In times of welcome reconciliation, civic, provincial, and federal governments are actively cooperating with British Columbia's First Nations in the reconstruction of their identities by encouraging place name changes across the province. The creation of the Salish Sea, the renaming of Queen Charlotte Islands, parks sharing both First Nations' and Anglicized names, and many others. Across British Columbia First Nations are reclaiming their ancestral lands by reclaiming traditional names. The Tlingit, Giskan, Athapascan, Nuu-chal-nuth, and other First Nation groups have, in some measure, attempted to reclaim their past and make "places" for themselves in the future. But how does renaming a place matter? What is there in the power of a place name to help accomplish this goal? As Edward Said argues, "the ability to measure, to categorize, and to name … reconstructs cultures not in a 'merely decorative or 'superstuctural' manner but, rather, in a powerful and historically under analyzed way."[1] This essay will examine how the imposition of toponyms were used by colonists to erase First Nations culture as surely as any legislation restricting aboriginal to reserves, limiting their native tongue, or banning the potlatch. Furthermore, I will expose how First Nations are using the power of toponyms to their advantage in reclaiming their identity, culture, and future in British Columbia.

A toponym is "a place name, especially one derived from a topographical feature;" whereas toponomy is the study of place names.[2] Most toponymists limit themselves to the historical derivation of their local place names. As a result, some of the more well-known authors in British Columbia write about the popular origin of place names from provincial and neighborhood perspectives.[3] If you wanted to know how the town of Kelowna earned its name you would consult one of the multitudinous publications listing local names and their historical derivations. Kelowna, for example, was originally named L'Anse au Sable (Sandy Cove) by early French fur trappers, but eventually became associated with a very hairy man who would emerge from his half-undergrond dwelling prompting the Okanagans to name him "Kimach Touche" or "Black Bear's Face. Locals found the Okanagan word for a female grizzly bear more palatable however, and Sandy Cove became Kelowna forever after.[4]

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[1] Edward Said, The Palestine Question and the American Context (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1979), 25, as quoted in Darby James Cameron, "An Agent of Change: William Drew and Land Surveying in British Columbia, 1887-1929," *BC Studies* 167 (Autumn 2010), 9.
[2] "Toponymy," *Dictionary.com* (accessed March 23, 2011).
[3] Mark Thorburn, George and Helen Akrigg, Andrew Scott, and Page Bess
[4] G.P.V. and Helen Akrigg, "Kelowna," in *Geographical Names of British Columbia*, http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/education/bc_e.php (accessed March 23, 2011).

A toponym describes a place, but at present there remains some contestation over the meaning of the word "place." Depending on the philosophical bent of the geographer, "place" can mean "a unique essence…rooted in the deeply personal memories and intentions that individuals attach to it." Unfortunately, this definition does not consider the ability of outside forces to arbitrarily name a geographical locale and thus exclude or marginalize local inhabitants. More recently social theorists have co-opted "space" to form areas of spatiality involving workplaces, living spaces, and even "international division of labour".[5] At times, "place" can mean a delineated area designed to "transform polymorphous and uncontrollable 'space' into a finite system of neatly isolatable, stabilized and interconnected 'places.'"[6] However, in the context of this discussion, "place" will more simply mean a geographic locale used to differentiate one "place" from another with the understanding that "place names frequently become 'shorthands' that articulate and crystallize broader cultural meanings."[7]

In a further magnification, applied toponymy traverses the disciplinary boundary between geography and history. Lawrence D. Berg and Jani Vuolteenaho begin the transition with the observation that "place names not only denote single portions of geographical space, but can also act as 'pegs on which to hang descriptions'" .[8] The historian moves beyond origin stories to examine the social, economic, and political ramifications in the evolution of a particular name. Historians realize that "naming a place is always a socially imbedded act, one that involves power relations, [and] the 'pure' linguistic standpoint remains inadequate for the critical study of toponymy."[9] In other words, there is more to the meaning of a place name than the etymological description of its source; for historians, then, toponymy transforms from a simple study of place names into a study of the cartographic representation of power over place.

Before we understand how power and place names act in British Columbia, we must first understand how the relationship between the two was instilled in the colonizers' mind. Mid nineteenth-century British settlers had this power dynamic firmly in mind because of a long history of politicized literature, which included maps, and they used similar methods to change the political landscape of the fledgling colony.

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[5] Lawrence D. Berg and Jani Vuolteenaho, Eds, *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Policies of Place Naming* (Burlington, VA: Ashcroft Publishing, 2009), 10.
[6] Berg, 10.
[7] Berg, 11.
[8] Berg, 8.
[9] Berg, 9.

Robert J. Mayhew examined how enlightenment geographers incorporated political meanings into geographical interpretations. Long before the time period covered by this essay, but important in the continuum of mapmaking, John Ogilby printed *Brittania* (1675), the first map created with accurate measurements.[10] Aside from its mathematical accuracy, this road map provides an excellent example of blatant politicking in early mapmaking. The map was Obilby's personal expression of loyalty for his patron, King Charles II. In the period known as the restoration, the king regained the throne after the fall of Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarian government in 1661. Ogilby illustrated his route maps in order to promulgate royalist sentiment as well as paying homage to his patron. These maps not only included roads identified with the royal crest, but also lengthy descriptions of towns for travellers. Where Ogilby chose to include royalist towns, he provided glowing descriptions of monarchist victories. Parliamentarian towns, on the other hand, when inclusion was necessitated by size and location along important routes, revealed enemy's losses, exposed towns' disloyalty, and omitted examples of parliamentarian bravery.[11]

Emanuel Bowen succeeded Ogilby's place as a pioneering political cartographer. His work, *Britannia Depicta: or Ogilby Improv'd*, compounded Ogilby's royalist efforts by including borough and religious district crests to emphasize the power of local and religious governance. In effect, "the iconographic effect of Bowen's work...[created] a pervasive reminder of church and state".[12] On an alternate, co-existing path, the society of antiquaries, formed in the early 17th century, "met regularly as a private organization, independent of any official authority, to read papers on English institutions, customs, and topography. Though the society "resolved not to 'meddle with matters of state, nor of religion,'" prior to the English civil war, their platforms were at cross purpose with the king's desired absolute power. As a result, they became alienated from the court and eventually managed, among chorographers at any rate, to redirect the affection of the monarch towards a "national autonomy of the land".[13]

This brief history may seem quite distant from the relatively modern cartography of the mid-nineteenth century to twentieth century as studied in this essay, but Helgerson's observations

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[10] Robert J. Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography: The Political Language of British Geography, 1650-1850,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, 75.
[11] Mayhew, 79.
[12] Mayhew, 83.
[13] Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 128.

remain applicable as modern British Columbian maps are based on European philosophies. Cartographers displaced extraneous royalist and religious markings with ones more suitable to a more common and secular national allegiance; or they removed them altogether. Yet the place names left behind serve as roadmaps of history delineating the political, economic, and social forces that created them.

How does this process work? Thanks to the work of George R. Stewart, we find at least ten different ways place names evolve.[14] Though each of the evolutions is distinctly different, they all reflect the power dominant cultures have to reshape the landscape in their own image. Of interest to historians, then, is how the dominant culture impressed the landscape with names of their design. In some ways it is more obvious. For example, the city of Vancouver, Mt. McKinley, or Queen Charlotte Islands were all commendatory names from white explorers. Stewart points out possessive toponyms, like Barkerville or Campbell River are most frequently employed. He differentiates possessive names from the more primitive descriptive, associative, and incident names because those societies lack the concept of personal ownership of land.[15] Successive classifications are varied and occur in lesser degrees, but they all share a more complex representation of control beyond their simple etymology.

Applied toponymy historians draw inferences "from textual material about the society which produced it as they have recognized that the meaning of a text is not just contained within its content."[16] In the case of maps as opposed to other documentary evidence, the printed name of a location on a map reveals the interplay between power and place.

In the First Nations' case, the modern Salish Sea and Haida Gwaii exist within the spatial apparatus of Western cartography; they do not in themselves operate as places exclusively native. They are also mapped out according to Western methods; the land is seen through western eyes and broken into discernable chunks with identifiable borders. In a general sense, First Nations traditionally have a more fluid representation. Their cartographic history is recreated from song, legend, and other oral histories passed through the generations. First Nations and colonizers both manufacture their sense of place, and they share an organic connection to the landscape, but due to the overwhelming combination of other factors – lack of

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[14] George R. Stewart, *Names on the Globe*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975; Place name classifications: Descriptive, Associative, Incident, Possessive, Commemorative, Commendatory, Folk-etymologies, Manufactured, Mistake, and Shift names, 87.
[15] Stewart, 112.
[16] Mayhew, 19.

a central government, economic dependence, cultural difference, and a dwindling population, to name a few – First Nations' identity has been damaged while the Europeans' has only been strengthened.

Expanding on identity, Thomas Thornton explores how the Tlingit people of Alaska and Northwestern BC define themselves through their "concept of place."[17] For the Tlingit place is inextricably entwined to "social organization, language/cognition, economy, and ceremonialism."[18] In order to share a common sense of direction, the Tlingit must to some extent define "place" as a recognizable locale, but they also define themselves in relation to their surroundings.

Distinctly unlike the material and progress-oriented colonizers, "the Tlingit notion of space consists of three dimensions – space, time, and experience – each of which is both ecologically and culturally constituted."[19] Geographic remoteness was one major reason why the Tlingit survived the post-contact more intact than southerly groups as they were more able to maintain their complex connections to their space in the face of limited northern expansion. The Tlingit accommodate change by altering their landscape through place names. Changes in the availability of resources like game, fish, or water would incur a place name change. A fluid language would allow for a variation of the original name that, for the Tlingit, represented both the original place, its past, and its place in the present. The process of transformation would also become part of the Tlingit's new identity as they transformed to accommodate to the new living conditions.

Julie Cruikshank in her toponymical study of the Athapascan people of Northern British Columbia discusses ways that "place names become symbolic resources that can be used to encode, enrich and even structure accounts of the past,"[20] names, then, served as metaphors bringing together varieties of information or association.[21]

Cruikshank discovered just how important place names were to the Athapascan people of Northern British Columbia, a wide-ranging First Nations group whose ranks include the

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[17] Sergi Kan, review of *Being and Place Among the Tlingit,* by Thomas F. Thornton. *BC Studies* 160 (2008), 131.
[18] Kan, 131.
[19] Kan, 131.
[20] Julie Cruikshank. "Getting the Words Right: Perspectives in Naming and Places in Athapaskan Oral History. *Arctic Anthropology* 27, No. 1 (1990): 52.
[21] Cruikshank, 63.

Chilcotin, Carrier, Sekani, Tahltan, Beaver, Kaska, and Slave bands.[22] The bands are related, but share little more than a common dialect. Importantly, common language patterns extend Cruikshank's Athapascan research to bands farther south. She points out that names are mnemonic providing a unique way of encoding information.[23] When a word in text represents an object, readers share a common understanding regarding that object. Place names, however, particularly those in First Nations' language, can also help reconstruct history through the telling of events that no longer occur. For example, the *Medzih E'ol* translates into "place where the caribou swim across in groups."[24] This event has not happened for hundreds of years, but helps scholars reconstruct migration paths of caribou. Further, they also describe a rich 'mythscape' which brings to life static geographical formations through attachments to legend, tales, and song. As they point to nearby mountains, the Athapascans tell their animal creation story when Animal Mother attached her trampoline to four mountain peaks at the beginning of time.[25] This alone is drastically different than the European relationship with place as they see only mountain vistas, beautiful water spots, and unpeopled wilderness. The landscape is otherwise transformed, anthropomorphized, peopled with legends, and culturally connected when seen through First Nations' eyes.

Colonizers used place names to extend their own dominion by creating a familiar landscape for settlers while perpetuating the elites' representation of society through an "epistemological extension of Britain into and beyond its empire."[26] In addition to commemorative and commendatory naming, they simultaneously recreated their vision of the landscape by replacing or ignoring First Nations place names. As place names are integral to the maintenance of an identity, removing the original names effectively erases First Nations' identity, accommodating the assimilation goals of early colonizers.

Explorers claimed that they discovered a new world, itinerants removed resources, and settlers generally co-operated with First Nations, but colonial government saw a need to map out the "untamed" wilderness they had so fortuitously "discovered." In 1912, surveyor William Stewart Drewry described British Columbia's interior as "a great silent country waiting for the

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[22] Reg Ashwell, *Indian Tribes of the Northwest* (Saanichton: Hancock House Publishing, 1977), 74.
[23] Cruikshank, 63.
[24] Cruikshank, 63.
[25] Cruikshank, 63.
[26] Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archives: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), as cited Cameron, 9.

advent of road and rail to bear the population whose footsteps are even now approaching."[27] James Darby Cameron's argument chronologizes how Drewry classified the landscape, constructed space, and supported the control of land by interested parties. Most importantly Cameron argues how "surveying has conditioned knowledge and power;" for the colonizers, British Columbian history began when Drury mapped out the naked land.[28]

In what Cameron calls a "panoptic gaze," Drury mapped out the land with what would be God's view – what we, today, would call birds-eye view. This view is the exact opposite of the First Nation's ground up view with which they mapped out their world. Drury's application of his own perspective, sanctioned by prevailing ideas about property, progress, and commerce, ignored First Nation geography and reclassified the landscape into one of possibility instead of honouring the people who came before him.[29]

Drewry, therefore, was an active agent in the claiming of space cartographically without considering First Nations into his calculations. Surveying became a scientific and rational method for taming British Columbia's "wilderness." Cameron links the mapping of British Columbia to the Eurocentric theory of progress, in that settlers made use of apparently unimproved land. This combined with self-interest, rhetoric about civilization and savagery, and assumptions about race, reduced the extant First Nations to an impediment of progress.

"Drury used linguistic devices to reshape British Columbia. He dramatically altered customary and local knowledge by using methods of translation, naming (nomenclature), and orthology (the "right" description of things)."[30] Drury's names were reinforced by succeeding Provincial and federal administration as they incorporated his terminology in their work. Surveyors were allowed and even encouraged to use familiar names associated with Anglo-American settlers "to ensure that settlers could better identify and connect themselves and their history to the land, using nomenclature to memorialize and celebrate the Anglo-American presence."[31]

As Cameron points out, surveying has also been used as a tool for nation building. The demarcation of new borders and the privilege of naming new places ignore the fact that nations

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[27] W. Drewry, Inspector of Surveys, "Report on Connection Surveys in Lillooet and Cariboo Districts," Report of the Minister of Lands, Government of British Columbia, 31 December 1912, D 248-52, as cited in Cameron, 9.
[28] Cameron, 14.
[29] Cameron, 14.
[30] Cameron, 28.
[31] Deville, Proceedings, 53: Édouard Deville, Proceedings of the ADLS, fourth annual meeting, 15 and 16 March 1888, as cited in Cameron, 30-31.

existed prior to their arrival. Elated "discoverers" reformed the landscape in their own image. Explorers could name the "discovered" places in familiar terms that perpetuated connection with their country of origin; in this case, Russians, Spaniards, Americans, and English all transplanted their culture onto a landscape which disregards the First Nations.[32] In an ironic twist, Mathew Sparke observes that in modern attempts to differentiate Canada from the United States , historians who reveal the changing nature of toponymies "contribute to a national narrative in which it is the very diversity itself that is turned in to the grounds of national distinction".[33]

Instead of forcing the First Nations to forsake their past through religious conversion[34] or coercing their assimilation through the Indian Act (1876), the less obtrusive place naming just as surely deprives the First Nations of their land, language, and culture. As Berg and Vuolteenaho argue, "the hegemonic practices of place naming do some of the heavy work of naturalizing and reinforcing the dominance of existing social orders.[35] Rather than forcibly removing people from their land with gunboats, militia, or legislation, a re-engineered place name disassociates First Nations from their historical attachment to "place." Of course, the effect is not immediate, but over time and as more of the population refers to the place by its new name, the original association is forgotten and the new association becomes the history of that place.

To what degree were the First Nations successful in resisting the imposition of toponymic colonization? Though the entire range of First Nation's resistance is beyond the scope of this essay, it is safe to say that until recently most attempts to regain some measure of independence ended in failure. Actions taken by individuals or collective groups, with and without the support of the dominant society failed. Despite delegations to the Pope, King Edward VII and the Prime Minister's office, appearances in court, and many attempts at organized protests of increasing militancy, the First Nations failed to regain lands and culture taken from them in the colonizing years of British Columbia.

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[32] Cameron, 9.
[33] Mathew Sparke, "A Map That Roared and an Original Atlas: Canada, Cartography and the Narration of Nation," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 3 (Sep., 1998), 487.
[34] Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 162.
[35] Berg, 14.

They questioned the colonizer's right to control their fishing, hunting, and resource rights, had many grievances for the loss of their potlatch[36], and despaired over the residential school system.[37] First Nations across British Columbia rose up against the political body of the province and the nation for the injustice; however, "the threatening presence of a naval vessel off the shores of a First Nation's village was usually enough to mitigate an uprising.[38] Furthermore, Cole Harris opines, "First Nations knew that, while a brief victory might be achievable, keeping armies at bay for the longer term was quite another matter.[39] As a result, the combination of overwhelming military dominance and traditional rules of acceptance and welcome created a passive-seeming First Nations population. Or as Cameron writes, "contested spaces have remained relatively peaceful due only to the radically unequal state of power between the colonizer and the colonized."[40]

Despite these valiant efforts to maintain their cultural identity and regardless of the perceived passivity, First Nations rarely complained directly about the loss of their traditional names. This is surprising considering place naming insidiously controls the First Nations' future as strongly as any of these other methods, and the cultural loss is as damaging as any material resource usurpation.

Not until historians studied the Tlingit, Tl'azt'en, and Athapascan efforts to reclaim their identity did the reconstruction of historic toponymy gain traction. Joining these historians, critical toponymists observe that "place names represent a contested cultural realm through which people in marginal societal positions are able to express their own place-bound identities and counter-hegemonic political goals.[41]

BC First Nations have often pointed out that they never relinquished aboriginal title. Under the 1763 Royal Proclamation, the Canadian government was required to extinguish native

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[36] See Jean Barman, "Schooled for Inequality: The Education of British Columbia Aboriginal Children," in *Children, Teachers and Schools in the History of British Columbia,* eds. Jean Barman, Neil Sutherland, and J. Donald Wilson (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1995), 57-80.

[37] See Tina Loo, "Dan Cranmer's Potlatch: Law as Coercion, Symbol, and Rhetoric in British Columbia, 1884-1951," *Canadian Historical Review* 73 (June 1992), 125-65.

[38] Barry M. Gough, *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-1890* (Vancouver: ubc Press, 1984), 190-210 as cited in Cameron, 29.

[39] Cole Harris, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 94, 1 (2004): 167 as cited in Cameron, 29.

[40] Satish Chand and Ron Duncan, "Resolving Property Issues as a Precondition for Growth: Access to Land in the Pacific Islands," in *The Governance of Common Property in the Pacific Region*, ed. Peter Larmour (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies and Resource Management in Asia-Pacific, 1997), 39; D. Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries*, 191as cited in Cameron, 30.

[41] Berg, 14.

rights to land before occupation. Among other insalubrious methods, British Columbia instead attempted to erase First Nation's culture through the Anglicization of the province. By moving Natives to reserves, the government not only controlled the space occupied by First Nations, but also denied access to their traditional geographic locations severing contact to their historic past. No longer could elders point to familiar landscapes, areas which their hunters had long travelled, and landmarks associated with their pantheon of deities. They were strangers in their own land.

Obviously the BC First Nations have never been passive as they were forced from their traditional homes and into locales organized by an outside body, but it appears the extended contact with the settlers was beginning to alter how First Nations perceived their place in the unwanted but inevitable new society. First Nations began to protest with European methods. An 1874 petition organized by 110 Fraser Valley Native leaders protested the arbitrary locations of Indian reserves. Paul Tennant notes in his work that First Nations' groups of the 1900s became more organized and neo-traditional.[42] He argues the unifying goal of First Nations groups "was their assertion of land ownership and their objection to the size and location of their reserves."[43] Many historians have noted how the locations of reserves lacked agricultural possibilities equal to the land taken by white settlers.

The neo-traditionalist activist also appears in the efforts taken by Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en people as they use map-making techniques to manifest their oral histories into cartographic form.[44] Mathew Sparkes studied the court case that brought these First Nations face-to-face with their cultural enemies. First Nations, for the first time, used European cartographic methods to name and delineate boundaries of their lands on the basis of detailed oral histories. The Chief Justice denied the validity of such evidence, as oral history did not provide enough consistency to prove individual rights to land.[45] Each time they brought these records forward, they encountered whites who were unwilling to listen to them, thereby rendering their own historical knowledge worthless.

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[42] Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849 – 1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990) as cited in Wendy Wickwire, "'We Shall Drink from the Stream and So Shall You': James A. Teit and Native Resistance in British Columbia, 1908-1922," *Canadian Historical Review* 79, No. 2 (June 1998), 209.
[43] Wickwire, 210.
[44] Mathew Sparke, "A Map That Roared and an Original Atlas: Canada, Cartography and the Narration of Nation," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 3 (Sep., 1998): 463-495.
[45] Sparke, 476.

As navigation through the legal systems of the dominant culture failed, First Nations embraced alternate routes to reclaiming their past. The failed residential school program attempted to educate the "native" out of British Columbia, seeking to erase or limit the traditional language-based educations of the First Nations. Administrators recognized one way to maintain a First Nations' identity was for them to pass on information through the passage of oral history with the appropriate native language. By the end of the residential school program, First Nations educators recognized the inability to speak aboriginal language seriously affected the students' connection to their cultural past. In response, the Tl'azt'en people of the central interior have begun to reclaim their heritage by forming a database which conserves First Nations' place names in the Dakelh language.

Karen Heikkila and Gail Fondahl concur and suggest a re-working of the existing school system to incorporate alternate learning methods is necessary "to remedy the alienating and homogenizing influences of formal education."[46] The re-introduction of place names becomes an important first step as alienated youth need "tangible makers of places on the land that give substance to the culture of their people."[47] In combination with elder instructors and a physical connection with their land "place names have a significant role to perform as aids in making the land accessible in human terms, as signs, pathfinders, containers of knowledge…and meditations of events and people long ago."[48]

A database of Tl'azt'en toponyms aids the ongoing land claim process, but more importantly recreates a landscape which future generations of Tl'azt'enne will reconnect with their past. Toponyms serve as tools for teaching navigation, concepts of ecology, exploring the seasons and subsistence methods, environmental consciousness, and discussing local governance.[49] A history rebuilt from "place" upwards also rebuilds the community dislocated by the imposition of European cultural dominance. Hence, this education becomes an important step in reclaiming a history almost lost to European settlement.

Cruikshank notes the Athapascans of Northern British Columbia perpetuate the use of traditional place names in order to preserve their heritage. Although their geographic remoteness and either lack of desired resources or the expense of extraction may have incidentally

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[46] Karen Heikkila and Gail Fondahl, "Indigenous Toponyms as Pedagogical Tools: Reflections from Research with Tl'ast'en Nation , British Columbia, *Fennia* 188, no. 2 (2010), 105.
[47] Heikkila, 109.
[48] Heikkila, 109.
[49] Heikkila, 113-6.

contributed to the continued use of local place names, Cruikshank identifies many purposeful methods used to preserve their connection to land through toponyms.

Cruikshank's study identified that names *can* persist. As stories are passed to younger generations who have lost the ability to speak their native language, they use First Nations names as signposts to serve as an anchor linking the present to the past. Names are also indicators of land use. Preserved First Nation's names assist to determine the range of Athapascan territory, which becomes important in land claims discussions. The Athapascans' identity remains strong as continued use of traditional toponyms replaces "histories of dispossession and erasure of cultural knowledge with accounts grounded in precise locations."[50]

Though useful at bringing wider attention to a cause through news media, direct confrontation does not work as governing bodies forces protesters back to their "place." European colonizers who have impressed their reality onto the land do not want it replaced. Yet, First Nations continue to resist their cultural expulsion by retaining their ability to label their own places; they demand inclusion on their own terms and they are not a "vanishing breed." With the dominant culture's persistent refusal to recognize the value of place names generated by oral history in the First Nations culture "we miss this message, we ignore history, and we privilege one set of recollected presentations of a glorified cultural past over a more immediate expression of a struggling cultural present."[51]

Far from the adversarial land claims process and failed attempts at navigating western legislative convention lies some additional areas of successful toponymic reclamation. If it were not for the persistent efforts to reclaim heritage names, successive generations of First Nations might have succumbed to the erasing power of European versions. The Tlingit, for example, have suffered the erasure of their language to such a degree that they are not prepared to directly apply for name changes, but instead attempt to regain identity on a more basic level. Instead of relying on the power of names, the Tlingit have combined the traditional potlatch with a sense of place. Fewer Tlingit individuals today know the traditional place-names or pursue traditional subsistence activities; thus, an increasing number take part in memorial potlatches. Thomas Thornton observes, "as Tlingit senses of place are continually being reconfigured in new constellations of relationships, Tlingit ritual continues to answer, forcefully, questions of how

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[50] Cruikshank, 106.
[51] Cameron, 236.

Tlingits belong to places and how ancestral places continue to define their identity, community, and cosmos."[52]

Other First Nations groups find success working within, but not challenging, national guidelines for place naming. Canada in 1897 began its protocol regarding the choice and type of place names with the formation of the Geographic Board of Canada. This resulting standardization of spelling and application to landscape allowed cartographers to use the same names at all scales of municipal, provincial, national, and international maps.[53]

In an atmosphere of limited cooperation, the British Columbia government has reconsidered how place names factor in the marginalization of First Nations. A relatively early attempt at using the standardization was the removal of derogatory names. "Nigger" was removed in the 1960s, while four place names retain "negro." "Chinamen" was removed in the 1990s with twenty "Chinas" remaining. Only four "Japs" remain today, yet forty "Indians" linger.[54] In December 2000, the particularly offensive "Squaw" was removed from eleven British Columbian place names:[55]

> Two different Squaw Creeks in the Kootenay region, two different Squawfish Lakes, a Squaw Lake, and Squaw Mountain in the Omineca-Peace region, and Squaw Fish Lake, Squaw Island, Squaw Range, and two Squaw Creeks in the Skeena region.

The names will be phased out from maps and official documents, reflecting an increasing sensitivity on behalf of the provincial government to the perspectives of the First Nations.

In 2004, BC introduced a new program to recognize and include aboriginal place names. On National Aboriginal Day, Cates Park in Vancouver was renamed Whey-ah-Wichen in honour of BC's First Nations history. Tribal leaders, treaty negotiators, government officials, and the public all collaborated in the renaming process. In what seems to be a positive step in the recognition of aboriginal history connected to a place name, involved parties decided to include both names on a sign at the park entrance. However, there appears to be little evidence

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[52] Kan, 132.
[53] "A Brief History of the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC)," *National Resources Canada*, http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/info/hist_e.php, (March 24, 2011).
[54] "nigger," "negro," "china," "chinamen," "jap," "indian," National Resources Canada: Canadian Geographical Names Data Base (CGNDB); nigger: 0, negro: 4, china: 20, chinamen: 0, jap: 4, indian: 40, http://geonames.nrcan.gc.ca/search/search_e.php, (March 25, 2011).
[55] Cheryl Petten, "B.C. Government Listening to Summit Concerns," *Windspeaker* 18, no. 9 (Jan 2001).

of the name change on maps of the area.[56] In 2006, the change continued as the municipality outlined a series of steps in the interpretive management plan highlighting the ongoing collaboration between The District of North Vancouver and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation.[57]

Despite a positive response for a small park in North Vancouver, not all renaming goes as well. In the face of long histories of colonial place name creation, many names are solidified in the cultural collective memory. This memory is reinforced by majorities of populations who resist change and it is challenged by those who have long been marginalized by the power of place naming. The venerated Stanley Park is a case in point. In July 2010, an elder of the Squamish First Nation proposed that the park be renamed "Xwayxway (pronounced kwhy-kway).[58] Despite much support from civic leaders, including the provincial tourism minister and the mayor of Vancouver, to add the First Nations name to signage, there was little said regarding an official geographic name change. While First Nations and local government are satisfied with the symbolism inherent in the dual name, populist detractors passionately decry the foolishness of changing such a historic place.[59] Furthermore, federal officials denied the change. Canadian Heritage Minister James Moore announced, "Our government does not support efforts to change the name of Stanley Park,…A name change will not happen."[60] As in the case of resources, the potential loss of something near and dear to the dominant culture remains untouchable by current native efforts at change. Thus, Stanley Park remains another toponymic battleground for Squamish First Nations.

The name "Salish Sea," however, did not exist pre-exploration and its creation represents attempts at reconciliation in modern times. Doctor Bert Webber of the University of Western Washington has argued for the name change for thirty years in order to bring attention to the interdependency of marine life in the areas where the Fraser River empties into the ocean, including Puget Sound and Strait of Georgia. Wilson thought it would be appropriate if the area was named after the areas predominant Salish language. In 2008, the name was tabled during a First Nations summit in Chemainus.[61] By January 2010, in accord with the Geographic Names

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[56] "Cates Park" and "Whey-ah-Wichen" at <http://maps.google.ca>, (March 24, 2011).
[57] District of North Vancouver, http://www.dnv.org/article.asp?c=769.
[58] Robert Matas, "Natives Propose New Name for Vancouver's Stanley Park," < http://www.theglobeandmail.com>.
[59] Bill Tieleman, "Rename Stanley Park? These Are Crazy Days," *Tyee*, http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2010/07/06/RenameStanleyPark/, (March 25, 2011).
[60] http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/story/2010/07/05/bc-stanley-park-name-change-feds.html
[61] Deborah Jones, "Western waters may soon be the Salish Sea," *Globe and Mail,* Nov. 13, 2009. A14.

Board of Canada and the Washington State Board on Geographic Names, the body of water would be recognized as the "Salish Sea," but like the "Great Lakes" of the east, would not replace existing names. The process, says Lieutenant Governor Steven Point, "reflects the growing understanding and appreciation of our cultures. It is another step in the bridge of reconciliation."[62]

Liberal Premier Gordon Campbell, in one of the highlights of his political career, attended the renaming ceremony of the Queen Charlotte Islands. This northwestern archipelago named in 1788 after the wife of King George III, is the traditional home of the Haida whose descendants insist that they are not reclaiming a name, but "reiterating our sovereignty over our lands and waters. We've always known it to be Haida Gwaii."[63] On June 3, 2010 as a result of Bill 18, the Haida Gwaii Reconciliation Act returned the original name to the islands. The Haida performed a name-returning ceremony, giving the name "Queen Charlotte" back to the colonists'descendants. In a notable sign of reconciliation both sides recognized the damage colonial place naming had done to at least this one First Nation. Premier Campbell complimented the Nation:

> The name Haida Gwaii represents a proud people with a history of achievement stretching back into time and a nation respected for its enormous contribution to the life of our province," said Premier Campbell. "I want to thank the Haida Nation for sharing their culture with the people of the world and for teaching us the value of reconciliation.[64]

With similar respect, but with a strong assertion of aboriginal rights and a recurring identification of First Nations with the land, the President of the Haida Nation replied:

> We received our life and our culture from Haida Gwaii. Over countless generations, our bodies are reclaimed by the lands we call Haida Gwaii. Haida Gwaii is not only where we are, this is who we are. While we cannot unwind

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[62] Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation: Coast Salish Peoples, "News release: B.C. Coast Salish Nations, Tribes Honour Salish Sea," July 15, 2010.
[63] K. Pemberton, "Name-change ceremony symbolically cuts Haida Gwaii's link to colonial past," *Vancouver Sun,* June 17, 2010.< http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/news/westcoastnews/story.html?id=5604cded-1d6b-4017-9f2e-c38975bc14ab>.
[64] Ibid.

> history, we will leave colonialism behind us, as we have laid the foundation for a respectful relationship into the future.[65]

Perhaps of all BCs First Nations, the Haida seem to have maintained their cultural connection with land through enduring place names. Often referred to historically as the most warlike nation, their modern conciliatory nature more accurately reproduces the feelings of welcome, trust, and acceptance with which First Nations greeted British Columbia's original explorers.

The teleology of native place names once served to disinherit natives from their land. As time progressed, the removal of derogatory names and re-introduction of native names shows how First Nations' activists are successfully using western abstraction of space to their advantage. However in doing so, the First Nations place themselves within a political system whose dominant philosophy continues to rule against aboriginal ownership of land. Nevertheless, there is hope if modern governments continue to seek peaceful reconciliation with First Nations interested in asserting control over their place names.

At best the imposition of Euro-centric place names simply created a familiar terrain from which to build a new colony for the expanding British Empire. Colonizers were inculcated in the manner of place names as commemorative ways to honour their patrons or their rulers. At worst, the conscious erasure of First Nations place names destroyed cultural links to the past and contributed to the myth of the vanishing Indian. Generation by generation, First Nations lost connection to the land in the renaming process and are indeed vanishing – off maps anyway. While residential schooling, racism, and legislated cultural limitations have been much studied, further work is necessary to determine how much the colonizers actively used toponymic reformation to "conquer" the First Nations. First Nations connect place to myth, time, and space and through oral history maintain their community. Colonial reconstruction of the physical "place" almost destroyed the First Nations connection to their meta-physical world. It is a tribute to the persistence of First Nations culture and a measure of the power of place naming that have allowed modern First Nations to turn the tables and re-engineer European names.

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[65] Ibid.

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