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CASE STUDY

Ethical Reflections on Making the Untitled TETÁĆES Map

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TEMOSEN (Charles "Chazz" Elliott), a professional artist and carver working from a family studio in WJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip) First Nation, and Kim Shortreed, a settler immigrant artist and scholar, teamed up to challenge Western cartographic traditions through Untitled TETÁĆES, *the first prototype of a haptic map, an art/map concept created by Shortreed during his Ph.D. project. Having completed and shown the map at a local gallery, Kim now reflects on the ethics of creative and cultural ownership, toponymic justice, and cartographic colonization.*

KEYWORDS: art; British Columbia; ethics; Indigenous cartographies; mapping; Salish Sea; SENĆOŦEN; settler cartographies; toponyms; toponymic justice; WJOŁEŁP Tsartlip First Nation; WSÁNEĆ Peoples

INTRODUCTION

I conceived of the haptic map concept in 2023, as part of my Ph.D. project, "Contracolonial Practices in Salish Sea Namescapes," at the University of Victoria (UVic). The term haptic refers in its narrowest meaning to a sense of touch, but is also widely used to mean a sense of position and motion (proprioception). There is thus such a thing as haptic knowledge, and geographers have taken account of this in designing "tactile" maps for visually impaired users. Such maps have been supplemented with sound, producing a kind of "haptic" map (Rogers et al. 2013). Moreover, Tania Rossetto argues that "touch, as a proximal and non-representational way of knowing . . . is well suited for experimenting with non-representational approaches to maps," and that "tactile/haptic aspects of cartography" represent "a potential research area" in need of further development (2019, 85). The collaboratively built *Untitled TETÁĆES* the is the first complete prototype of my interpretation of a haptic approach to mapmaking (see Figure 1).

The primary goal of my haptic concept, and indeed the *Untitled TETÁĆES* art installation/map (map, hereafter), is to explore creative ways to consider maps less as abstract toponym-indexing machines and more as aesthetic relation al sites for human interactions, cultural exchange, and storytelling. My inspiration for this map concept is informed in part by cartographer and artist Margaret Pearce, who argues that cartography can be a "mode of creative expression" with the "potential to do more" than serve as a geospatial "inventory" tool, in the case of typical Western-style maps, for "the information extraction industry of colonial economies" (2021, 317). The *Untitled TETÁĆES* map combines aesthetics, language-learning, and interactivity in order to observe what these combined elements can teach about the ways in which maps construct a sense of place and perhaps spatial identity—it is an approach to haptic mapping that attempts to build a bridge between embodied learning on the land and the relatively abstract and visual-centric learning possible through typical Western two-dimensional paper or digital maps. As an art installation experience, *Untitled TETÁĆES* intends to get viewers thinking about the ways in which sensory understandings of spatiality and our emotional connections to personal geographies entwine to engender feelings of being "at home" in some places and not others.

My primary collaborator on this project was **TEMOSEN** (Charles "Chazz" Elliott), a professional artist and carver working outside the academy from a family studio in WJOŁEŁP (**Tsartlip**) First Nation.[1] Together, we

1. To learn more about TEMOSEN's work, family, and art, see the Salt Spring Arts webpage on **a 2022 show** called JSINSET—ŚWELOĶE (Family Growing Ourselves Up), a collaborative exhibit, curated by Rose Spahan, of works by TEMOSENŦET Charles Elliott, Myrna Crossley, TEMOSEN Chazz Elliott and Matthew Parlby-Elliott.

constructed the map over the course of roughly fifteen months. We constructed what is essentially a curved, narrow box, with three sheets of ⅛" thick Meranti plywood for the inner wall and seascape, and three sheets of ¼" flexible plywood sheets for the outer wall and the carvings. The structure was built using a stitch and glue technique with EcoPoxy as the main adhesive and filler. Overall, the map is a cylinder shape, roughly ten feet in diameter, with an entrance cut out; the entrance has a width of just over 36 inches and meets Canadian code for door width for wheelchair access. The interior map space is intended to allow three to four adults to move around comfortably. The Salish Sea seascape horizon scene on the map's interior was spray painted by artist **Jesse Campbell** (Michif [Métis]), who also specializes in large-scale murals. Each T̲ET̲ÁĆES (island) on the map can be moved anywhere along the seascape horizon. When lifted off the magnetized wall, a motion sensor in the island triggers an audio clip to play from a hidden speaker in the island, which speaks the island's name in both English and SENĆOŦEN, an Indigenous language spoken in W̲SÁNEĆ territories, including the lands known also as the Saanich Peninsula in British Columbia.[2] The map also has accompanying elements and resources: a field recording of **waves lapping a local seashore**, which is played on a loop from speakers within the central map space; an interactive, **virtual version** of the map, created by Legacy Gallery; and a **customized Google map** showing the written names for each island, in SENĆOŦEN and English, with some information about each island.

The *Untitled T̲ET̲ÁĆES* map is intended to be experienced in different ways. Viewers can enter the map space and listen to the sounds, arranging the islands as they wish. We placed a "Map Guide" near the entrance to the map, which provides among other things, some suggestions on ways to experience it:

> Each T̲ET̲ÁĆES, or island in SENĆOŦEN (a language spoken by W̲SÁNEĆ Peoples) in the map, is intended to be moved around so that you can hear both its SENĆOŦEN and English name. The islands' shapes are traced from the actual islands in the Salish Sea that they represent. Imagine yourself standing on a shoreline, looking out to the islands' silhouettes, or from on top of ŁÁU,WELN̲EW̲, the highest point on the Saanich peninsula and sacred to the W̲SÁNEĆ People. Do the islands look familiar to you? Feel yourself building an understanding of familiarity of place. Move the islands from memory, feel their shapes, listen to their names and try to say them. These islands are part of the living landscapes in W̲SÁNEĆ Territory and the Salish Sea.

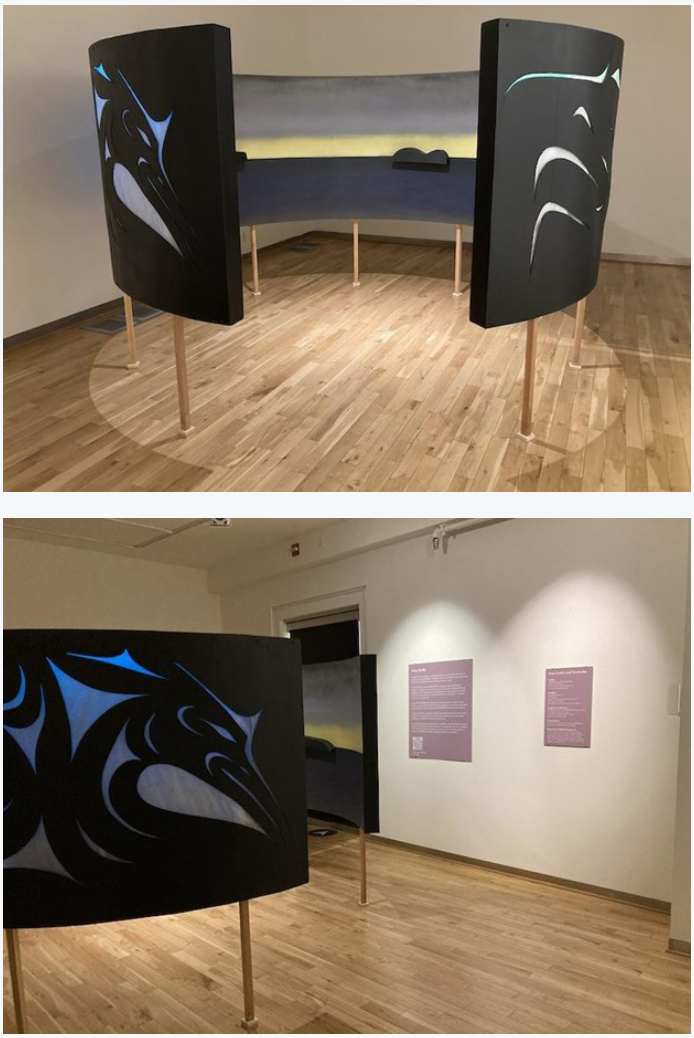

Figure 1. The *Untitled T̲ET̲ÁĆES* map, an early prototype to demonstrate our haptic map concept for SENĆOŦEN and English toponyms. This interactive map is a motion-activated art installation that speaks aloud place names in both languages. The above images show the map at Legacy Art Gallery in lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) territory/Victoria, BC, Canada, where it was shown from September 23–December 9, 2023 (photographs by the author, September 9, 2023).

There is a toponymic justice aspect to this map, which is to encourage viewers—especially settler viewers familiar primarily with English place names—to consider

2. See the W̲JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip) First Nation's **website** to learn more about W̲SÁNEĆ territories and histories.

SENĆOŦEN names as intrinsic to living W̱SÁNEĆ namescapes rooted in W̱SÁNEĆ narratives. This haptic map concept intentionally complicates how most W̱ENITEM—or "Anglo, white person" in SENĆOŦEN (Montler 2024)—are educated about what maps and toponyms are, or might be, as cartographic and cultural products.

Phillip Paul, in *The Care-Takers*, describes one counter to indexing-centric cartographies, and toponyms specifically, in W̱SÁNEĆ oral tradition, in which "a place name is tied irrevocably to either a teaching story or to a historical account" (1995, 1). All toponyms can of course be tied to varieties of meanings and narratives, which in themselves can vary in meaning and cultural significance, but the irrevocability in W̱SÁNEĆ toponymic practice is that teaching and narrative are epistemologically intrinsic to toponyms: to separate stories from places is to disrupt fundamentally their toponymic mores. Further, Paul relates that narrative accounts are embodied in people and the exchange between "the story teller" and "the listener" (1). The *Untitled ṮEṮÁĆES* map could never replace personal and cultural relational exchange—nor should it—but it can create conceptual spaces that gesture toward embodied and relational learning. While the artistic, representational landscape of the *Untitled ṮEṮÁĆES* map tells a visual story, it also tells a multi-sensory story of place intended through touch, by moving physical representations of islands, and hearing, by listening to a Salish Sea soundscape and recordings of spoken SENĆOŦEN and English toponyms. Placing Indigenous and non-Indigenous toponyms into relationship and conversation in new ways could encourage viewers to consider Indigenous/settler relationships to land differently and represent in a small way what artist TEMOSEṈŦET (Charles Elliot), TEMOSEṈ's late father, described as "a small bit of decolonization" (Dickson 2014).

TEMOSEṈ descends from the W̱SÁNEĆ and lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) Nations and I am a settler immigrant from the United Kingdom, and so we found ourselves discussing the ways in which our inherited cultural cartographic perspectives could be creatively paired through the *Untitled ṮEṮÁĆES* map, such that its design could promote broader conversations on reconciliation. Making and showing the *Untitled ṮEṮÁĆES* map invited us to explore some ethical territories particular to our collaborative journey—that of combining W̱SÁNEĆ and settler cartographic traditions, perspectives, and narratives in one map. I discuss these explorations here in order to invite reflection and to encourage dialogue for those working on similar cartographic projects in similar spaces. The first ethical conversation we had was about ownership of the map as a concept and object, and the second was about settler audience reactions to, and understandings of, the W̱SÁNEĆ/settler toponymic equity aims of the map and its representation of living landscapes. We are not celebrating or endorsing our approaches to these ethical conversations, nor do we intend to suggest universal solutions. Rather, we observe that maps that co-present Indigenous and settler cartographic perspectives will necessarily face ethical dialogues specific to their collaborations, institutions, and territories.

OWNERSHIP

The first ethical consideration we faced while making the *Untitled ṮEṮÁĆES* map was determining who would own it, both as an object and as an intellectual and cultural property. My haptic map concept developed in a settler academic institution, with its attendant systems, expectations, and ethical benchmarks. A year or so before we began the map construction, I presented a proposal on the *Untitled ṮEṮÁĆES* map to the UVic Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) and completed the **Human Research Ethics Standard Application**. As part of the ethics approval process, I also completed the Government of Canada's Tri-Council **Course on Research Ethics** (TCPS 2: CORE-2022). These ethics review processes took roughly five months to complete but they had nothing to do directly with ownership, so I needed to take UVic's ethics process further, especially since the map's construction involved Traditional Knowledge.

The *Untitled ṮEṮÁĆES* map is intended as a new way to understand namescapes, but TEMOSEṈ's design also conveys connections to and representations of W̱SÁNEĆ cultural memory, ontologies, and narratives of place.[3]

3. TEMOSEṈ designed and carved the outside panels with help from Matthew Parlby-Elliott. I built most of the map's structure (with help from TEMOSEṈ, Matt, and Ben Olsen) and the interactive islands. Mural artist Jesse Campbell painted the seascape horizon.

Therefore, early in our collaboration we determined it vital that TEMOSEN have complete ownership of the map and that he have final say on where the map could be exhibited. Our early discussions began with the understanding that the map might end up exhibited exclusively in Tsartlip, Tseycum, and Tsawout Nations' communities, and for their members alone. After TEMOSEN agreed verbally to work on the project, I secured several funding sources to pay for any work at the **wages recommended**, in 2023, for professional artists by a Canadian non-profit association called Canadian Artists' Representation. Of the funding received, roughly 90% went to TEMOSEN and roughly 10% toward materials.

As we began our design discussions and started to sketch out ideas and approaches to the design, I had to ensure that this and future creative outputs would belong to TEMOSEN and not UVic. Should the project cease midway, for whatever reason, TEMOSEN's work needed to be protected—an incomplete *Untitled TETÁĆES* map would still need to belong to TEMOSEN. To address ethics of who would own the map, both during its construction and in perpetuity, I drafted a "Haptic Map Agreement"—our version of an artist contract agreement—and reviewed it with TEMOSEN until we were both satisfied with its language and that TEMOSEN's ownership of the map was uncontestable. We both signed the agreement and I attached a digital copy to my UVic HREB application, which was accepted and approved as part of the broader ethics review application. Creating the agreement together was empowering for us both because we chose language and terms specific to our collaboration and to the creative and cultural practices that TEMOSEN brought to the map and its making. Our conversations about the ethical implications of the agreement were helpful, as they encouraged productive discourse on WSÁNEĆ and settler understandings of place and territorial presence, histories, and what it means to "own" land and its symbolic representation in cartographic form.

REPRESENTATION

The *Untitled TETÁĆES* map's design removes traditional Western cartographic elements, like written toponyms, border lines, and consistent scale, yet leaves enough elements in place to teach something about location and to encourage viewers to think about how they construct feelings of geospatial familiarity and belonging. This haptic map concept, as a cartographic/art and media project, raises considerations about Western cultural and institutional expectations and biases for what defines a "map." Are these *ethical* considerations? I argue that they are because the relationships established between a "map" and its viewers, as well as places it represents, have typically been informed by WENITEM hegemonic, cartographic, and epistemological norms, such as the assumptions that geocoordinates, cardinal directions, and distances on maps are culturally neutral or objective. JB Harley observes that maps can be "agents of change" and "they can equally become conservative documents. But in either case the map is never neutral" (1989, 14). Our working assumption was that by fundamentally questioning what we produce creatively and cartographically, we could learn new ways to question our inherited personal, cultural, and educational assumptions about what maps and toponyms can be. While building the *Untitled TETÁĆES* map, we came to understand our haptic map as much more than a theoretical cartographic concept: it is an ethical practice through which to learn about how better to undertake collaborative anticolonial work through interactive media. Moreover, we found that as our early, respective expectations about the installation's design and production as a "map" receded, the more clearly we were able to consider the installation as a sensory and phenomenological experience, a creative shift very much in keeping with Pearce's guiding principle to "work towards no predetermined outcome, but instead seek to learn what becomes possible" (2021, 334).

One of the ethical outcomes we did not predetermine was that presenting WSÁNEĆ (Indigenous) and English (settler) toponyms in symbolic harmony could potentially undermine the toponymic-justice intention of the *Untitled TETÁĆES* map, that is, to motivate real-world toponymic equity in British Columbia's official toponymic systems. As much as my haptic map concept strives to champion Indigenous toponymic resurgence and awareness, it also includes colonial and non-Indigenous toponyms, and this co-representation illuminates an ethical impasse. On the one hand, my haptic map concept presents a rebalancing of toponymic inequity—through the co-representations of Indigenous and English toponyms—on the other

hand, it presents a cartographic narrative of false equivalency in a settler-administered namescape of imbalance between Indigenous and settler toponyms. The *Untitled TE<u>T</u>ÁĆES* map, for example, represents the same number of SENĆOŦEN and English names; each of the four islands included in the *Untitled TE<u>T</u>ÁĆES* map has two audio clips: one in SENĆOŦEN and one in English. But, this toponymic balance is not reflected numerically in the official gazetteer of British Columbia. The British Columbia Geographical Names Office (BCGNO) **gazetteer** shows that English and non-Indigenous-language toponyms of "foreign imagination" far outnumber SENĆOŦEN and other Indigenous-language names (Noodin 2021, 27). It is also common in W̱SÁNEĆ territory to see English language versions of SENĆOŦEN names, for example, "Saanich" is an Anglicization of W̱SÁNEĆ. Viewers unfamiliar with the extent and degree of colonization's systematic and systemic erasure of Indigenous toponyms, through omission or Anglicization, might consider the *Untitled TE<u>T</u>ÁĆES* map to represent a toponymic harmony restored, rather contemplate its broader objective: to contribute to emerging, meaningful exchanges on how best to approach toponymic, cartographic, and ultimately land-ownership inequities between the colonial state and First Nations and Indigenous Peoples. My haptic map concept intends to contribute to "expanding dialogue[s]" on finding new ways for cartographies to serve as "potentially useful means of incorporating Indigenous and non-Indigenous conventions in the same map" (Pearce and Louis 2008, 107). However, settlers contemplating these conventions, which are themselves culturally and situationally specific, need to consider more fully the ethical complexities inherent in these new cartographies.

The ethical concern of overlooking toponymic injustice emerged during the artist panel discussion at Legacy Gallery, as part of *Untitled TE<u>T</u>ÁĆES*'s showing. During the question-and-answer session, I asked the audience of roughly fifty people to raise their hands if they had ever heard of the BCGNO and the overwhelming majority had not. This prompted a lively discussion about "official" vs. "unofficial" toponyms. Small as this sample size was, it nevertheless reveals a gap in general knowledge about the domination of specific settler institutions over our shared namescapes. Early in my haptic map concept's development, I grew increasingly concerned that I, as a settler immigrant, would—despite best intentions—reify what Margaret Noodin calls "cartographic colonization," a simultaneous erasure and colonial reframing of Indigenous naming histories and practices (2021, 16). Noodin observes that "as the narratives embedded in cartography show, colonization was a blunt process of forced forgetting and much was lost as names and identities were obliterated, merged or reshaped by foreign imagination" (27). Building on Noodin's observations, the *Untitled TE<u>T</u>ÁĆES* map could be rightly critiqued for transfiguring real-world toponymic inequity into a kind of toponymic chimera in which, at least in our abstract art/map space, SENĆOŦEN and English toponyms present as equals.

Among the narratives embedded in my haptic map concept, one is a falsehood that could undermine its ethical intention of encouraging official equity between Indigenous and settler toponyms in the BCGNO's gazetteer. Those unaware that toponymic inequity exists in our shared Indigenous and settler namescapes might experience the *Untitled TE<u>T</u>ÁĆES* map and assume, for example, that SENĆOŦEN and English placenames are relative equals, or that it is just a matter of time before these Indigenous and settler toponyms share cartographic space generally. However, official toponymic equity will take many years to achieve. In its present state, settler cartographies dominate Salish Sea landscapes from a place of seeming bureaucratic banality, in a toponymic status quo in which, from Indigenous perspectives, toponymic injustice is normalized. This banality acts as an ongoing tool of colonial effacement and dispossession, furthering a perpetual frontier narrative in which, as Razack contends, "European settlers" cast themselves "as bearers of civilization" (2002, 2). Lawrence Berg, building on Razack's contention, argues that in the settler state's toponymic banality "whites are able to safely ignore" Indigenous Peoples, and I would add their namescapes, by lending "a sense of the everyday" to systems that ultimately marginalize Indigenous Peoples and namescapes (2011, 20). For example, Trutch Street, named after a prominent British Columbian who "held repugnant personal views about First Nations," was only recently renamed to Su'it Street, which translates as *truth* in the lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungan) language (Depner 2022, 11). Prior to this name change, and its press coverage, Trutch was one name among the many that blended into the banal and unquestioned toponymic backdrop of other historical settler figures in the Salish Sea region. If toponymic equity were to happen at all, I maintain that a fundamental, systemic shift in thinking and practices around settler naming conventions is required. Presenting SENĆOŦEN and English toponyms as equals is a lie by

omission, unless viewers are aware already of just how rare this is in BC's conventional cartographic systems.

To the credit of the Legacy Gallery's staff involved in the *Untitled TEṮÁĆES* show, particularly Lorilee Wastasecoot (Ininew/Cree), Curator of Indigenous Art and Engagement, this group used the map's concepts as an opportunity to bring ethical conversations on space, place, and territory outside the map space and into other media. Legacy Gallery applied for and received funding from a local organization to create a "Digital Knowledge Mobilization Package," in the form of a website, video interviews, and exercises, in their words, "to give K-12 students, teachers, and community members an opportunity to further learn from and engage with the Untitled *TEṮÁĆES* art exhibition in their classrooms and at home" (2024). Legacy created a geospatial and territorial awareness education package intended, through its various exercises, to get students to learn about issues of space, place, and W̱SÁNEĆ and Indigenous toponymic awareness using the *Untitled TEṮÁĆES* map as metaphorical starting point. The first drafts of the educational modules were well intentioned and well designed. However, conspicuously absent in their content was any discussion of toponymic inequity. This fundamental ethical consideration was overlooked at first, and not intentionally. A few conversations and drafts later, we worked together to bring toponymic inequity considerations into the curriculum content. Now the lesson plan, located at the bottom of the "Video Interviews" page, asks teachers to "Ask students why they think it is important that people know SENĆOŦEN place names and why they might not be as well-known or as recognized as settler place names" (Legacy Art Galleries 2024). Neither TEMOSEṈ nor I see this education package as a complete solution to the ethical problems inherent in the map's co-presenting in harmony real-world toponymic disharmonies. However, we do consider this ancillary media helpful for settlers, particularly, to find ways into ethical discussions about shared Indigenous/settler namescapes. In addition to the education package, on a didactic panel presented as part of the Legacy show, we provided a QR-code link to the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council's "**Resources for Settlers**" web page, which shows, among other information, a map of the hundreds of SENĆOŦEN toponyms in W̱SÁNEĆ territories. Our current thinking is that the *Untitled TEṮÁĆES* map may not be able to solve the co-representation ethical problem in the official sense, but we can at least provide resources for settlers to better understand the toponymic diversity around them.

For reasons of resources (both temporal and financial) and scope within my Ph.D. project, our *Untitled TEṮÁĆES* map—the first and hopefully not last example of our interpretation of a haptic map—was limited in scope and toponymic representation. At a **trial show** on SḴŦAḴ / Mayne Island, prior to the longer show at Legacy, several viewers commented encouragingly that they would have enjoyed interacting with and learning more about the many TEṮÁĆES/islands closer to their region of the Salish Sea. As more viewers interact with and respond to the *Untitled TEṮÁĆES* map, we will continue to learn more about which elements have predictable effects and which ones require more translation time, or a trip back to the metaphorical drawing board. Over time, we will continue to draw on Pearce's intentions to "learn to say with a map what we feel to be falling through the cracks between words, yet which we know must be said" (2021, 336) cartographically and ethically.

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