demonstrates continued Indigenous presence.

Wayfinding and human-land orientation are essential components of human survival. The Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island have their own methods of wayfinding specific to their landscapes. Lucchesi (2018) conceptualized three distinct periods of Indigenous mapping of Turtle Island: ancestral, anticolonial, and decolonial. The ancestral period refers to maps and wayfinding practices that have not been influenced by colonization; this period is not “caged within the pre-contact category” (2018, p. 13) but also refers to contemporary Indigenous practices of knowing land. Ancestral mapping can be embodied in individual and collective knowledge; transmitted and adjusted through song and story; aligned with celestial navigation; externalized as tactile tools; and exist in an unknown number of other ways specific to people and land.

Indigenous Peoples have contributed to Western cartographic knowledge since the arrival of Europeans to Turtle Island. Most of the European advancement across the continent was made possible because of Indigenous Peoples sharing their land knowledge in many ways—sometimes being the physical embodiment of land knowledge (i.e., acting as guides wayfinding voluntarily or through coercion) or creating maps using Western cartographic norms (Anderson, 2016, p. 493; Cole & Hart, 2021; Stark, 2012). History has many examples of colonizers/“explorers” simultaneously relying on Indigenous wayfinding knowledge while also expressing amazement that the People—from individual guides pressed into service to whole communities of Peoples freely sharing knowledge—were as knowledgeable as they were. Cole and Hart (2021) offered multiple examples of historic and modern Western cartographers “confirming” the accuracy of historic Indigenous maps through observation and scientific triangulation. These Indigenous maps helped colonizers avoid dangerous river rapids, understand Indigenous demographics and

settlements, and find suitable places for shelter and food—to name only a few benefits. The examples in Cole and Hart clearly demonstrated historic colonizer trust in Indigenous wayfinding and intentional use of Indigenous knowledge to further colonial mapmaking projects. Lucchesi demonstrated this thinking in more contemporary times by analyzing the racist commentary by a Western anthropologist discussing Inuit wooden maps as recently as 2018. She calls out how the anthropologist manages to pan Inuit maps as trinkets because he believed the Inuit were not smart enough to create three-dimensional maps, while also affirming that the Inuit maps do indeed refer to specific landscapes (Lucchesi, 2018, p. 14). Today's maps of Turtle Island come from these Indigenous knowledge origins, though they almost exclusively reflect colonial histories and aspirations (Beck, 2022; Lucchesi, 2020).

Indigenous Peoples have used Western cartography as one of many ways to affirm their personhood in protest of colonization across the continent. Lucchesi's (2018) anticolonial Indigenous mapping period refers to ways Indigenous Peoples employed Western cartography to declare their presence on the land in the face of colonization over centuries or manipulated it to protect their people and culture. Anderson (2016) argued that contemporary readings of colonial maps of the eastern seaboard of Turtle Island combined with historic writings of settlers describing their interactions with Indigenous guides, demonstrates that Indigenous Peoples exercised extensive agency by deliberately using Western cartography to serve their communities. Examples of anticolonial Indigenous mapping include Indigenous maps of territory to serve Indigenous parties during historic treaty negotiation (Stark, 2012), manipulation of maps to foster military alliances (Anderson, 2016, p. 494), and creating maps from within colonization to promote Indigenous People's survival (Lucchesi, 2018). A modern example of anticolonial

mapping would be the extensive (and expensive) territorial mapping projects in support of modern territorial land title claims throughout Canada (McGurk & Caquard, 2020; Sparke, 1998).

The decolonial period of Indigenous mapping refers to contemporary Indigenous map making as a tool for sharing Indigenous stories and realities, “by and for Indigenous people” (Lucchesi, 2018, p. 22). These maps are decolonial because they are oriented to an Indigenous future where “not everything has to be about colonialism” (Lucchesi, 2018, p. 22). It can be argued that some user-friendly digital maps of land created by Indigenous Peoples using Indigenous place names could be decolonial when they are intended for Indigenous orientation and connection to land. These are Western-style maps infused with Indigenous place names and other Indigenous data, like stories, audio, and photos. Thus, digital maps with Indigenous place names built by Indigenous Peoples continue the long history of Indigenous mapping of Turtle Island.

Place names are linguistic components that represent a connection between people, languages, and land. In general, place names contain within them land knowledge, foundational stories, ancestral and contemporary histories, directions, and much more. In *Canada's Place Names & How to Change Them* (2022), Beck demonstrated how place names are the foundation of land knowledge transmission and sense of place in addition to telling you where you are. Colonial names tell the story of land from the colonizer's point of view by emphasizing colonial histories and priorities. Naming land is a way to lay claim to it and maps with colonial names visualize the land as a colony (Anderson, 2016; Beck, 2022). Thus, many First Nations—the Haida Gwaii (Council of the Haida Nation, n.d.), the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council (W̱SÁNEĆ

Leadership Council, 2022, p. 19), and the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish Nation Council, 2022, p. 13) among them—include First Nations place name usage and reinstatement as essential components of their governmental strategies. Reinstating Indigenous place names materializes Indigenous Peoples' connection to land through, for example, common usage, signage, and mapping.

This aligns with critical toponymy, which seeks to tease out the political underpinnings of place names (Rose-Redwood et al., 2009). Cartography and maps are well-documented as tools of colonization and modern maps were drawn for colonial goals and perpetuate colonial society (Hunt & Stevenson, 2017; Lucchesi, 2018; Rose-Redwood, 2016; White & Castleden, 2022). Renaming places with names that reflect marginalized people within colonial society works toward “preventing the symbolic annihilation of marginalized social groups and their historical identities” (Rose-Redwood et al., 2009, pp. 465-466).

For example, Beacon Hill is Victoria's first public park and a key public asset for residents and tourists alike. The colonial name comes from its advantageous position for a communications beacon. When settlers repeat the name “Beacon Hill,” they refer to guiding ships into colonial port, with a short human history dating only to the 1840s in Victoria. Contrast this with Míqən, the Lək̓ʷəŋən name for the hill. Míqən means “place to warm your belly in the sun,” which speaks of a human experience of soaking up the sun on the hill's south-facing slope since time immemorial. It is thanks to First Nations' ancestors who have been enjoying and caring for that land for untold generations that settlers on picnic blankets on the hill in summer can enjoy the same grassy slope. Using the name Míqən can draw connections between the past, which is still very much alive, with the embodied present.

One avenue of reinstating Indigenous place names is to change the “official” maps themselves, such as those created by the Canadian government. In British Columbia, the BC Geographical Names Office (BCGNO) is the government arbiter of place names obligated to report to and follow the protocols of the Geographical Names Boards of Canada (GNBC). The years-long, quasi-legal process to change a name on a government map in BC includes time for public consultation, collection of historic evidence of name usage, and final arbitration by government authorities. The 20-year-long cross-border collaborative initiative to change the name of the Salish Sea (from the Strait of Georgia in BC, Juan de Fuca Strait between Canada and the USA, and Puget Sound in Washington, USA), is instructive in this case. Tucker and Rose-Redwood (2015) traced the origin of the place name change to a settler scientist from Washington in 1990, describing the process of gathering scientific community and public support over years of advocacy to change the name in both Canada and the USA.

Whether a name change application is attempting to rename an obscure meadow or a massive body of water, like the Salish Sea, the process is the same for all applications to the BCGNO. Application instructions include reinstating Indigenous names as a priority for the office. In its description of the application process for changing or adding a place name, the BCGNO states, “Names that will likely be considered for changing: removal/rescinding of racist and derogatory names, restoring Indigenous place names, and names that meet standards established in the BC Geographical Naming Policy (the Policy)” (BCGNO, n.d.-f). The *Vancouver Sun* quoted Trent Thomas, BC’s head toponymist and representative for BC on the GNBC, saying, “A lot of our work these days [in the BCGNO] is working with Indigenous nations to recognize their names for places, as we know they have names for all the places where

they live, and most of those were replaced with colonial names” (McIntyre, 2023). Looking one step up the hierarchy of authority, the GNBC’s 2020-2025 strategic plan recognized the connection between Indigenous Peoples, place names, and Truth and Reconciliation (GNBC, 2020, p. 4) and prioritized bringing Indigenous advisors onto the board and developing a national policy about working with Indigenous place names (p. 10).

A local example of public advocacy to reinstate a First Nations place name that lies just outside this thesis research area is PKOLS, the recovered SENĆOTEN name for Mount Douglas. After several years of grassroots and public advocacy, in 2013 leaders from multiple W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations held a ceremony to install a monumental sign on the mountain to reinstate the name and reinforce their people’s bond with the land (W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council, n.d.). This is reflected in the District of Saanich’s recognition of the name nine years later on August 15, 2022 (District of Saanich, 2022). PKOLS appears on Google maps (with “Mt. Douglas” in parentheses) and other maps of Victoria, however it exists only within the BCGNO database as a cultural, historical note—the “official” name for the mountain in the government database is still Mt. Douglas. Though the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples, other Indigenous Peoples in the region, the municipality, and many settlers together now call the mountain PKOLS, the governments of Canada and BC do not. Hence, Indigenous place name uptake in the larger cultural context exists on a spectrum from public awareness to government agreement. Very often, government lags behind popular usage.

Indigenous advocacy and direct action for PKOLS points to a larger Indigenous critique of the colonial systems that legitimize cartography. Gaining official recognition for PKOLS from the BCGNO was not a priority for the W̱SÁNEĆ advocates, though Ball reports that applications

were made for the change (2013). Instead of waiting for government recognition to give permission—and permits—to put up a sizeable sign on the mountain declaring it PKOLS, the W̱SÁNEĆ leaders and First Nations community planned and held their own sign installation ceremony on May 22, 2013, attended by an estimated 600 people (Rose-Redwood, 2016). This ceremony included a reenactment of the signing of the Douglas Treaties, signed here in 1852, to critique the treaties themselves and the colonial practice of renaming places; the monumental PKOLS sign carved by Charles Elliot (TEMOSENTET) of the W̱JOŁEŁP First Nation was also installed by the without a permit. This action exemplifies how relying on the BCGNO as an arbiter positions the government as the “authority,” which ignores the authority of Indigenous Peoples themselves over their lands, languages, and cultures (Rose-Redwood, 2016, p. 191). Mohawk activist and scholar Taiaiake Alfred, involved in the implementation of the event, is quoted by Ball as saying: “One of the biggest problems in Canadian politics is we’re always asking for permission.... I think the strongest move you can make is just to act Indigenous, and to act on your teachings” (Ball, 2013). In a reflection of this, renowned Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betosamasake Simpson observed from afar that the ceremony was “a collective and transformative direct act...[that] transforms our relationships to each other and to the land we share” that was “initiated by Indigenous peoples on Indigenous terms” (2020, p. 241). On July 2, 2025, the refurbished sign was rededicated through a W̱SÁNEĆ ceremony reaffirming the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples’ connection to the mountain. I attended the event in person; the following three photos were taken at the event.

Figure 1

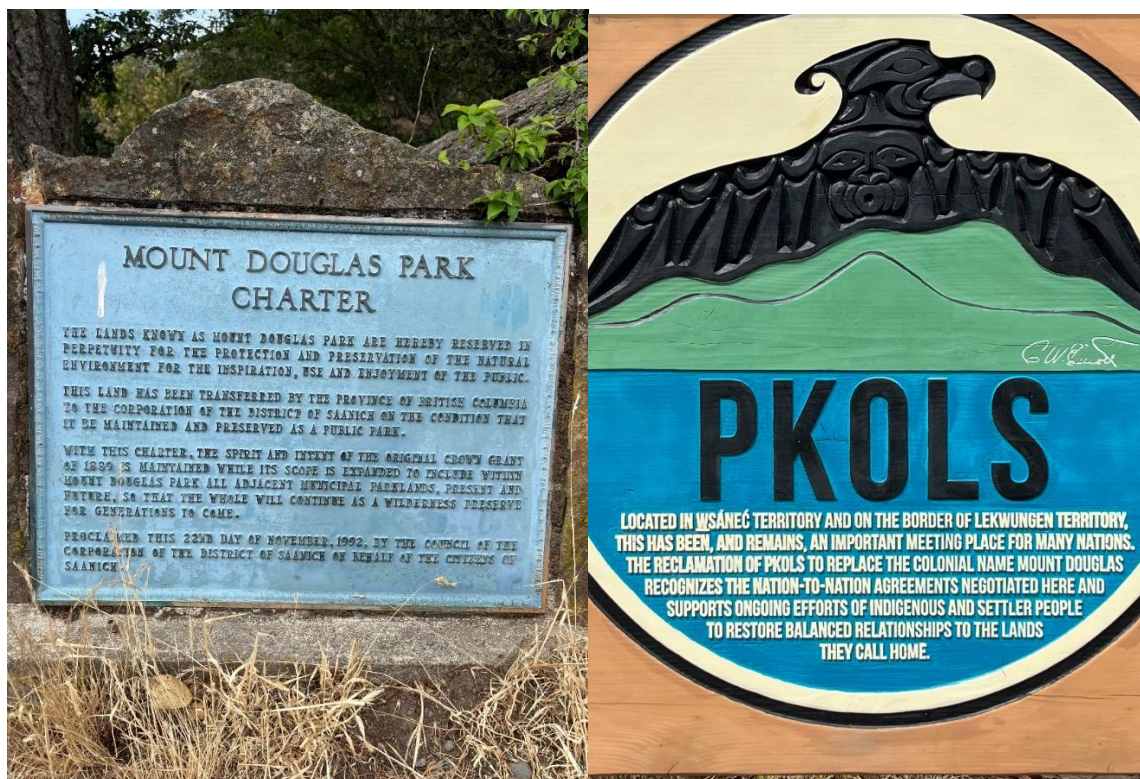
Monumental sign at PKOLS carved by Charles Elliott (TEMOSEN̓FET) next to municipal monument proclaiming the land “Mount Douglas”; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Figure 2

Details of municipal monument and PKOLS monument. Left: Municipal monument dated November 22, 1992; the first line says, “The lands known as Mount Douglas Park are hereby reserved in perpetuity... to the corporation of the District of Saanich”. Right, the WSÁNEĆ monument reads: “The reclamation of PKOLS to replace the colonial name Mount Douglas recognizes the nation-to-nation agreements negotiated here and supports ongoing efforts of Indigenous and settler people to restore balanced relationships to the lands they call home.”

Photo credit: Melinda Quintero



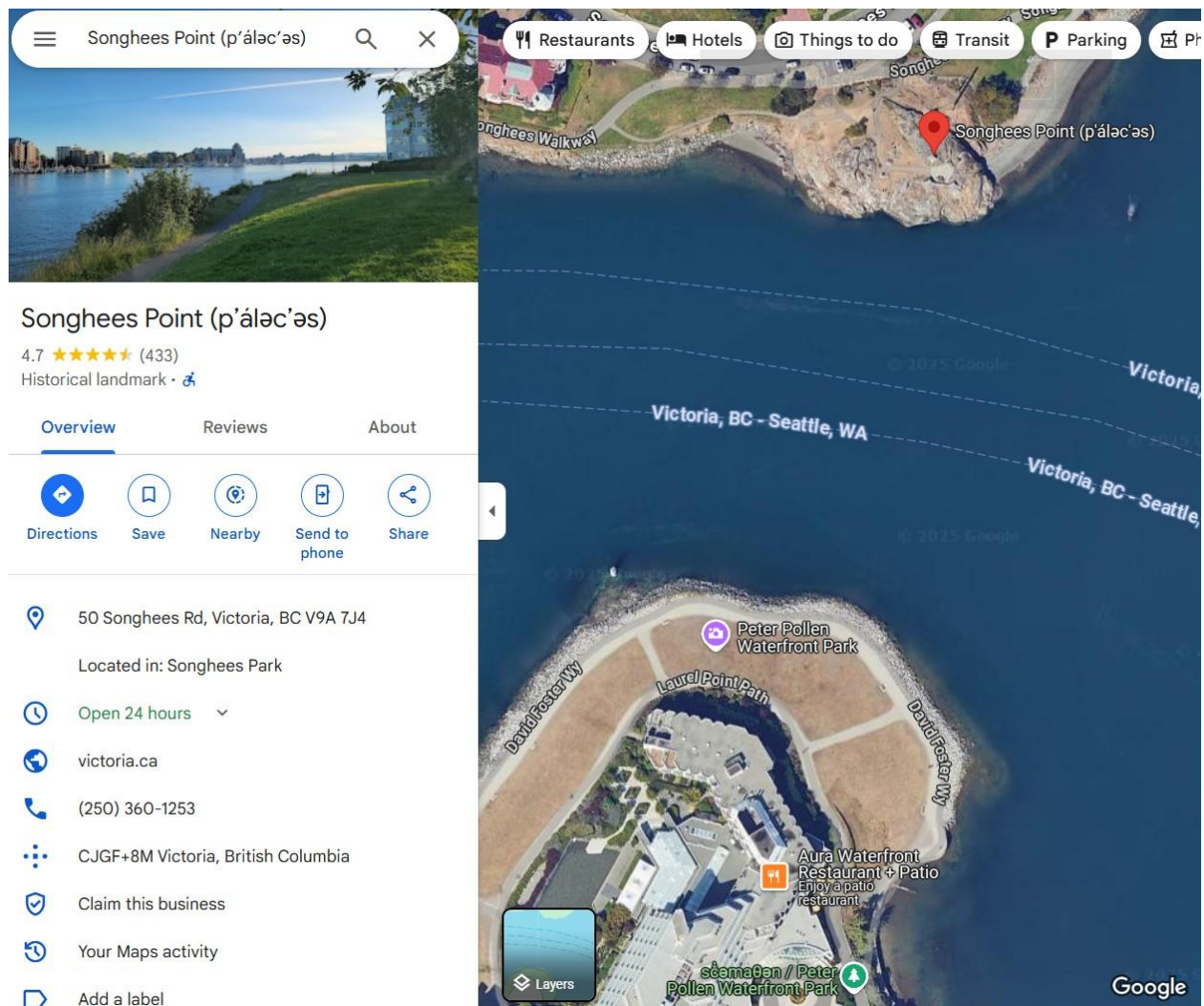
Digital maps are user-friendly and accessible tools for learning about land but changing names in digital maps presents both opportunities and challenges. Technology companies such as Google, Apple or OpenStreetMap maintain extensive geographic databases that populate their

maps. Elements in some databases can be changed by the public. For example in Google Maps, anyone can report errors or suggested additions to Google for incorporation into their map database with the report tool. However, adding information is limited to specific sites, such as businesses, religious sites, and historic landmarks. There does not appear to be a way to suggest name changes for bodies of land or water. When place names are added to Google Maps, they appear as icons which lay on top of the base layer map that uses colonial names.

Take for example the *Signs of Lekwungen* monument at Songhees Point. On Google Maps, someone has added “Songhees Point (P’áləc’əs)” as a business with an arbitrary address that coincides more accurately with the condominiums just inland. The monument is not a place of business; it might be better described as a historic landmark. However, the understanding of the Lək̓ʷəŋən word P’áləc’əs, meaning “cradle board” and recalling a cultural and initiation practice for infants, refers to the entire headland in the harbour—not a finite spot. P’áləc’əs would be better demarcated as a swath of land via the Google map base layer, the same layer which uses “James Bay” and “Gorge Waters.”

Figure 3

Screenshot of Songhees Point (P'álac'əs) in the north with s̓cəmaθən / Peter Pollen Waterfront Park visible to the south on Google maps from June 26, 2025; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Another example is “s̓cəmaθən / Peter Pollen Waterfront Park” at 200 Belleville St., the address for the park. This is visible at the very bottom of Figure 3. As the Lək̓ʷəŋən name s̓cəmaθən, meaning open mouth and referring to the harbour shape, is part of the name of the park, it is incorporated into the Google Map. However, the name is now associated with the park,

though historically the name refers to an ancient burial ground which is now lost (Keddie, 2003, p. 33) and a First Nations perspective on the shape of the harbour generally. Bestowing the name on the park links it with the park and its recreational use, rather than providing any context about the First Nations' connection with this stretch of land. At the time of writing, no public signage explains the park name or its sacred roots, though the name appears on wayfinding signs for the park (Figure 4); the City of Victoria's plan overview for the park does reference *sc̓əmaθən*'s historic purpose (City of Victoria, n.d.-a). Furthermore, the online *Lək̓ʷəŋən* dictionary created by the X̱w̱sépsəm Nation uses the orthography *S̓c̓əmásən* and refers only to the meaning about the harbour shape, while the *Signs of Lekwungen* monument at nearby Laurel Point refers to the site as a burial ground but also notes that "No traditional name is known for this area" (Songhees Nation, n.d.). For the purposes of this thesis, I will be referring to this location using the orthography in the online *Lək̓ʷəŋən* dictionary (*S̓c̓əmásən*).

Figure 4

sc̓amaθən / Peter Pollen Waterfront Park sign; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Though the presence of these and other examples on Google maps contributes some Lək̓ʷəŋən and SENĆOTEN language to the map, they do not impact the map base layers which use colonial names. These layers are sourced from “more than 1,000 third-party sources from all over the world” (Google, 2019), including the US Geological Survey, the Geographical Names Board of Canada, and smaller government databases. (Interestingly, Google also includes “a housing developer” in its list of sample “authoritative data source[s]” [Google, 2019].) The

PKOLS Google Map example described earlier demonstrates a place name which is not recognized by a national database but is nonetheless prominent on Google Maps. “PKOLS (Mount Douglas Park)” on Google Maps may be the result of users reporting to Google to have the name changed or the District of Saanich requesting the change. For the large part though, this is an exception: Google Maps primarily reflect colonial government maps, with a scattering of Indigenous language added by users or where local name changes have reached “authoritative” (read: colonial government) levels. To change the colonial underpinnings of a Google Map place name, the name would have to change in the “authoritative” government databases, which is again another colonial process.

Furthermore, the President of the United States of America’s recent executive order to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico, a 16th century colonial name, to the Gulf of America is a clear example of the farce that is government and corporate authority over place names. On January 20, 2025, the first day of his presidency, President Trump signed an executive order that all US federal agencies call the Gulf of Mexico the “Gulf of America”. As Google and Apple, the two most prominent digital map databases and APIs used in apps and websites around the world, pull their databases from federal sources, these maps now reflect the change made at the federal level. As a middle ground, Google has stated that the “Gulf of America” appears for users in the US, while Gulf of Mexico appears for users in Mexico, and a combination of the two is visible for the rest of the world (Shapero, 2025). The name change is visible in the US Geological Survey, the primary government agency that regulates place names, also available online. The typical avenue for changing a name in this database is to apply to the U.S. Board of Geographical Names, in a process like that described for the BCGNO. The process in the US is

described as taking a “minimum of 6 months” (USGS, n.d.). Recalling how long it took advocates to change the name of the Salish Sea and the international cooperation required to change the name of a body of water that spans an international border similar to the Gulf of Mexico, plus the fact that Google Maps does not have a mechanism for the public to suggest name changes to land or bodies of water, the swiftness of this executive order completely shatters the veneer of authority held by these government agencies and Google. Successful name-change applications from citizens must convince a board of arbiters that a change is valid, which presents the illusion of control over naming the land. And yet, after this executive order, someone somewhere in the backend of all these governmental databases simply changed a few lines of code—the proverbial “flipping the switch”—and it was done within a few days. Government bodies and tech companies maintain the illusion of authority by regulating how and why their place name data is changed, when in our digital age, it really just comes down to database coding.

Counter-mapping presents a malleable and customizable alternative to the time- and resource-consuming—and potentially counter-productive—government route to changing a place name. Counter-maps use Western cartography as the medium for sharing Indigenous place names, which can disrupt the dominant, colonial perception of land (McGurk & Caquard, 2020, p. 59; Willow, 2013). Basic digital and graphic design tools give anyone with computer access the ability to manipulate maps for their own use and, to some extent, control the data on the map (McGurk & Caquard, 2020). In 2010, Thomas and Paynter of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc. noticed a trend among First Nations to digitally map their

territories using their ancestral place names. This counter-mapping aligns with Lucchesi's (2018) Indigenous decolonial mapping period.

This trend is further supported by the McGurk and Caquard (2020) study of Indigenous digital maps and techniques in Canada. This study found that while digital mapping can present some philosophical issues around representing Indigenous knowledge with a Western tool, overall Indigenous People engaging with the technology “infused” (p. 52) it with their knowledge and control. Indeed, a digital counter-map of territory with explanatory notes about Indigenous place names is a common feature of many First Nations' and Indigenous organizations' websites across Canada. Examples of extensive First Nations digital and decolonial counter-mapping include: the Haida Nation, the Musqueam Indian Band, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, and the Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn in New Brunswick. A map of similar scale and scope that shares local names does not exist for the Victoria area. My thesis represents a move toward filling this knowledge and representational gap, though it is important to note that the examples cited above largely originate from First Nations work.

Underneath each of these digital map examples is a database which feeds into the map or design software. Therefore, a first step toward creating this type of map for Victoria is to create a database. Thanks to the hard work and generosity of numerous First Nations elders and knowledge keepers in recent decades, many First Nations place names for the Victoria area have been documented and shared with the public. Samples of these public resources include monuments, memorial plaques, and public signage; First Nations' websites; municipality websites; and academic scholarship. (A more in-depth discussion of database resources will

follow in the “Methodology” section.) Information from these sources can fill a basic database, including latitude and longitude, to populate a map.

In Victoria, some First Nations place names are represented on digital and printed maps, and monuments. The WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council digitized and added to the hand-drawn map from *The Saltwater People*, a major resource of SENĆOTEN place names. However, the map does not pair the place names with their pronunciations or translations. The First People’s Cultural Council, based in Greater Victoria, has an extensive map that focuses on linguistic groups and artists’ ateliers for the entire province, but still uses a database of colonial names for the base layer and does not include specific place names. The *Signs of Lekwungen* monuments, a collection of seven bronze monuments which dot Victoria’s inner harbour and share stories of Lək̓ʷəŋən place names, are inconsistently marked on Google Maps and tourist maps by local destination marketing organization Destination Greater Victoria (DGV). The eight *First Nations Monuments of Oak Bay* do appear on the Community Green Map (Green Map System, Inc., 2008), which may be the only settler-funded map of the research area with visually significant First Nations place names. This illustrated map uses SENĆOTEN place names with different fonts much larger than their English equivalents, however it lacks explanatory text or translations.

Though digital counter-mapping offers a creative opportunity to express Indigeneity and decolonize colonial cartography, it has many Indigenous and settler critics. A major issue is that Western cartography is an expression of Western epistemology; using Indigenous place names on Western maps is simply window dressing without structural change. Indeed, the Google Maps examples of P’áləc’əs and Sčəmásən demonstrate that minor changes do little to impact the

larger structure. Maps are a Western technology which rely on Cartesian logic to represent three-dimensional space on a binary two-dimensional x/y axis (latitude and longitude). Applying Simpson's metaphor for Western epistemology as "caged knowledge" (2004, p. 380) that presents the world through a binary lens, the x/y axis can be understood as the bars that cage land knowledge. Western cartography also depicts land from a top-down view, born of a Christian belief in the logic of a divine plan and the religious compulsion to reflect divine order (Watts, 2007, p. 385). Indigenous mapping and land knowledge traditions are often immersive, with locations relative to the position of the person on the land itself, and conveyed visually or orally, representing the relationship between viewer, land, water, and everything in between (Hirt, 2012, p. 4). This on-the-ground mapping thus becomes a way to communicate ancestral knowledge and stories to orient the person to the land and to the larger cultural context.

Indigenous place names demonstrate the breadth and expansive multi-dimensional nature of Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Beck, 2022). As such, some Indigenous advocates argue that Indigenous land knowledge cannot be rightly communicated in all its complexity within the Western cartographic cage; Indigenous mapping epistemologies developed over millennia of Indigenous life are better suited to express Indigenous land identity (Lucchesi, 2020). From the settlers' side, Rose-Redwood (2016), a settler and critical toponymist, uses the word "domesticate" (p. 193) to describe the neo-colonial process of integrating Indigenous place names into colonial contexts. This is neo-colonial because it perpetuates Western hegemony, as opposed to being decolonial by focusing on Indigenous ways of being in the world. This same cartographic structure also enmeshes Indigenous Peoples within government renderings of land (Willow, 2013). Paradoxically, placing Indigenous Peoples within the "western grid of

intelligibility” (Willow, 2013, p. 873) can both render them visible within the colonial systems which seek their erasure, while also making them more vulnerable to colonial government abuse (Rose, 1996, p. 6).

Counter-mapping thus becomes another act of reinforcing colonial structure which ignores Indigenous methods for communicating land knowledge, such as stories, songs, weavings, carvings, and other embodied creations (Lucchesi, 2018; McGurk & Caquard, 2020). Knowing that Indigenous mapping traditions are non-text-based and immersive experiences begs the question: Can Indigenous land knowledge be justly represented within cartography, a technology born of Western epistemology partially responsible for on-going colonization? Rather than focusing on Indigenous representation within Western cartography, a decolonization framework might ask how—and if—Indigenous land knowledge should be visually represented on Western maps at all.

Syme (2020) extended the critique of counter-mapping to the digital databases and algorithmic coding which lie beneath all digital maps. Data science and computer coding are inherently colonial because their algorithms and binary codes “reinforce deep biases in how we cognitively live in the world” (Syme, 2020, p. 1,110). Thus, data science and computer coding support colonial constructs as well. McGurk and Caquard (2020, p. 58) expanded on this critique by emphasizing that Western data giants dominate the digital data landscape. To the point, many online maps rely on Google, Apple or OpenStreetMaps (three American companies) to provide their background geographic data layer. As described earlier, these databases come from government sources, thus they also reinforce government perceptions of land (McGurk & Caquard, 2020, p. 50).

To truly decolonize maps, society would need a completely new way of building them, requiring extensive decolonization and deconstruction of both computer science and cartography. This radical task combined with the difficulty of changing a place name in Canada through official channels, makes digital counter-mapping a more accessible—though admittedly imperfect—option for visualizing Indigenous place names. As McGurk and Caquard's (2020) Indigenous digital mapping interview subjects reflected, cartography can serve as a framework for communicating Indigenous priorities for representation, as one tool among many.

This thesis is also positioned within critical tourism studies. The tourism industry is entangled with colonial systems and structure (Grimwood et al., 2019) and these deep-colonial connections can muddy the intention of leveraging tourism for decolonization. Rose described the concept of deep-colonizing as, “conquest embedded within institutions and practices which are aimed toward reversing the effects of colonisation” (1996, p. 6). Hence, the tourism industry's enmeshment with colonial structures—such as government funding, museums with stolen cultural objects, or cultural commodification for tourist consumption—has the potential to do more harm to Indigenous People than good. Or, conversely, tourism's role in on-going colonization complicates how the industry is leveraged for decolonization and Truth and Reconciliation. On the topic of the colonial tourism industry, Grimwood et al. (2019) counseled:

...we must pierce settler stories or locate counter-narratives that act against them, lest we accept settler colonialism as totalizing and inescapable. Morally and politically speaking, we need new stories that embed Settlers in anti-colonial struggle in the present and position Indigenous peoples as much more than victims of an unstoppable colonial/tourism state (p. 4).

The Canadian tourism industry is working to incorporate Indigenous tourism into its broader framework to align with UNDRIP and the TRC's 94 Calls to Action (Bell & Erickson, 2022; Graci et al., 2021; Howell & Dennis, 2023). Destination British Columbia, the destination marketing organization (DMO) for the province, cites both these documents as frameworks for its commitments to Truth and Reconciliation (Destination BC, 2024, p. 10). Incorporating Indigenous Peoples into the tourism industry is frequently expressed as, though not limited to, promoting Indigenous-led tourism business initiatives (Destination Greater Victoria, 2025; Graham & Dadd, 2021; Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, 2022). Bigby et al. (2023) expanded the range of benefits of tourism for Indigenous communities from business development to increased opportunities for cultural expression, land connection, and language revitalization. Using Indigenous place names in many contexts incorporates these latter three benefits for Indigenous representation (Hunt & Stevenson, 2017), while a potential opportunity to support language revitalization exists at the intersection of tourism and Indigenous language use (Whitney-Squire et al., 2017). Though research among Indigenous tourism contexts demonstrates how place name use benefits Indigenous communities and tourists participating in Indigenous-led experiences (Graham & Dadd, 2021; Whitney-Squire et al., 2017), there appears to be little research into how integrating Indigenous place names into the larger settler tourism context—such as including them on tourist maps—contributes to Truth and Reconciliation from the settlers' side.

Indeed, many Indigenous scholars, advocates, and First Nations have drawn clear connections between the colloquial use of Indigenous place names and decolonization (Beck, 2022; Council of the Haida Nation, n.d.; Rose-Redwood, 2016; Syme, 2020). Respected

Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach advocated that for Indigenous “cultural knowledge to thrive, it must live in many sites” which “include education and research” to push through the narrow colonial system (2021, p. 11). As settler toponymist Rose-Redwood posited (2016, p. 202), everyday speech that reflects an Indigenous landscape among settlers can be more powerful than “official” recognition of names precisely because it is the repetitive practice of many people reinforcing names through their daily lives that undermines the performative authority of colonial institutions like the BCGNO. Beck (2022) cited several examples of colloquial use of Indigenous place names that co-exist and even supersede “official” names among Indigenous and settler communities in Canada that are not on official maps. Beck argued that multiple names for land encourage settler awareness of the land’s multiple identities, which in turn gives people options for how they connect to the land. “Over time,” Beck (2022) continued, “this awareness will graft one or more names onto our collective identity” (p. 192), giving a colloquial or secondary (read: Indigenous) place name the public repetitive reinforcement necessary to cement it in public consciousness. In turn, this serves Truth and Reconciliation from the settlers’ side by increasing awareness in settler daily life of continued Indigenous presence and priorities (Beck, 2022, p. 194).

This study focuses on Victoria, the capital of British Columbia, Canada, as a colonial city that has historically relied on a deliberate, monolithic British sense of place with English place names. Colonial place identity hinges on the superiority of the colonial construct and is exemplified by representational erasure of Indigenous Peoples. Rose-Redwood described the colonial Victorian streetscape from his US-born perspective as a “space of colonial commemoration par excellence”, where everyone is reminded of their colonial location “whether

one is going to buy groceries at the local market, walking a dog through a local park, or attending a local high school” (2016, p. 194). From its inception, Hunt and Stevenson (2017) argued, Victoria’s Britishness has been transposed as a grid upon First Nations land, like other urban grids across Canada. Point in fact: The overwhelming majority of Victoria’s official place names are in English despite the uninterrupted presence of at least two First Nations language groups.

Tourism marketing and promotion is one way that cities establish and perpetuate a public image. D.A. Smith (2012) catalogued the many ways that Victoria has played up its shallow British roots as a unique selling point for tourists as “the most British city in Canada” or “more English than the English”, which in turn reinforces its colonial identity. Similarly, Stanley (2020) meticulously detailed how colonial systems created Victoria’s artificially European sense of place, inviting Victorian settlers to ponder how Indigenous People might experience the city differently than them. Stanley referenced the *Signs of Lekwungen* monuments (p. 102) that are essential to this thesis, but found them an exception to the overwhelming rule of Eurocentric Victorian public space.

In more recent years, the DGV strategic and destination plans have demonstrated a deliberate shift away from this British sentimentality toward a more diverse and inclusive public image. This is seen with a concerted effort in a brand review from 2018 to “break from past stereotypes and communicate a modern, fresh and accurate representation” of Victoria (Destination Greater Victoria, 2021, p. 14); and the 2025 Business Plan being the first business plan to have a land acknowledgement and an entire section dedicated to “Reconciliation and Indigenous Tourism” (Destination Greater Victoria, 2025, p. 44). Nonetheless, when Victoria hit a top spot on Condé Nast Traveler’s Readers’ Choice Awards for best small city in North

America in 2024, the prestigious travel magazine reminded readers that the city has “a reputation as the most British town in Canada” (CNT Editors, 2024). In the age of AI aggregation of archived internet content, this stale messaging will likely haunt the city’s destination marketing into the future.

In 2018, the City of Victoria unveiled 11 wayfinding signs downtown with First Nations place names (see Figures 5 and 6). According to *Victoria News*, the 11 signs were “designed to help tourists and local residents navigate their way to key attractions and destinations” (Greater Victoria News Staff, 2018). The signs feature a map in English with the Lək̓ʷəŋən place name at the top; occasionally the place name is also on the map (see Figure 6). However, no translation/explanation or pronunciation is provided for the Lək̓ʷəŋən names. Note the second two photos in Figure 5. These show “siʔem tawənew’txw” for City Hall and “čeyməŋ tawen” for Chinatown. Searching for these names online returns only the *Victoria News* article and two social media threads. It is clear that “čeyməŋ tawen” is a Lək̓ʷəŋən version of Chinatown, however it is not clear from public information if this a historic name or a modern invention/translation. This then calls into question “siʔem tawənew’txw” for City Hall. A Lək̓ʷəŋən speaker might be able to share some insight here or City of Victoria archival research may reveal the origin of the names. See p. 79 for further discussion of these signs as they relate to the thesis database.

Figure 5

City of Victoria wayfinding signs with Lək'wəḡən names at top; photo credit: Melinda Quintero

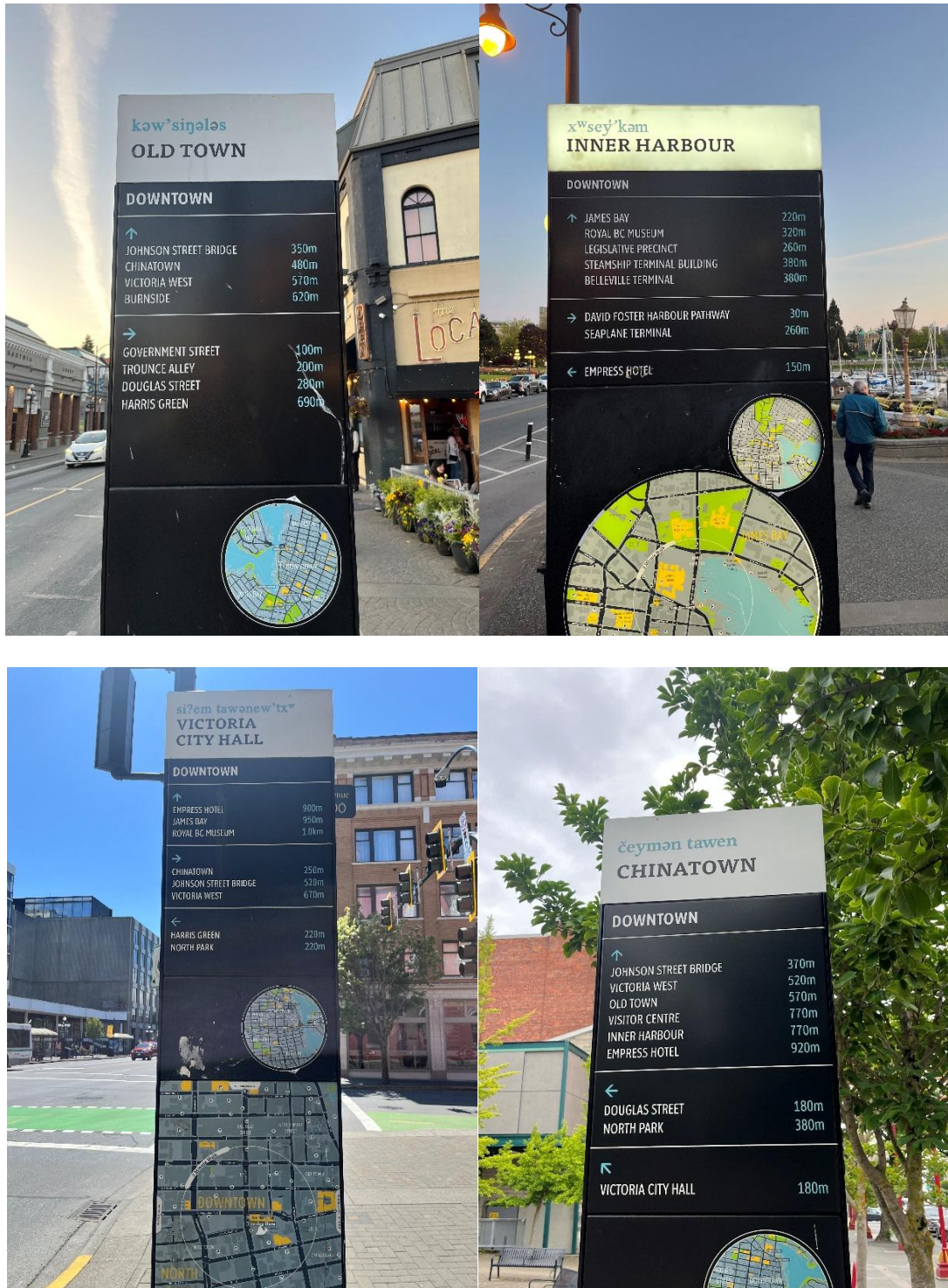


Figure 6

City of Victoria wayfinding sign for Míqən/Beacon Hill; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Note: “Míqən” is in bright green at the very top of the sign in photo on left.

The seven *Signs of Lekwungen* monuments share First Nations place names in a more engaging way. Sponsored by the X^wsépsəm and Songhees First Nations with the City of Victoria and other settler organizations, these downtown monuments are bronze casts of a cedar carving by renowned Lək^wəŋən artist Butch Dick, made into the form of a spindle whorl, and include the Lək^wəŋən place name plus phonetic pronunciation. Taken together, this collection of monuments makes a fine walking tour from P’áləc’əs (Songhees Point) to Míqən (Beacon Hill). A full-colour companion pamphlet is available at City Hall and online, while a photocopied, black-and-white single-page version is available at the downtown tourism centre. These materials describe the

artwork's meaning and some of the history of the Songhees and X^wsépsəm First Nations, while also drawing connections between colonialism and the rapid transformation of the landscape into an urban city (City of Victoria, n.d.-b). The monuments' accompanying information board offers a shorter version of the same information (though without the colonization critique) encouraging viewers to visit the monuments to learn about Lək^wəŋən territory, culture, and history.

The monuments mark key points of First Nations history, which also coincide with points of interest to tourists and to Victoria's colonial history. For example, the monument featured in Figure 20 (p. 86) acknowledges Q'emásəŋ, the First Nations place name for the area when settlers first arrived; this marker stands in front of the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM; the Province's history museum) and across the street from Parliament, two major tourist attractions and colonial institutions. The write-up for Q'emásəŋ points out that the RBCM holds many objects that the Lək^wəŋən "loaned" to the museum "so that the traditions can be shared as we share the land" (City of Victoria, n.d.-b). Another monument on the Lower Causeway acknowledges Xws3yq'əm ("place of mud"), the mudflat rich in clams now buried beneath the foundation of the colonial Empress Hotel. The write-up shares that the flats were also canoe portage to Ross Bay and that many cultural artifacts were found along the route during construction of the modern city (City of Victoria, n.d.-b). The monuments' accompanying information board (Figure 7) proclaims "Surviving traditional places names, and the soil itself preserve ancient stories waiting to be told" and "To seek out these markers is to learn about the land, its original culture, and the spirit of its people." An orientation map uses bullets instead of names to show where the monuments are across the area. The monuments, signs, and pamphlets remind the viewer: "We are still here" (City of Victoria, n.d.-b). This powerful collection of

monuments capitalizes on tourism interest to share First Nations place names as an expression of continued presence through colonization and push against colonial erasure.

Figure 7

Information board for Signs of Lekwungen; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Yet, despite the obvious connection to tourism, the *Signs of Lekwungen* are not well-documented on tourist maps. Of the six free, generic tourist maps of Victoria collected from the Belleville Ferry Terminal (terminus of the Black Ball Ferry Line from Port Angeles, Washington), the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal, and the downtown visitors' centre in June 2025 only one includes the *Signs of Lekwungen*. That map comes from DGV and inconsistently marks the monuments—some are located by name, one with a small icon, while two are missing

altogether. In addition, the monuments that are marked are all labeled as “skwc’ənjílc.” This name means “bitter cherry tree” and refers only to the monument near City Hall; the DGV map incorrectly uses this First Nations’ place name for the five monuments and places listed on its tourist map. At the time of this writing, the map available on DGV’s website does not include the monuments at all.

The *First Nations Monuments of Oak Bay* are eight small monuments in the District of Oak Bay featuring art by Charles Elliot (TEMOSENTET) of the WJOLELP First Nation. These small bronze plaques acknowledging First Nations place names and land use were installed in 2008 in honour of BC’s 150-year celebration. Though placed in prominent locations, including the Chinese Cemetery and Cattle Point, these monuments are somewhat tricky to find. Official online information about them is seemingly limited to one *Oak Bay News* article (van Reeuyk, 2018), a basic website with information about the monuments’ origin and locations (District of Oak Bay, n.d.), and a personal blog; while the project was supported by the Songhees and Xw’sépsəm First Nations, the monuments are not mentioned on either of their websites. Perhaps the reason these monuments are not widely advertised is because they appear to be under municipal review. The *Oak Bay News* reported that the municipality “agreed to work with local First Nations to add Lək’wəḡən place names ... to broaden public understanding of the history of the lands now known as Oak Bay” (van Reeuyk, 2022). This process includes a review by the Songhees and Xw’sépsəm First Nations for appropriateness, as part of the municipality’s adoption in principle of UNDRIP (van Reeuyk, 2022). These monuments are not on official maps but do appear in an illustrated community map online, which also uses First Nations place names for the coast and islands (Green Map System, Inc., 2008).

Figure 8

First Nations Monuments of Oak Bay at Bowker Creek; *Thaywun* name shared on the plaque;

photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Aside from street and neighborhood names that derive directly from First Nations language, such as Esquimalt, Saanich or Songhees Point, a lone example of First Nations orthography on a municipal street sign in the research area is Su'it Street, formerly Trutch Street, in the Fairfield neighborhood. Listed first in the alphabetic orthography as Su'it, then in the Ləkʷəŋən səʔit, with phonetic pronunciation “say-EET,” this street was renamed as a municipal act of reconciliation in 2017. The street originally commemorated Joseph Trutch, chief commissioner of lands and works in the late 1800s, the first Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, and famous for having “ignored the idea of Indian title altogether” (Wood & Rossiter, 2022, p. 43). Trutch’s racist views of Indigenous Peoples and proclamations that aboriginal title

did not exist would haunt the province's land title policy nearly into the 21st century (Wood & Rossiter, 2022, p. 43). In February 2022, Victoria's City Council voted unanimously to change the street name to səʔit, which means truth. At the time of the unveiling ceremony for the new sign, the *Times Colonist* reported that "Mayor Lisa Helps called the renaming a significant act of decolonization and another step toward reconciliation" (Harnett, 2022). Though the name is not a historic First Nations place name tied to the location, the story of Trutch and the work of Truth and Reconciliation have now become a part of the landscape represented by the Su'it Street sign.

Unfortunately, Trutch Street still appears on some tourist maps. Of the four generic tourist maps gathered in June 2025 mentioned in the earlier that reach Su'it Street, two have the name Trutch. One of these maps is sponsored by DGV—though a second map by DGV has the corrected name. In June 2023, I noticed that the DGV's map of Victoria online still included Trutch Street. I contacted DGV by email to inform them that they needed to change it and received confirmation that they would investigate. As of the time of this printing, Trutch Street was still on the DMO's website.

Figure 9

Su'it street sign in Victoria; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Victoria does have historic street signage in a language other than English and within a heavily touristed neighbourhood. Since the 1980s, the streets of Chinatown—the oldest Chinatown in Canada—have used Chinese characters alongside English (Chinatown Ad Hoc Committee, 1979). Other distinctive features of Chinatown’s street signs are their shade of bright red (in contrast with the City of Victoria blue/grey street signs), a calligraphy-inspired font for the English, and the decorative elements such as dragons or gold. The conceptualization for bilingual street signs can be traced to Lai’s report *The Future of Victoria’s Chinatown* from 1979, written upon request by City Council to survey opinions from the Chinese community, Chinatown’s business owners, and—notably—tourists about a potential Chinatown rehabilitation. One recommendation in the report was the City Council develop a “set of guidelines to maintain and enhance [Chinatown’s] Oriental characteristics and identity” (p. 33). To meet this goal, the Chinatown Ad Hoc Committee in 1979 wrote the Plan for the Rehabilitation for Chinatown with an objective to “restore and rehabilitate Chinatown’s physical

fabric and to enhance its cultural and economic well-being” (Chinatown Ad Hoc Committee, 1979, p. 2). One of the initial recommendations to build cultural wellbeing was to install bilingual signage to enhance and unify the neighborhood’s sense of place. Bilingual signage was understood to be a contributor to and reinforcement of the Chinese-quality of the neighborhood. This begs the question: How would First Nations language on Victoria’s street signs communicate Indigenousness in the cityscape and support Indigenous Peoples’ wellbeing?

Figure 10

Example of a bilingual street sign in Chinatown; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Looking further afield, the Skwxwú7mesh First Nation offers an instructive example of First Nations control over signage for tourism. The Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Winter Olympics occurred on the territory of multiple First Nations. The Sea-to-Sky Highway, the only road connecting Vancouver and Whistler, runs directly through Skwxwú7mesh territory. Taking the opportunity to express cultural values, connection to land, and continued presence in their own

territory, the Skwxwú7mesh leveraged the Olympic highway traffic to promote their nation. Features of Skwxwú7mesh tourism infrastructure created for the Olympics include information kiosks at highway turnouts; a new Squamish Lil'Wat Cultural Centre in Whistler where "no place names are given in English" (Townsend-Gault, 2011, p. 49); route markers shaped like canoes declaring the road a "Cultural Journey"; rock-like monumental signs with place names in English and Skwxwú7mesh; and Provincial highway signs with Skwxwú7mesh place names. Townsend-Gault (2011) analyzed the Skwxwú7mesh approach to maximizing their visibility along the high-speed highway, emphasizing the First Nation's intentional work to turn the highway into "a spatial alternative to Native-art-as-usual" (p. 46) because of the territory's cultural significance. This work would have been collaborative among First Nations and between the Skwxwú7mesh First Nation and the Province of British Columbia.

Using Townsend-Gault's interpretation, the place name signage along the Sea-to-Sky Highway materializes the cultural journey. The traveler goes from Vancouver, where highway signs are almost exclusively in English, deeper into Skwxwú7mesh territory where Skwxwú7mesh language begins to orient the traveler to the land. The highway itself indiscriminately cuts through the territory, ignoring First Nations land use as colonial government infrastructure characteristically does. Yet, the Skwxwú7mesh re-purpose this colonial feature to tell their story. A driver may stop at seven information kiosks along the way between Whistler and Vancouver learn about Skwxwú7mesh history, culture, and land connection. These kiosks also share information about Skwxwú7mesh places and place names (Townsend-Gault, 2011, p. 50), communicating the Indigenoussness of the landscape, despite the presence of the highway and English place names. Even if a driver does the two-hour drive

without stopping, provincial highway signs with Skwxwú7mesh place names—in parentheses under their English equivalents—orient the driver to the First Nations landscape.

These tourism and road infrastructure improvements are examples of First Nations-led work to both highlight and embed First Nations language into the settler's experience of land. Townsend-Gault (2011) argued that these Skwxwú7mesh additions to the Sea-to-Sky Highway communicate to travelers that they are deep within Skwxwú7mesh territory, with its own cultural history and contemporary expressions. Multiple online settler travel articles confirm awareness of this deliberate Skwxwú7mesh cultural project, encouraging settlers to take in the landscape as the Skwxwú7mesh invite them to do (Read, 2022; Romeyn, 2025). Notably, highly regarded *Condé Nast Traveler* is among the settler publications that promoted the First Nations interpretation of the Sea-to-Sky Highway—the same publication cited earlier in this literature review proclaiming Victoria to be Canada's "most British town." As with the example of Haida tourism language project also cited earlier, the application of Skwxwú7mesh language in the tourism setting presents an opportunity for learning how Indigenous language use in a tourism setting influences settler travelers' understanding of sense of place. Currently, there does not appear to be research about this topic for Skwxwú7mesh territory.

Methodology

This work took root within a circle of Indigenous principles of academic integrity. Visually represented by Gladue (2020) as a circle, these guiding principles are generally expressed as relationality, respect, and reciprocity. Though not to be understood as universal across Indigenous cultures or a standardized (read: calcified) check list of research and academic principles, these principles represent “themes and parallels in Indigenous paradigms” (Gladue, 2020, p. 3) applicable to academic research. Relationality recognizes that relationships among people and with non-humans, with land, with ancestors, with everything, form the basis of reality—no one exists within a vacuum. Respect guides our actions to be ethical and done with care to be in right relation with ourselves and others. Reciprocity acknowledges that our actions in the world have repercussions and should therefore be done with an awareness of our effect on other beings within our orbit and beyond. These principles guided this research and are interwoven into this writing.

From within these principles of Indigenous academic integrity, this work relied on two-eyed seeing research methodology. This methodology intentionally approaches research with perspectives from both Indigenous and Western knowledge (Bartlett et al., 2012). In the case of my research, two-eyed seeing allowed me to combine Western cartographic epistemology—that it to say, that mapmaking is a valid and instructive process for understanding land—with Indigenous, land-based ways of knowing that prioritize multi-faceted, interactive human connection with land over categorical organization. With two-eyed seeing, though both perspectives are seemingly in opposition to each other, they both have their merits and roles to play in research. This methodology describes the middle ground illuminated by McGurk and

Caquard (2020): the awareness that cartography is problematic as a deep-colonial tool yet can serve a decolonial purpose. This methodology holds the tension that arises from challenging Western cartographic hegemony with Indigenous language and history; and the tension of giving visual form to Indigenous knowledge to promote the long-term, societal transformation of Truth and Reconciliation while being fully aware of Indigenous critique of Western cartography.

Strategies for creating digital counter-maps are varied, though similar in their approach of corroborating historical information across multiple sources. As I am a settler of non-Indigenous cultural origins with an interest in Indigenous mapping, I have chosen as frameworks three examples of digital mapping projects that involve colonial government and settlers. This contrasts with decolonial maps created by First Nations for First Nations, which likely have some engagement with settlers but otherwise would have their own methodology and technologies.

The First People's Cultural Council of British Columbia, a Crown Corporation, has an extensive map of British Columbia that charts linguistic groupings across the province. These datasets are drawn from myriad resources—from government reports to grey literature and the organization's own research. Additionally, the FPCC map has a crowd sourcing feature, where Indigenous People can write in requests to make changes and additions to the maps. This includes the option to add place names and audio files for pronunciations. The "checklist" for including place names or changes to the map follow research protocols for involving Indigenous culture, including consulting with Indigenous community about the appropriateness of uploading information. FPCC staff vets and oversees the crowd-sourced data.

The Ta'n Weji-sqalia'tiek Mi'kmaw Place Names Atlas has mapped the entire province of Nova Scotia with First Nations language. The project goal was to “document... and raise public awareness” of the Mi'kmaq's presence on the land (Ta'n Weji-sqalia'tiek, n.d.). Through critical analysis of historic maps drawn by colonial figures in the 1800s, foundational research by settler academics for the Atlas in 2010 recalibrated the colonial “districts” for the region to better represent the cultural landscape prior to the arrival of settlers. The researchers took their cues from the land and seascapes, basing their new interpretation of the Mi'kmaw homelands on “natural physiographic features such as watersheds, river systems, climatic conditions, and geological formations” (Lewis & Sable, n.d.). Bolstered by this research which challenged the colonial systemic framing of the Mi'kmaw homeland, the project gained a collaborative element with the Mi'kmaq People. Together, a collective of Indigenous researchers and academics gathered place names through interviews with Mi'kmaw speakers, academic research in aboriginal title, and colonial archival research. Taken together, these different resources provide multiple ways to share the names and their stories with the public. An additional element of collaboration is that Mi'kmaw students do some of the research tasks, such as building the database and conducting qualitative interviews.

A project on a smaller scale is Indigenous Placenames of Salt Spring Island. This project is held within the Salt Spring Island Archives online and comes with the disclaimer “that maps such as this are in themselves a colonial concept. This map is presented solely in the interest of education around Indigenous placenames that have been shared with us and the correct pronunciation of these names” (Arnett, 2024). The Archives initiated this 21-year-long project in 2003, with two settler researchers—one a settler of Māori descent and another from a historic

Salt Spring Island settler family—as developers. The project began by building relationships with Hul’q’umi’num’ and SENĆOTEN-speaking community to conduct ethnographic interviews about First Nations place names for Salt Spring Island. The map itself is a relief map that includes audio files of pronunciation and is complemented by rich explanations of the place names’ meanings. The main writer, Chris Arnett, is positioned as having “compiled” (Arnett, 2024) the map from information offered by 15 First Nations elders. Though Arnett’s exceptional storytelling, writing, and research skill are demonstrated throughout the project, this important distinction places him as a conduit of information—not the author of new data or knowledge.

Indigenous participants actively consenting to share Indigenous knowledge while building public knowledge lend these joint Indigenous-settler collaborative mapping projects their strength and legitimacy. This thesis is limited in this regard. Including First Nations voices into this research is an essential and irreplaceable principle of respect in Indigenous research methodology (Lucchesi, 2020; Smith, L.T., 2012) and consultation regarding place names (Beck, 2022, p. 194). This issue will be discussed further in the “Limitations” section.

Working toward building a project based on respect, the research design for this thesis attempted to follow the Indigenous data principles of OCAP®, developed by First Nations Information Governance Centre, a national non-profit with its origins in the Assembly of First Nations. Place names are Indigenous data about land, territory, culture, language, ancestry, and more. Therefore, “the inherent and inalienable rights and interests of Indigenous peoples relating to the collection, ownership and application of data about their people, lifeways and territories” (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016, p. 2) applies to place names. OCAP® stands for: Ownership (deference to Indigenous Peoples’ collective ownership over their data); Control (deference to those same

communities' decision-making about how their data is collected, used, and stored); Access (facilitating and self-determining access by community to data collected); and Possession (responsibility of community to steward the data over time) (First Nations Information Governance Centre [FNIGC], 2022). I acknowledge the First Nations of the research area's ownership over the data I have gathered and have worked at building relationships between myself and representatives of these First Nations to facilitate giving the database and visualizations to them at the conclusion of this project. Indeed, this project will not be considered complete until a handover happens. Table 1 shows how each OCAP® principle is applied in the design.

Table 1*OCAP® principles applied in research design*

OCAP® Principle	Attempted Application in Research Design
Ownership: Deference to Indigenous Peoples' collective ownership over their data	Accessing only public information, which implies a degree of consent to be shared while also being aware that some First Nations data in the public sphere may have been extracted or misused throughout colonization.
Control: Deference to those same communities' decision-making about how their data is collected, used, and stored	Progressive, on-going work to build relationships with the First Nations of the research area to inform them of my project and seek their input.
Access: Facilitating and self-determining access by community to data collected	Database and visualization handover as an essential determinate of project completion.
Possession: Responsibility of community to steward the data over time	Research is reciprocal and done in service to First Nations, with open acknowledgement that I do not "own," nor did I "create" the information. Database is stored locally on my computer to be given to First Nations.

With the principles of OCAP® in mind for this research, I developed what I call the “Anyone Test” to ask, “Can Anyone find this data?” and “Can Anyone access it?” The test served two major purposes. Firstly, the “Anyone Test” simplified the design; secondly, it was a guardrail to keep me—a settler researcher—“in my lane” as I work with First Nations data. One purpose of the database is to demonstrate how readily available this place name information is; therefore, to fulfill this purpose the information must be easily accessible to “Anyone” with an interest in learning about Indigenous place names. For each new piece of data I encountered, I would ask: “Could Anyone find this data?” If I was “Anyone” from anywhere in the world, settler or Indigenous, curious about Indigenous place names with a desire to learn, could I have found this data? Furthermore, could I access and use this data? If the answer to both was yes, then I could use the data. Conversely: Does this data require special access or cultural connection? If the answer was yes, then I could not use the data to demonstrate how readily available the information was. With this test, my design became more streamlined to focus simply on public information. The design changed from being a historical archive investigation requiring training in archival research, to non-extractive, unobtrusive field and desk-based research. As the data I relied on is publicly available and “Anyone” can access it, the data itself did not necessitate sacred, cultivated access to Indigenous culture and language. This helped the research respect Indigenous protocols for sharing cultural knowledge. However, this does point to an assumption that the First Nations are consenting to the information being in the public sphere in the first place; this will be discussed in the “Limitations” section. Nevertheless, the “Anyone Test” helped to minimize ethical risk and support my goal of completing this project from a position of respect for Indigenous Peoples.

Through quantitative field and desk research, supplemented with qualitative data collection about First Nations and colonial stories, this study built a very simple place names database for the Victoria waterfront from Cadboro Bay to Millstream. This geographic scope reflects local First Nations historic orientation to the sea and contains the city's emblems of colonialism: part of the former land holdings of the Hudson's Bay Company, the provincial Legislature, the Empress Hotel, and the Canadian Forces Base. As it happens, many of these colonial monuments are also prime tourist attractions. Furthermore, as will be discussed in the "Limitations" section, the geographic scope represents the limits of how much data I can manage as a singular researcher.

The database is a basic Microsoft Excel spreadsheet on my computer. Applying the "Anyone Test" to computer knowledge also simplifies the database—no special coding was required to gather place names into one file. Place names and their latitude/longitude were added to the database in the first instance of me encountering them. Research began as field excursions to the research area, starting with the *Signs of Lekwungen* and the *First Nations Monuments of Oak Bay*. I recorded the locations of these and city wayfinding signs with First Nations language on them and transcribed their text, noting any First Nations place names. It is important to note that there is a good chance that other City of Victoria or municipality wayfinding signs or information boards include First Nations place names that I have not spotted.

After field research, I needed to determine if I had visited all the monuments in the research area that commemorate First Nations history. To do this, I cross-checked my initial field research with lists of public art and monuments on the Capital Regional District's (CRD) website. I filtered the database by municipality, "First Nations," "monuments," and other types

of public art, noting any works that I missed. However, I quickly noted that this database does not include the Oak Bay monuments—which contributed eight First Nations place names to the project database—indicating the incomplete nature of the CRD catalog. I visited every monument or public artwork in person.

Understanding the field research had likely reached a saturation point, I turned my attention to expanding the resource list with desk research. This started as basic Google searches for “Indigenous place names Victoria” and the individual names on the monuments noted in field research. These searches led me to online resources. Examples of text-based sources include academic literature, including local history accounts; archival material; and grey literature such as municipal and First Nations’ websites, including online language resources. For place names, some of these resources include translations, histories or stories, and pronunciations, while others include some of these or only the names. These online resources often cited a handful of the same settler academic resources, which I then sourced and included as data sources. Taken together, these sources triangulate the place names. A full list of database resources is in Appendix A.

I relied heavily on the place names list in *The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871* (<https://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/>). This is a digitized archive of colonial notes and letters from Fort Victoria created with the explicit purpose of exploring how to decolonize historic archives to make them more publicly accessible (The Colonial Despatches Team, n.d.-a). One of the ways the team of academics and coders at the University of Victoria have sorted the archives is by place names, creating a list of more than 700 names spanning the British Empire of any place name mentioned anywhere within the archive. I combed through the

list and pulled out every name that was within the research area. This returned extensive information about 13 colonial names to supplement the First Nations place names.

Finally, as the project has progressed over nearly two years, my field explorations expanded. I have since come across multiple information boards and interpretative signs in various states of upkeep in key places such as Beacon Hill Park and the Gorge. These signs have provided supplemental historical background and occasionally serve as triangulation sources for place names.

The database combines quantitative (i.e. latitude and longitude for point placement on a map) and qualitative data (i.e. stories and legends associated with the names). The signs and websites are secondary data because they communicate knowledge and are not the knowledge themselves; rather they indicate the extent of knowledge. The information gathered was based on the categories shared by the example maps discussed above. Resource triangulation filled in data gaps where singular sources were incomplete. The data categories are:

- Municipality (quantitative)
- First Nations place name in official orthography, plus any additional orthographies (quantitative)
- Translation (quantitative)
- Story associated with the name (qualitative)
- Latitude/longitude (quantitative)
- Source (quantitative)

From this base, I decided to include an additional element: colonial names. By including the corresponding English counterparts and dates when the English names became “official,” the database demonstrates correlations or similarities between colonial names and First Nations names. This comparative data illuminates where First Nations languages may have influenced English names and reveals First Nations histories within English place names. Furthermore, using dates demonstrates the rapidity of name colonization and locates the city’s history in the not-so-distant past, reminding viewers of the arbitrary nature of the colonial naming system.

In researching colonial names, I also came across colonial names for places with specific First Nations histories but that do not have publicly known First Nations place names. I have included these few places in the database for completeness of identifying First Nations places via place names. The database therefore also has:

- English name (quantitative)
- Date imposed (quantitative)
- Story associated with English name (qualitative)

Collecting these data points achieved the first objective of bringing place name information into a unified resource. The data reached an obvious saturation point when the list surpassed 100 place names. New resources began referencing back to the database’s main academic and First Nations resources, making it clear that new resources were not contributing additional information. Throughout the data gathering process, the collection had multiple entries for the same locations listed in different orthographies. As I familiarized myself with the data and the map over time, I consolidated the different orthographies for the same place under a singular

data point using the official Ləkʷəŋən or SENĆOŦEN orthography. The database prioritizes orthographies as listed on First Nations' websites.

To achieve the second objective of showing the density and prominence of First Nations place names, the data has been visualized as a map with Google Maps. The map displays First Nations place names, their pronunciation, translation, associated story, associated colonial name, and date the colonial name was imposed. This shows the area's publicly available First Nations place names, thereby disproving their erasure. The choice of mapping application was deliberate. I was given the option to visualize my data with Geographic Information System (GIS) software using a Royal Roads University license. However, this option did not pass the "Anyone Test" because a GIS license is prohibitively expensive for a person with a casual interest in mapmaking and using GIS requires additional training and more advanced coding skills. On the contrary, Google Maps (via the MyMaps feature) offers a user-friendly, free, and accessible option to customize a base map with personalized data. However, as shown in the Literature Review, Google Maps has deep roots in colonial government cartography. A user cannot change the base layers in MyMaps, so for my project Míqən will only display as a bullet point over Beacon Hill (Figure 16), rather than changing the name Beacon Hill entirely. Despite these limitations, Google Maps represents a user-ready option to experiment with visualization.

This thesis does not create new knowledge, in the common understanding of the role of Western academic research. Nor does this study purport to be an authoritative account of First Nations settlements and movements. Rather, this study serves a functional purpose of gathering—or compiling, as was the case of Indigenous Placenames of Salt Spring Island—information into one place. The database is the primary output and offers the most potential and

applicability for First Nations to decide how to utilize and control the data. The visualization illustrates the depth and variety of First Nations place name knowledge that is shared with the public through monuments, websites, and literature. This counter-map challenges Victoria's colonial sense of place and its reputation as the "most British city in Canada," aiming to unsettle the settler who knows their neighborhood by its English names.

Limitations

“Knowledge about Indigenous peoples is not the same as Indigenous knowledge, which is held by the people themselves,” Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group (IPSG) of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) Declaration of Key Questions about Research Ethics with Indigenous Communities (2010).

My positionality limits this study in geographic scope and resources. Initial exploratory research demonstrated the density of place names for the Saanich Peninsula, a significant part of Greater Victoria, and home to the WJOŁEŁP, WŚÍ,ĶEM, STÁUTW, and BOŲEĆEN First Nations. All these names were more than I could process alone; the study’s geographic limitations reflect what I can manage on my own. Furthermore, I am not a computer or database coder; I do not have the coding skills to build a dynamic database. The data lives in a basic spreadsheet which is fed into basic data visualization application Google Maps—the very same problematic digital map that reflects colonial naming priorities.

I developed my research design with a growing awareness of my limitations as a settler researcher working on a topic about Indigenous history, culture, and language. As a settler non-Indigenous researcher, I am in neither the ethical nor community-based position to conduct ethnographic or participatory action research with the many First Nations whose homelands are the research area. Furthermore, I cannot rely on the First Nations’ community to confirm my “findings.” As such, the research design triangulated First Nations place names with information gathered from public resources gleaned through the “Anyone Test.” The research reshuffled public information to offer a new perspective, instead of extracting, removing, or sequestering information from Indigenous community.

In this way, my design's limitations align with ethical expectations for working with an Indigenous topic in a non-extractive, unobtrusive way that promotes reciprocity. Inspirational projects like the Ta'n Weji-sqalia'tiek Mi'kmaw Place Names Digital Atlas and Indigenous Placenames of Salt Spring Island represent extensive and deep collaborations between teams of Indigenous People and settlers conducting qualitative interviews for research. As a singular settler researcher, my positionality limits my ethical capacity to supplement public knowledge with qualitative interviews. To balance this, resource triangulation attempts to instill confidence in place names without the support of ethnographic research. Furthermore, the public sources represent a deference to First Nations' control over their languages and place names. This is operating on the assumption that First Nations community has consented to these place names being publicly accessible and that they were obtained in an ethical manner in the first place, which might not always be the case. Seemingly Indigenous place names in common use and the public domain can be of settler origin or have passed into the public sphere through an extractive process (Beck, 2022, p. 127). This represents a further potential limitation of the sources.

The data is stored locally on my personal computer. I have opted to not include the database as an appendix to this thesis. This decision prevents public access to the database when the thesis is published. If the database was included in the thesis, it would then be included in the publication of the thesis online. Through publication, the database would be accessible to anyone, which does not align with the principles of OCAP®. To respect First Nations' control and possession of their data, the database must deliberately fail the "Anyone Test" by having only restricted access and permissions.

However, all this methodological tightrope walking does not absolve me of the ethical requirement to consult First Nations of the research area. Dr. Shauneen Pete, of Little Pine First Nation in Treaty 6 Territory, Chair of the Royal Roads University Emerging Indigenous Scholars Circle, and committee member for this thesis, has carefully guided me throughout this process toward developing relationships with the Nations whose land I studied and data I handled. However, progressive efforts to build connections with the Songhees First Nation, the X^wsépsəm First Nation, and the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council have taken more time than the research timeframe. In 2024, Dr. Pete was able to share a bit about my project with Songhees Elder and *Signs of Lekwungen* artist Butch Dick, who expressed interest and noticed parallels between the project and another project he was working on. In the two years I have been working on this thesis, I have shared my project with nine Indigenous scholars, local First Nations members, representatives from Indigenous Tourism BC, and settlers within First Nations and city government. Though these conversations were inspiring, met with enthusiasm, offered guidance, and even hinted at approval of the work, it was not until the close of the project that my contacts began to offer guidance on how to handover of the database and spark larger conversations with the First Nations themselves. Though still not true project approval, a path toward discussion and database handover has since become clear for the X^wsépsəm First Nation. It is important to remember that both the Indigenous Placenames of Salt Spring Island and the Mi'kmaw Place Names Atlas, two Indigenous-settler collaborative maps, each took around 20 years to develop into their current online state. Consultation with First Nations is on-going, even as the database is now complete.

Victoria was a major Indigenous trading hub well before and during the height of trade with the colonial fort, and as such it attracted Indigenous Peoples from other regions (Keddie, 2003, p. 40-47). Such diverse Peoples as the Haida from Haida Gwaii, the Kwakwaka'wakw from Northern Vancouver Island, and the Clallum from northern Washington would camp around X^wséyqəm (Inner Harbour/James Bay) and Q'emásəŋ (Gorge waters) for seasonal trade and to take advantage of the fort for commerce and staging grounds for further travel. Though historic record of these camps and their locations survives, this thesis did not include place names associated with these Indigenous Peoples' languages. Therefore, the database's overview of Indigenous place names is incomplete when it comes to incorporating all Indigenous Peoples who may have names and attachments to this land.

This thesis also waded into ethically murky water in terms of “the fantasy of entitlement to knowing” (Grimwood et al., 2019, p. 3), where settler researchers extract knowledge from Indigenous communities or view Indigenous knowledge as a resource to ultimately benefit settler norms. This project was inspired by my own curiosity to know “What are the First Nations place names for Victoria?” and my noticing Victoria's tourism literature leaves out First Nations monuments. I initially intended to redraw a tourist map of downtown as a handout for tourists. Putting myself in the shoes of a tourist coming to Victoria, I wanted to know more about First Nations history to supplement or enhance my experience. This thinking is very much inline with Grimwood's “entitlement to knowing” and the commodification of cultures and histories for tourist consumption.

As preliminary research illustrated the breadth of public knowledge of First Nations place names (which challenged my colonial assumption that “there wouldn't be much to find” and that

the project would be “easy”) and the ethical necessity of First Nations’ involvement, the project evolved. The focus shifted from how to share this information with tourists to how bringing this information together might be advantageous and useful for First Nations as an act of service in reciprocity. I continue to grapple with these issues around my own positionality and interrogating my colonial mindset.

Renowned Cheyenne cartographer Anita Hetoevêhotohke’e Lucchesi (2020) described my thought process and concerns practically point by point. In generalizing about mapping projects about Indigenous lands born from settlers’ mind, she wrote:

Much more commonly [than not], these projects are the result of a niche interest of an academic, and while they may have approval and participation from the community, such cartographic projects are not necessarily reflective of community priorities or do not sustainably build the capacity of the community to do its own mapping. More importantly, they rarely are done by Indigenous cartographers ourselves and rarely incorporate Indigenous epistemologies and mapping practices (p. 165).

In interviews with local digital and radio media about this thesis, I have publicly stressed and been transparent on the following points to identify and position myself as a settler researcher:

1. Personally, I think maps are interesting. In my opinion, having a map of Victoria with First Nations place names is a good idea. My opinions and ideas as a settler do not represent First Nations priorities or interests.

2. The knowledge I am learning from exists among the Songhees, X^wsépsəm, and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples with or without me. The role I envision for myself is to gather the information into one resource for future potential use by First Nations—I am not creating knowledge.
3. However, this “role” is purely of my own making—I did not receive consent to create this database.
4. I have not yet developed the long-term connections and relationships with the region’s First Nations necessary for a project of this nature. I am actively working on this.
5. The information in this database is not mine—what is mine is my time, skill, and energy, which I am offering in service to the First Nations within the research scope. These offerings are for the First Nations to accept or decline.
6. I will give the database to the First Nations of the research area.

The Data: Collection Overview

The First Nations of the region have put much work and care into sharing and celebrating their place names for the research area over many decades. The 15 dedicated First Nations place name monuments across the research area are the work of artists and leaders, community members, and collaborators. This care is also palpable in the community-based booklet *The Saltwater People* by revered W̱SÁNEĆ elder and SENĆOTEN-language advocate Dave Elliot Sr., with more than 200 First Nations place names for the breadth of W̱SÁNEĆ territory—from the Gulf Islands and the Saanich Peninsula to the San Juan Islands in Washington state. Settler-authored resources include anthropological studies referenced throughout First Nations' websites and the entire Fort Victoria historic dispatches digitized by the University of Victoria to contribute to decolonizing the colonial archives. In all, this thesis pulled together 100 First Nations place names from 20 public resources. Thus, the database became not only a collection of place names but also an archive of place name information locations—from First Nations' websites to academic and anthropological research articles. Bringing these names into one location achieved the major purpose of the thesis: The names became easier to access and appreciate as a collection, while visualizing the names on a map was instructive to show their density and prominence. Ultimately, I will give the final database to the local First Nations for them to use as they see fit.

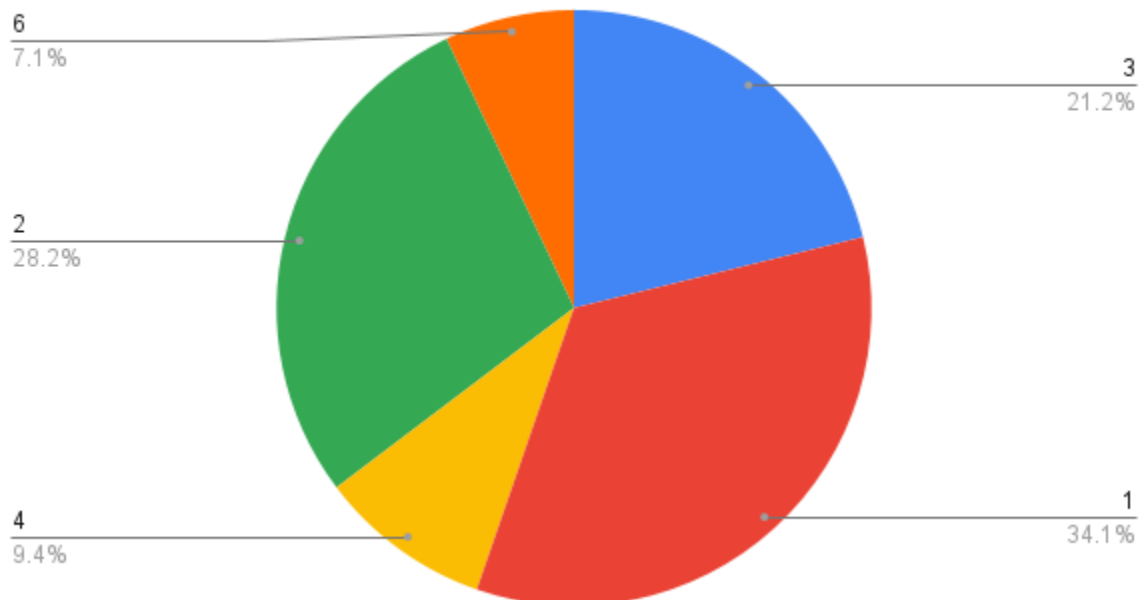
Data from 20 sources illuminated 100 First Nations place names for the research area between Cadboro Bay and Millstream, highlighting the density of First Nations language knowledge carried through 182 years of colonization. Approximately 42% of all the place names came from the Lək̓ʷəŋən dictionary, while around 30% came from the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership

Council's website. The most common settler source was Duff, with his 1969 study being a reference for 35% of all the place names. The number of sources per name increased as the First Nations name was more prominent in the settler landscape, such as the sites with monuments. Sixty names are Ləkʷəŋən, while 39 are SENĆOTEN; one is Chinook Jargon (the name Tillicum, meaning "people"). In 14 instances, the Ləkʷəŋən and SENĆOTEN names referred to the same place. Studying the linguistic and land-relationship similarities and differences between both languages could be a fascinating research project to support language revitalization and collaboration but is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Figure 11

Number of sources

Number of Sources



The database also has four additional colonial names with no corresponding First Nations name. These are: Colville Island (historic burial ground; Keddie, 2024), Coffin Island Point (burial ground [BCGNO, n.d.-a] frequently plundered by settler grave robbers [Scott, 2009, p. 126]); Halkett/Deadman's Island (historic burial ground which was burned down by settlers; Duff, 1969, p. 44); and Fleming Bay (historic shell midden; Keddie, 2023a). These are included because of their historic First Nations connection—presumably, these places once had First Nations names.

Many names in SENĆOTEN are sourced from the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council's website. This offered a map that is very similar to the map in *The Saltwater People*, but with additional names. The entire map cited Duff as a source. However, this online map did not provide translations or additional information about the names. In some places it was also difficult to decipher what land or water the names referred to, while others appear to be homophones for nearby Ləkʷəŋən names. Names on the Leadership Council's map with no related entry in *The Saltwater People* were listed in the database without translation or latitude/longitude and thus did not appear in the visualizations. In some cases, the SENĆOTEN name appeared to be similar to the Ləkʷəŋən name, being also similarly placed on the Leadership Council and *The Saltwater People* maps. However, without a SENĆOTEN speaker to confirm, this relationship was hypothetical—and demonstrated my limitation by not conducting ethnographic interviews nor being a student of SENĆOTEN. As I could not establish what the related colonial names are for these places, I also could not assign them dates for when they were changed by settlers. Hence, 22 names in SENĆOTEN are not represented in the visualization because no publicly available information could place their latitude and longitude or

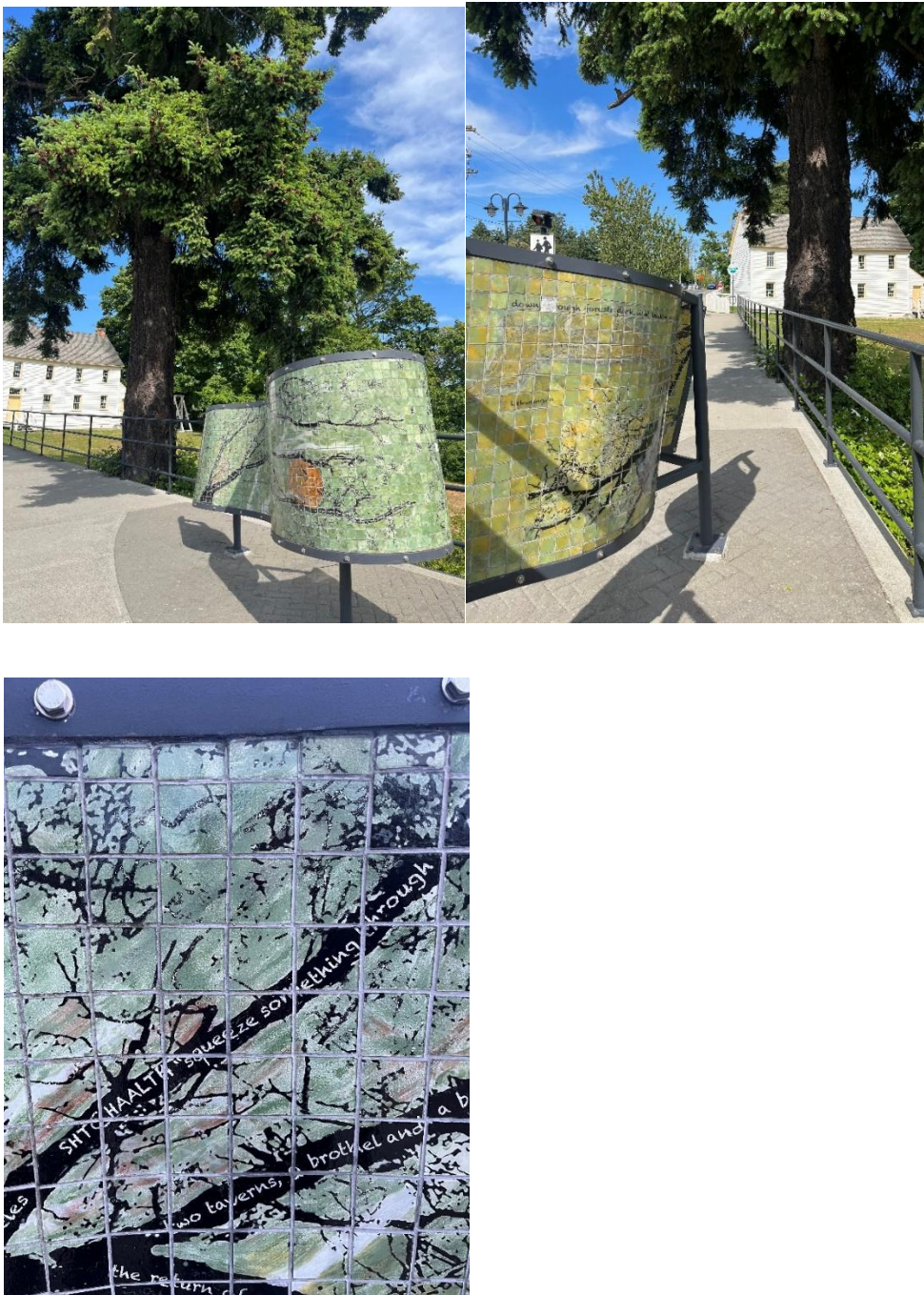
corresponding colonial name. These names could not be triangulated with additional sources. In this case, the database contained more information than represented on the map. This demonstrated the need for this research to be collaborative with First Nations.

The dates the colonial names were imposed showed the rapidity of name colonization in Victoria. The data included 56 colonial dates for just over half of all the entries. Of these, 46 colonial names were imposed between 1843 (the founding of Fort Victoria) and 1855 (publication of Joseph Pemberton's authoritative map of the region; The Colonial Despatches Team, n.d.-c). In only a short dozen years, including the time to draft and sign the Douglas Treaties of the 1850s, the colonial authority had imposed a significant portion of names upon the land that persist into the present. By the 1860s, "officially" recognized colonial names had taken over the majority of these First Nations place names.

Five colonial names in English had First Nations origins or roots. These names were: Esquimalt (anglicization of Whyomilth, referring to a family group on the west side of Esquimalt Harbour at the mouth of Millstream; Duff, 1969, pp. 31-33), Saanich (an anglicization of W̱SÁNEĆ), Knockan Hill (from Nga 'k 'un, meaning "rocks on top"; BCGNO, n.d.-e), Songhees Point (a former Songhees village and original site of the Songhees reserve), and Camosun (though this is associated with Camosun College, rather than referring to a specific place or being part of the city's place identity). The BCGNO reported that Colquitz River comes from First Nations origins (BCGNO, n.d.-b), with speculation that it comes from "'kwol quitz' or 'kol kol ish'" (meaning baby crying with no one to comfort it, likely referring to the sound of rushing water) in Lək̓ʷəŋən or "quil-queit-sa" (meaning spirit/ghost, and referring to the wind in the trees) in SENĆOTEN.

Figure 12

Bridging Perspectives by *Blake Williams* on *Admiral's Bridge* at the *Craigflower-Kosapsom Park* with historic *Craigflower Schoolhouse* visible in the background



Note: Shtchaalth to “squeeze something through” on *Bridging Perspectives* public art sculpture is a quote from Mr. and Mrs. Edward Jones and Mrs. Martha Guerin via Duff (1969, p. 27).

Through conjecture, we can also draw connections between a few other First Nations and colonial place names. Craigflower Creek was known as Deadman’s River in settler society until around 1932 (BCGNO, n.d.-c). The Ləkʷəŋən name Pəlqʷícəŋ means “‘place of ghost’ or ‘haunted by ghost’” (Duff, 1969, p. 34), suggesting the Ləkʷəŋən name may have influenced the first English name. The Portage Park area is known in Ləkʷəŋən as Ščaal, meaning “to squeeze something through,” referring to a historic overland route connecting the inlet to the ocean (also written as “Shtchaalth” in Duff, 1969, p. 34). Archival records indicate that the Royal Navy used this same area for portage (The Colonial Despatches Team, n.d.-b), suggesting a strong geographic connection between name and land, and possible First Nations influence within the name Portage Park. See Figure 12, photo of a public artwork in the area. Harpoon Rock, a glacial erratic at Harling Point/the Chinese Cemetery, gets its name from the mythical story of god figure Xe’els encountering two men harpooning seals on that spot. The Ləkʷəŋən place name is Saʔsyəməʔ, meaning harpoon. In the story, Xe’els turns the two hunters into stone; the remnants of the monumental stones associated with the story are still visible—though settlers broke up the rocks to make gravestones (Duff, 1969, p. 46; see figure 13). The last example was the Chain Islets. The Ləkʷəŋən name is Łléllayakʷ, meaning “broken into many pieces.” This is like “Chain,” which refers to the islets as a chain, suggesting a shared perception of the islets as smaller pieces of something larger.

Figure 13

Left: First Nations Monuments of Oak Bay by Charles Elliot (TEMOSENTET) installation at Saʔsyəməʔ (Chinese cemetery, visible in the background); Right: Harpoon Rock



First Nations People sharing stories comprised the main supporting material for place name usage. Though many of the contemporary resources can be traced back to Wilson Duff and Grant Keddie, two settler anthropologists, these two sources themselves relied heavily on stories and interviews with the Songhees and X^wsépsəm. Keddie's work often took a classical historical research approach which uses archives, archaeology, and records to discuss place names. These often included first-hand accounts from settlers and colonial officials, who recorded conversations with and observations of First Nations during the 1800s. Occasionally, Keddie also incorporated interviews with Songhees, X^wsépsəm, and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples.

In contrast with this classical approach was Duff's *The Fort Victoria Treaties*, which pulled together a substantial collection of place names via ethnographic interviews and conversations with six Songhees elders. These people's words have carried through Duff to many contemporary resources, like the online Lək̓ʷəŋən dictionary and the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council website; in a way, these threads of connection to the digital world immortalize these peoples' memories. Thanks are due to Mrs. Sophie Misheal, Mr. Ned Williams, Jimmy Fraser, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Joe, and Mrs. Martha Guerin for sharing what they chose to share with Wilson Duff in their conversations in the 1960s.

Similarly, *The Saltwater People*, which shares 235 SENĆOTEN names across W̱SÁNEĆ territory, is the dedicated care of Dave Elliot Sr. In his social position as a W̱SÁNEĆ elder, Elliot Sr. shared stories with settlers and Indigenous community about the culture and language of the W̱JOŁEŁP First Nation, one nation within the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council. His words were transcribed and compiled into this educational pamphlet, originally published by Saanich School District 63. The W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council relied on *The Saltwater People* for much of its cultural and language teachings on its website.

The City of Victoria wayfinding signs (briefly discussed on p. 41 and pictured in Figures 5 and 6) were not included in the data. According to *Victoria News*, nine of the 11 signs are: "Inner Harbour – x̱seý'kəm (two signs) [note that the online version of this article was missing the k]; Chinatown – čeymən tawen; Douglas Street – x̱ənitəm si?em sał; Old Town – kə'siŋ'aləs; City Hall – si?em tawen'ewtxw; James Bay – sx̱eŋx̱əŋ təŋəx̱; Ogden Point – čən'it təŋ'exw (two signs); Fisherman's Wharf – s̱q̱ə?qeq̱ wa'əp; Belleville Terminal – x̱ey'q̱wəl?əl." Of the signs listed online, only three (X̱seý'kəm, Kə'siŋ'aləs, Sx̱eŋx̱əŋ Təŋəx̱)

were triangulated with other sources. When the “Anyone Test” is applied to the other names, internet search results returned the same *Victoria News* article, two social media posts, and something in Cyrillic. Some names returned a few real estate listings showing properties for sale in or near one of these place names, while another returned a settler bio proclaiming they were raised in the land of one these place names. However, the search results neither provided historical evidence of the use of these names, nor demonstrated First Nations’ use in the public sphere.

This small exercise revealed multiple opportunities for further inquiry. For one, how did the City of Victoria develop these place names? What were their sources? Is it possible that these are modern inventions—that the English place names influenced the Lək̓ʷəŋən? A second line of inquiry would look at how these place names may be influencing the settler sense of place, as evidenced by the real estate listings and settler bio. If these names are modern developments, and they are being used by settlers to describe land, what does that tell us about how Indigenous language infiltrates colonial language and sense of place? Conversely, if these are historic names, why are they not referenced in the contemporary and historic records? Nevertheless, the lack of resources available to “Anyone” online about the origin of the remaining names on the wayfinding signs meant they could not be included in the data.

Visualization

Figure 14

Google-generated automatic preview of database map

First Nations Place Names from Cadboro Bay to Millstream

Place names.xlsx
All items

Visualization of data collected from Melinda Quintero's Master's thesis in the School of Tourism and Hospitality at Royal Roads University, Canada.

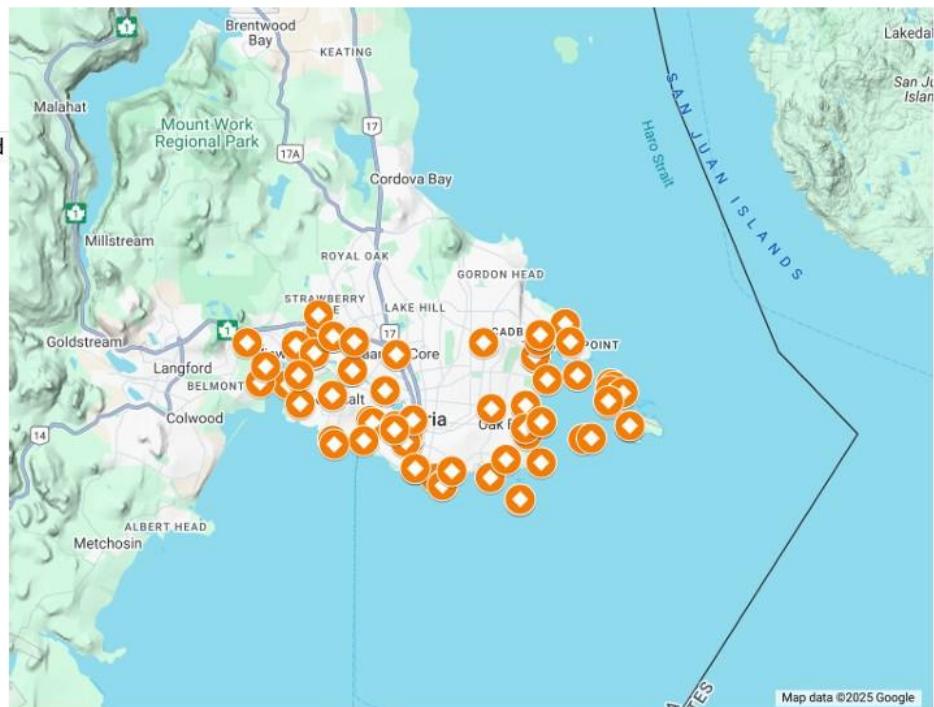


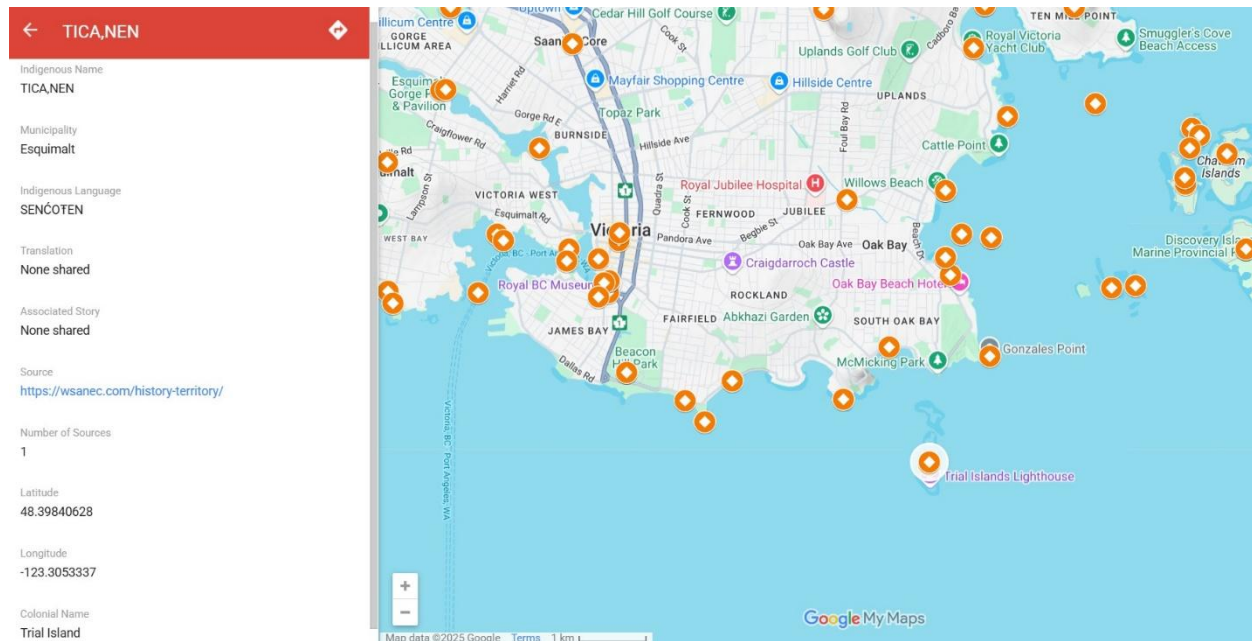
Figure 15*Example of an entry in the database*

Figure 16

Miqan entry

←

Miqan

Indigenous Name

Miqan

Municipality

City of Victoria

Anglicization or Non-Indigenous Orthography

Miqan; meegan

Indigenous Language

Lakwʷan

Translation

Warmed by the sun

Associated Story

Place where people would enjoy the sunshine in summer on the slope; also site of qoqwʷaʷs (qoqwʷaʷs) games; also <https://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/12530.html> mentions warming the belly

Source

Signs of lakwʷan Monument; Duff p 45; <https://www.firstvoices.com/lekwnun/words/2e56b393-5ebc-4cf6-9228-3ba6ad5f9253> ; <https://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/12530.html>

Number of Sources

4

Latitude

48.40997234

Longitude

←

Miqan

Warmed by the sun

Associated Story

Place where people would enjoy the sunshine in summer on the slope; also site of qoqwʷaʷs (qoqwʷaʷs) games; also <https://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/12530.html> mentions warming the belly

Source

Signs of lakwʷan Monument; Duff p 45; <https://www.firstvoices.com/lekwnun/words/2e56b393-5ebc-4cf6-9228-3ba6ad5f9253> ; <https://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/12530.html>

Number of Sources

4

Latitude

48.40997234

Longitude

-123.3643949

Colonial Name

Beacon Hill

Date Colonial Imposed

1840s

Colonial Name Story or Reference

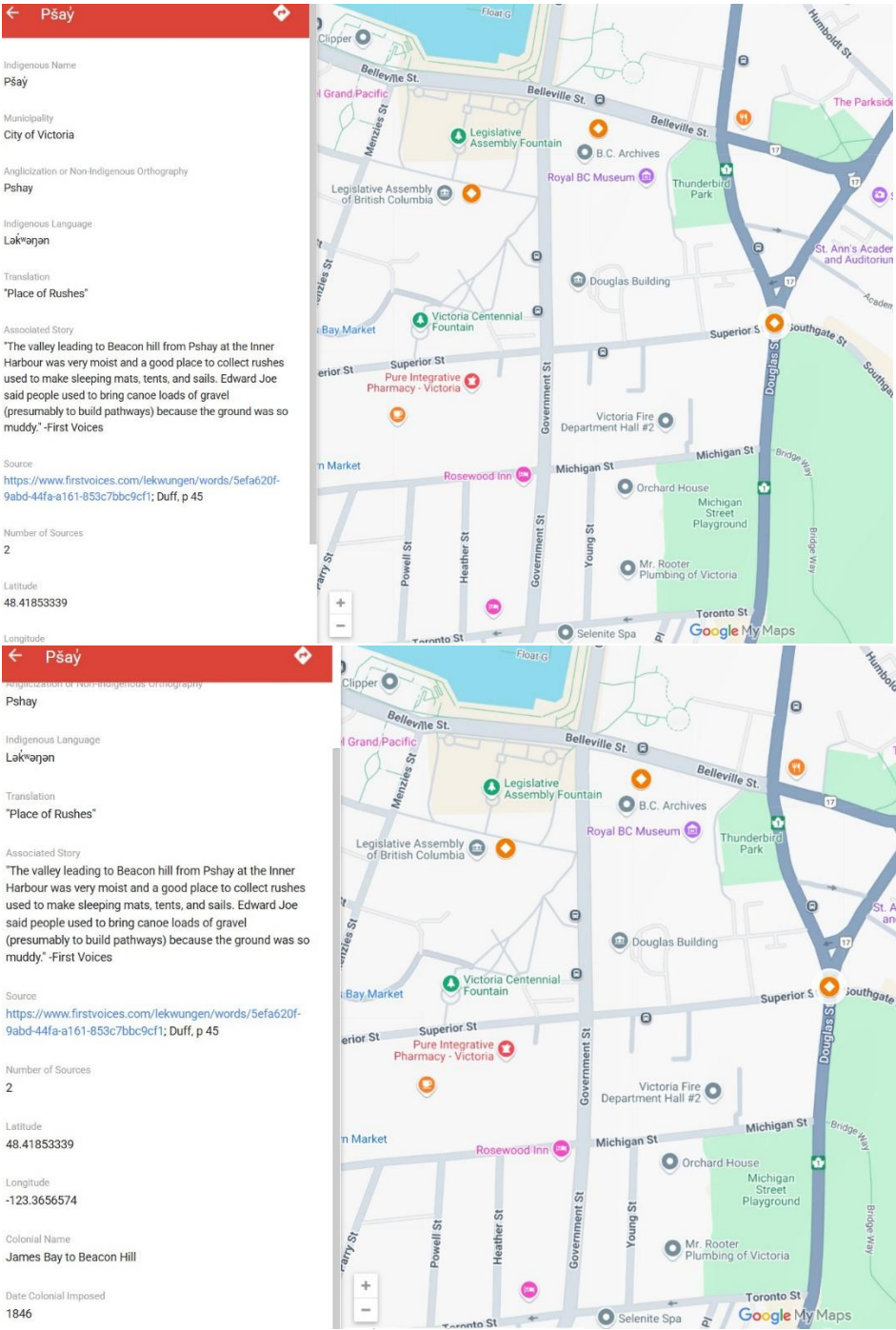
Site of radio beacon tower; historically site of naval beacons to guide passage into the harbour

Additional Notes

Human remains have also been found near miqan.

Figure 17

Pšay’ entry in the database



Discussion

Limiting the research to public sources with the “Anyone Test” demonstrated how much information is available to “Anyone” about First Nations place names for the research area. This showed how much work the First Nations have done to maintain their place names in the public space—with monuments, information signs, and online language resources—and exert their presence and agency through colonization.

The immediately visible limitation of the maps was that the base layers used colonial names. While it was instructive to see so many points on the map that corresponded to places with First Nations names, the colonial names like James Bay, Beacon Hill, and so forth, were still prominent. This visualization still relied on colonial map databases, which was illustrative of the Indigenous critiques (discussed in “Literature Review”) that counter-mapping amounts to window dressing without hitting at the colonial foundations of cartography and computer coding. This could perhaps be solved with GIS, though ultimately a more effective reciprocal method could be to hire an Indigenous graphic designer, Indigenous coder, and Indigenous cartographer to build the map without government-sourced map databases.

Latitude and longitude provided a precise location, whereas some of the First Nations place names referred to passages, creeks or fields—places that do not necessarily have a fixed centre or central location. This aligns with the Indigenous critique that Western maps calcify Indigenous knowledge and points to my own limitations as a database coder. For example, the map pinpointed Pšay̓ (see Figure 17), the damp valley thick with rushes leading from X^wséyqəm (James Bay) to Míqən (Beacon Hill); but this is a large area, not a singular location. Picking a

latitude and longitude for Pšay' limits the sense of the place to a spot between two others; in fact, the coordinates were arbitrarily chosen by me within the swath of area called Pšay'.

To further demonstrate this complication, a City of Victoria wayfinding sign sits at Wharf Street and Bastion Square, with the name Kəw'siŋələs at the top, with “Old Town” below. Kəw'siŋələs translates to “place of strong fibre” (Keedie, 2023b), though the sign does not provide any translation. Local settler historian and anthropologist Grant Keedie’s research quotes someone named McKay that Kəw'siŋələs is ““particularly that portion between Wharf and Douglas streets and [near] the junction of Cook Street and Belcher Street [now Rockland]”” (Keedie, 2023b). Hence, the sign refers to Kəw'siŋələs as Old Town, which is itself a sort of amorphous indication, sitting several blocks away from where historic records indicate was most strongly associated with the name. Kəw'siŋələs and Pšay' would be better represented as a swath of color instead of a pinpoint. The map has the same representational issue for creeks and rivers. This issue could perhaps be solved by more in-depth database coding, design, and GIS, which is beyond my current capacity and does not pass the “Anyone Test.”

The place name Camosun expanded on this limitation. The Lək'wəŋən word Q'əmasəŋ, sometimes spelled “Cammosung” or “Camosack,” is also the name of a local college, making it a widely known name in the settler landscape. The name refers to the “reversing falls” of the Gorge and is a First Nations name for the Victoria region generally. The name comes from an origin story about the fecundity of the Gorge waters, featuring a young girl and the spirit Xe'els. As a specific point, this is the reversing rapids directly below the Tillicum Road Bridge (the Chinook jargon word for “people”). As the tides ebbed and flowed, a massive bolder under the rapids would be exposed at the surface; this rock was understood to be a manifestation of the girl

whose taste for fish and berries brought these foods to the Gorge. Though settlers blasted many submerged rocks in 1960 to make the waters run more smoothly, Keddie speculated that the culturally significant Q'əmasəŋ rock remains intact (Keddie, 2025). Also at this location, the remains of a historic shell midden (Figure 19) are still packed in under the supports of the Tillicum Road Bridge and visible via the pedestrian underpass. The homemade signage for the midden is of unknown origin (Blandy, 2023).

Figure 18

Camossung by Fred Dobbs, Gorge Waterway Park; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Figure 19

Ancient shell midden underneath Tillicum Bridge with descriptive signage of unknown origin on paper under plastic; photo credit: Melinda Quintero



Figure 20

Signs of Lekwungen monument to Q'əmasəŋ with the Royal BC Museum in the background; place name in Lək'wəŋən with phonetic pronunciation pictured; photo credits: Melinda Quintero



Early settlers also understood that Q'əmasəŋ referred to the rapids and the region. This understanding was reflected in the original name of the Hudson's Bay Company Fort: For most of 1843, the settlement was called Fort Camosun until it was officially changed to Fort Victoria by royal decree in December that year (Scott, 2009, p. 623). A statue in honor of the girl Q'əmasəŋ of the myth stands in Gorge Waterway Park near the sacred waters (Figure 18), while the *Signs of Lekwungen* monument to Q'əmasəŋ stands at Government and Belleville Streets on the grounds of the RBCM, commemorating the name for the area (see Figure 20). The database placed markers at the rapids and at the *Signs of Lekwungen* monument but did not include the

statue in Gorge Waterway park because the statue is not exactly at the rapids. More dynamic coding would be able to link these three sites together to demonstrate their relationship, as well as incorporate photos of all the monuments and signage.

Only one of the First Nations place names (Sċəmásən) in the database referred to a burial mound or ground, though many known ancient burial sites are southeast of Downtown and across to Oak Bay and Cadboro Bay, well within the research area. Halkett Island, Colville Island, and Coffin Island Point (three burial sites) are included in the database because of their historic significance, though their First Nations names are not known to the public. Halkett Island was used as a landmark in the Douglas Treaties of 1850 to mark the boundary between the X^wsépsəm and Swengwhung (an historic family that signed one of the treaties; Duff, 1969, p. 35). In the treaties, it is referred to as both Halkett and “Deadman’s Island,” acknowledging its significance as a burial place for the Songhees (BCGNO, n.d.-d). In 1867, coffins and human remains on the island burned in a (supposedly unintentional) fire set by at least two youth. One was fined \$50 for the destruction (BCGNO, n.d.-d). Coffin Island Point is recorded in settler archives and newspapers as being a burial ground for the nearby Songhees Reserve. Scott quoted newspapers describing the island as a graveyard where coffins were kept above ground and “sometimes attracting relic hunters, vandals and arsonists” through the mid-to-late 1800s (2009, p. 126). The island is now accessible by land at low tide thanks to modern landfill.

Unfortunately, these stories of desecration are not one-offs in Victoria’s settler history (Matthews, 2006). Settler reporting from the mid-1800s described the Victoria area as having “thousands” of Songhees burial rock cairns or mounds, with possibly up to 200 in the area we now call Cadboro Bay (Keddie, 1984, p. 8). Over time, most of these cairns were intentionally

destroyed by settlers to make way for building and construction. By some accounts, many are still hidden behind property lines and tall fences in the well-to-do Oak Bay neighbourhood (Rudisuela, 2020). Still others were ransacked for souvenirs by casual groups of settlers, Victorian graverobbers, and organized excursions by the BC Natural History Society. In a 1901 talk about society's exploits, Frank Sylvester described in detail how he and his fellow society members opened 30 cairns across the Victoria area and uncovered "a really excellent [skeleton], and in a good state of preservation" in Cadboro Bay (Sylvester, 1901). Sylvester notes that the society gave one skull to the Provincial Museum (now the RBCM) but does not comment on what happened to the Cadboro Bay remains. According to Friends of Beacon Hill Park, Míqən had up to two dozen burial cairns noted in 1858, though they have all since been removed, "shoved to new locations" (Friends of Beacon Hill Park, n.d.), or otherwise been changed beyond recognition. Though these sites are largely lost beneath the urban landscape, nevertheless they represent sacred First Nations spaces and places for which no First Nations name is known in the public sphere.

Returning to the place name Sčə́má́sən, we see another minor disagreement. As noted earlier, Sčə́má́sən refers to both an ancient burial ground and a Ləkʷəŋən reference to the shape of the harbour as being an open mouth. The online Ləkʷəŋən dictionary, created by the Xʷsépsəm First Nation, only mentioned the harbour shape in its translation; the *Signs of Lekwungen* monument at nearby Laurel Point referred to the site as a burial ground but also noted that "No traditional name is known for this area" (Songhees Nation, n.d.). The Keddie book, *A Songhees Pictorial*, referenced an 1858 *Victoria Gazette* article describing the burial

ground of the “Songhish tribe” in great detail (2003, p. 33). In this instance, triangulation has illuminated disagreement among sources.

The database had two separate entries for X^wsépsəm. One referred to a village site where the current Craigflower School/Kosapsum Park is in Saanich, while the other referred to a former village site where the Parliament buildings are downtown. Duff (1969, p. 35) cited his source Mr. and Mrs. Edward Joe confirming the Craigflower site was a former village of their people, the X^wsépsəm, though another source Mrs. Sophie Misheal recalls W̱SÁNEĆ people living here. According to Duff (1969, p. 35), the village at the Parliament site was likely founded around 1843, as it was common for the First Nations of the area to move closer to the fort for trade. The Lək̓ʷəŋən dictionary reported that the people living at what is now the Parliament site were eventually moved to the old Songhees Reserve (Cienski, n.d.). Thus, the data showed two distinct places with the same place name in Lək̓ʷəŋən, possibly referring to different Peoples living in both places. This example spoke to some of the fluidity the interconnects language, land, and people with the same word referring to two different places.

Other minor discrepancies and disagreements among the data conveyed some of the dynamics of passing down First Nations place names through Western academia via First Nations storytelling. These were minor instances where two sources seemed to disagree about the names of small islands or coves. In the database, I flagged where I was unsure of how to precisely locate the place names. This will guide future database users toward spots requiring more attention and possibly ethnographic or participatory action research to clarify. These small errors notwithstanding, the database triangulation clearly showed the breadth of First Nations

place name knowledge available in the public sphere with the map visually representing First Nations labour to maintain place names and knowledge through time.

Applicability to Future Research

From the data and the research limitations described throughout this thesis, we can see how this study applies to future research. Expanding the database could help illuminate more place-based information for First Nations. The database could encompass archaeological sites not captured in the current design, which focuses on publicly known place names. These would include shell middens, historic reef-net sites, burial mounds, and other elements in the archaeological record. Collaboration with local knowledge keepers, researchers, and archaeologists could guide this database element. Furthermore, I originally imagined the database would have information about public art, monuments, and interpretation signs, including photographs and transcriptions of text. As the purpose of the database changed to focus on place names alone, I dropped these categories. Plus, incorporating more text and photos requires much more complicated coding than my abilities can support. Including a data field for the monuments related to place names would make the database more dynamic and better highlight the place-making efforts of First Nations to commemorate their lands and cultures. Using GIS presents an opportunity for more dynamic database coding as well as visualization, though the colonial underpinnings of GIS will have to be unpacked. In my opinion, complex maps like these could be leveraged for tourism as the start of a guide to First Nations art and monuments in Victoria to promote First Nations culture, language, and presence among visitors.

A database of publicly available names is a strong starting point for launching a larger, more dynamic, and collaborative mapping project with the ambition of the scholarly and community-grown Ta'n Weji-sqalia'tiek Mi'kmaw Place Names Digital Atlas. Increasing accessibility to First Nations place names for all the area's residents and visitors can support

language revitalization, a significant facet of UNDRIP (United Nations General Assembly, 2007) and the TRC's 94 Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). However, all this work must go through a process of First Nations community engagement, where debate and discussion can delve into how such a resource might serve the communities' definition and goals for decolonization. This "transformative process" is "up to individuals and communities to figure out how they will engage" (Grimwood et al., 2019, p. 9). With other digital counter-maps as guides, this database could be the start of a long-term collaboration between First Nations, academia, and settler community.

As noted in the literature review, there appears to be little research on how place names effect a tourist's sense of place and contribute to Truth and Reconciliation. Tourists receive marketing and narratives about a destination. What stories does Victoria's tourism industry tell? How can First Nations stories be better woven into the larger tourism narrative? A First Nations place names map could start a larger study about tourists' perceptions of Victoria, with the potential for a longitudinal study that tracks how First Nations place name usage among settlers shifts colonial narratives.

Conclusion

Indigenous place names are key facets of Indigenous language, culture, history, and connection with land. Colonial systems like those in Canada seek to absorb or eliminate Indigenous Peoples through erasure of their cultures. The tourism industry, being part of the colonial system, is complicit in this erasure. Supplanting Indigenous place names with colonial names on maps and in minds is one way that colonial systems attempt to marginalize Indigenous Peoples. The maps that we rely on today come from this colonial thinking—whether they are drawn and controlled by colonial governments, generated through digital databases, or are throwaway pamphlets about what to see and do in Victoria while on vacation. Indigenous Peoples have historically protested colonial rule and reaffirmed their presence within the colonial system by drawing their own maps using Western tools. In contemporary times, maps have calcified into government instruments for communicating territory and thus are largely controlled by governments.

Reviewing and revamping maps and place names is part of the work of Truth and Reconciliation among settler governments and organizations. Despite efforts by the Canadian government to acknowledge that government-controlled maps can better reflect Indigenous Peoples, changing these maps through government process is prohibitively time consuming and potentially counter-productive. Similarly, the official tourism narrative about Victoria has a long and documented history of focusing on the city's colonial British history, though recent work by the local destination marketing organization is clearly focused on changing this and enacting principles of Truth and Reconciliation. First Nations have generously shared their place names in

the research area with more than a dozen monuments to their languages, histories, and people—yet these are inconsistently incorporated into tourist maps.

Digital and design technology allows people to circumvent government arbiters of place names. This is seen by numerous examples of Indigenous online maps of territory using their place names. Canada also has many examples of Indigenous-settler collaborative mapping projects which attempt to visually inscribe Indigenous place names, stories, and culture into the land. However, Victoria—capitol of British Columbia, site of the province's first treaties—does not have a publicly available map that uses First Nations place names. To start such a project would require a database of place names with basic data to populate a map.

As something of a pilot project to fill this gap, this thesis successfully built a basic database of First Nations place names for the area between Cadboro Bay and Millstream, mostly along the Victoria waterfront. Twenty public resources—such as archives, monuments, online language resources, and academic research—provided 100 First Nations place names for the area purely through online and field research. This alone disproves the colonial assumption of dominance over the land. This project should be strengthened by morphing into a collaboration with First Nations and Indigenous scholars, who have the ultimate control and say over the use of their cultural data.

This thesis demonstrated that while popular maps of the area might have a settler and tourist believe that the region has little First Nations presence or enduring land connection, this is blatantly false. Gathering First Nations place names illuminated the density and breadth of Indigenous knowledge as public knowledge. These place names are very much alive, shared across decades with public art, monuments, interpretation signs, First Nations' websites, and

language revitalization tools—all of which are material reflections of First Nations stories and culture. With this thesis offering a renewed vision of Victoria with First Nations place names, the research looks toward ways the map can be shared with the public. This would be up to the First Nations of the research area to contemplate and decide. Whether done with maps, monuments, or both, shifting the identity of Victoria to include First Nations place names is one societal change among many to support Truth and Reconciliation.

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Appendix A

Alphabetical list of database resources	
Name	Website or Resource
British Columbia Geographical Names Office. (n.d.).	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/celebrating-british-columbia/historic-places/geographical-names
Camosun College. (n.d.).	https://camosun.ca/about/about-camosun-college/camosun-college-history
City of Victoria. (n.d.).	https://engage.victoria.ca/peter-pollen-waterfront-park ; minute 4:52 and webpage
The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. (n.d.). 2nd edition.	<i>University of Victoria.</i> https://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/index.html . https://bowkercreek.org/
Dick, B. (2008). <i>Signs of Lekwungen</i> . City of Victoria, B.C.	https://www.songheesnation.ca/community/l-k-ng-n-traditional-territory
Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon. (1899; reprint 1972).	https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35492/35492-h/35492-h.htm#Part_I.--Chinook--English_T

Duff, W. (1969).	The Fort Victoria Treaties. <i>BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly</i>, 3(Fall), 3-57. https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/bcstudies/article/view/607/651
Esquimalt Nation. (n.d.).	https://www.esquimaltnation.ca/our-nation ; https://www.esquimaltnation.ca/our-nation/language-culture
First Nations Monuments of Oak Bay. (n.d.).	https://ied.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2020/11/First-Nations-Monuments-of-Oak-Bay.pdf
First Voices. (n.d.).	https://www.firstvoices.com/lekwungen/
Grant Keddie: My Articles on subjects of Human and Natural History. (articles' dates vary)	www.grantkieddie.com
Keddie, G. (1992).	Installation of a Songhees Chief. https://staff.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Installation-of-a-Songhees-Chief-Keddie-1992.pdf

Keddie, G. (2003).	Songhees pictorial : a history of the Songhees people as seen by outsiders, 1790-1912. <i>Royal BC Museum</i> .
Lekwungen People: The Traditional Territory of Songhees and Esquimalt People. (1995).	https://ied.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2019/02/Lkwungen_People_Pamphlet.pdf
Mount Tolmie Park, Saanich Parks. (n.d.).	www.saanich.ca/assets/Parks~Recreation~and~Community~Services/Documents/MountTolmieParkInformationHistoryFeatures.pdf
Oak Bay Community Green Map. (2008).	https://www.oakbay.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/oak-bay-community-green-map.pdf
Olive Street Common: History of Land Use by First Nations. (n.d.).	https://olivestreetcommon.ca/land-use-by-first-nations/
Saltwater People as Told by Dave Elliott Senior. (1990).	https://wsanec.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/saltwater-people-1983-delliott-sr-compressed.pdf
Scott, A. (2009).	The Encyclopedia of Raincoast Place Names: A Complete Reference to Coastal British Columbia. <i>Harbour Publishing</i> .

WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council. (n.d.).	https://wsanec.com/history-territory/
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