

# The Importance of Contemporary and Historical Indigenous Cartography and Toponymy with Indigenous Contributions to Euro/American/Canadian Cartography

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## Abstract:

In recent years, many libraries and archives have started digitizing their collections thus making maps by Indigenous peoples more easily available for scholars to study. While a number of these maps were discussed in the History of Cartography series (volume 2, book 3: 1998), more have since been found and disseminated. These maps are critical in understanding the historic and current land tenure of Indigenous groups. Further, Indigenous claims to land can be seen in their connections via toponymy. European concepts of territory and political boundaries did not coincide with First Nation/American Indian views resulting in the mistaken view that Natives did not have formal concepts of their territories.

While Native Americans/American Indians/First Nations did not originally have access to paper for their map creation, nonetheless, many of them had excellent cognitive cartography concerning their environment, settlements, populations, territories, trails and trade routes. They were often able to communicate this spatial knowledge to Euro-Americans mapping about said lands by drafting maps (on paper, deerskin, or on the ground in dirt and snow) and providing place-names. These maps and toponymy essentially describe how well Indigenous peoples understood the geography of their lands. Additionally, many Euro-American explorers would get lost without Indigenous help while traversing the North American landscape. Alternatively, sometimes Native guides intentionally led Europeans astray.

This presentation will illustrate how Native residents were very spatially cognizant of their own lands, as well as neighboring nations' lands, overlaps between groups, populations, hunting territories, and trade networks. Finally, the Sinixt First Nation provides a perfect example of how an Aboriginal people are currently inputting and using a GIS representation of their territory in British Columbia and Washington state with proper toponymy and use areas.

## References

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