"They Would Not Take Me There"

People, Places, and Stories from Champlain's Travels in Canada 1603–1616

Michael Hermann[1] | mike.hermann@umit.maine.edu
Margaret Pearce[2] | margaret.pearce@ku.edu

[1] Canadian-American Center
University of Maine
154 College Avenue
Orono, ME 04473

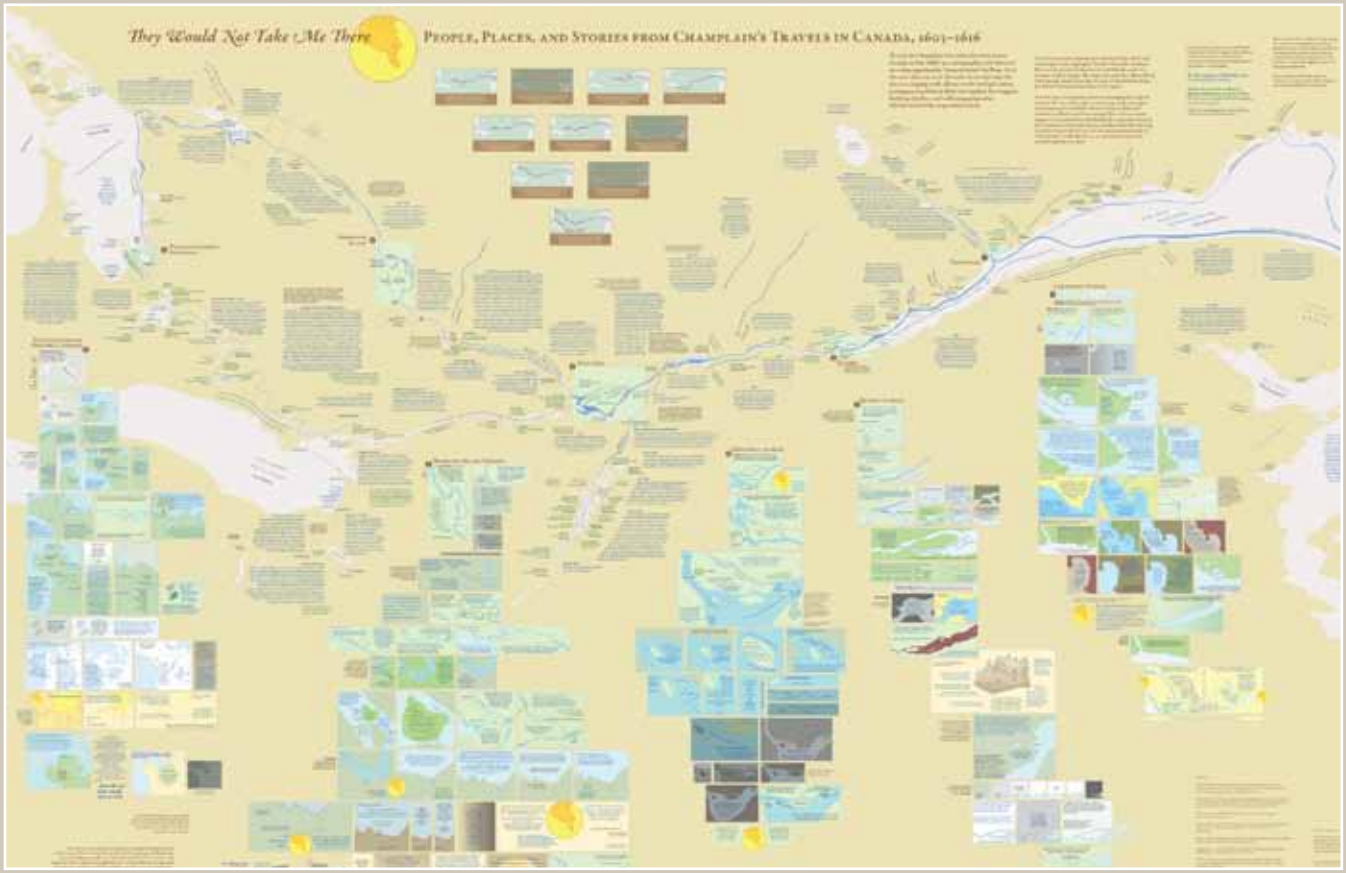
[2] Department of Geography,
Global Indigenous Nations Studies
University of Kansas
Lindley Hall 404, 1475 Jayhawk Blvd
Lawrence, KS 66045-7613

INTRODUCTION

In 2008, Michael Hermann and Margaret Pearce collaborated on a mapping project to illustrate the seventeenth century travel journals of Samuel de Champlain in the 1600s. The project began with a single map of the hydrography from the Gaspe Peninsula to the Georgian Bay, which was the extent of Champlain's exploration of Canada along the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers. But the cartographic challenge evolved into more than mapping Champlain's exploration routes; the mapping of his experience became both the design question and quest. Champlain's own travel narrative became the primary design element, with his words placed among the geography he described. These quotes were selected to bring the reader into the landscape of the map, including, but not limited to, observations of the physical landscape. His interactions and conflicts with Natives and Europeans also were stories that needed to be mapped. This concept of mapping stories and interactions became the primary focus.

Within the context of a larger map (39 x 59 inches), we created a series of sequential panels to convey the depth and diversity of experience in places

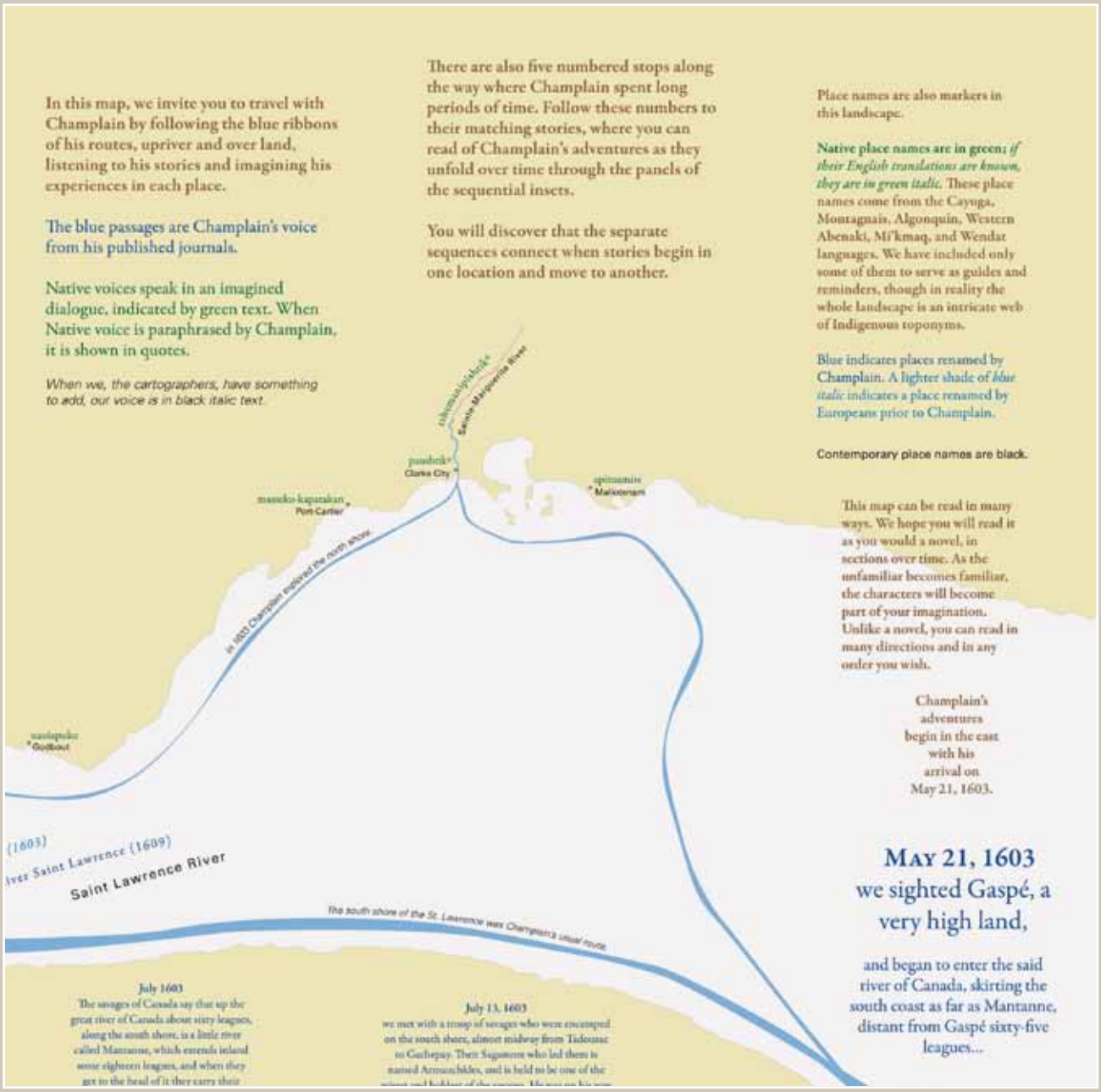
over time. These panels were designed to encode story elements using different techniques with type, color, and scale, in order to express isolation, seasonality, danger, despair, death, hope, and survival. Champlain's voice is quoted directly from his journals (typeset in blue), imagined Native voices respond (in green), and the cartographers' voice (in black) moves the story along. The map is published on two sides; English on one side and French on the other. Native placenames are translated on both sides. Some examples follow.



They Would Not Take Me There; People, Places and Stories from Champlain's Travels in Canada, 1603–1616. Paper map is 39 x 59 inches, folded to 8 x 10 inches, or available rolled. Published by The University of Maine Canadian–American Center, Orono, Maine, USA. ISBN 978-0615-23159-4. Retail $14.99.

INTRODUCING THE READER

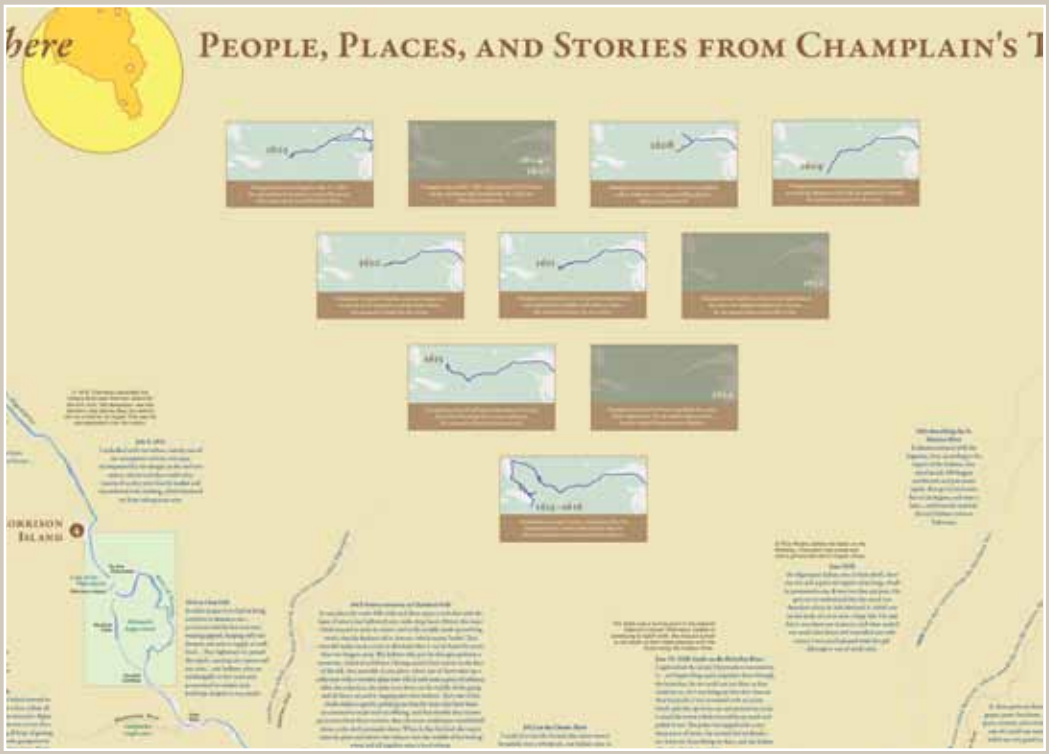
The predominant direction of Champlain's travels was a push westward. This is problematic because people want to 'read' the map from left to right, or west to east. To address this counter-intuitive issue, the upper right of the map is used to introduce the reader to the map as a whole, immediately following the title. The introduction is followed by an invitation from the cartographers, which embeds a legend based on type and color, and is read as narrative instead of a conventional abstract legend. It ends with the introductory statement by Champlain, as he first sights land in 1603. From here, the reader is well positioned to understand the maps use of typography as voice, and to enter the landscape with Champlain, for the first time, heading west.



Map typography as voice: Champlain's voice is in blue, imagined Native voices in green, and the cartographers' voices in black.

TIME AND PLACE

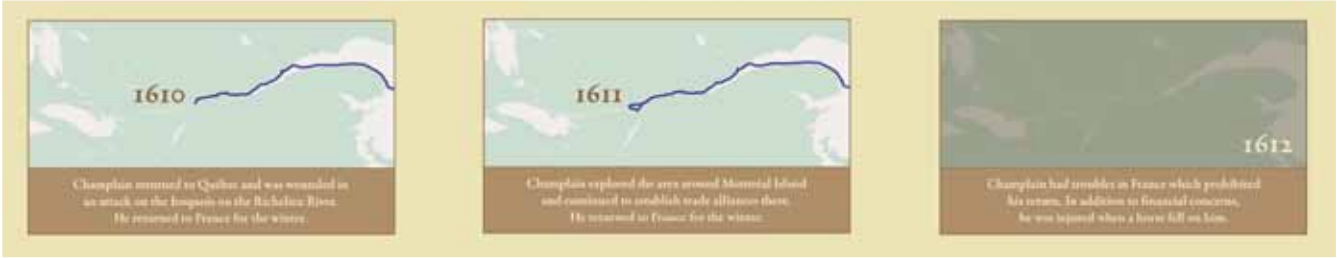
A series of small multiples was designed to orient the reader to both time and place during the thirteen years of travelling illustrated in the map. Champlain's routes often overlapped, and in some seasons he travelled back and forth several times between the same places. This level of detail was removed from the main map, although specific dates were used to help the reader understand from which trip a specific quote derived. Readers then may refer to the small multiples for a sense of the overall journey extent for each year. Some years Champlain did not return from France; those years are shown as dark panels with no route. Overall, the locator maps illustrate Champlain's continued goal of pushing farther west and north with each year.



Small multiples showing the extents of each of Champlain's trips to Canada.

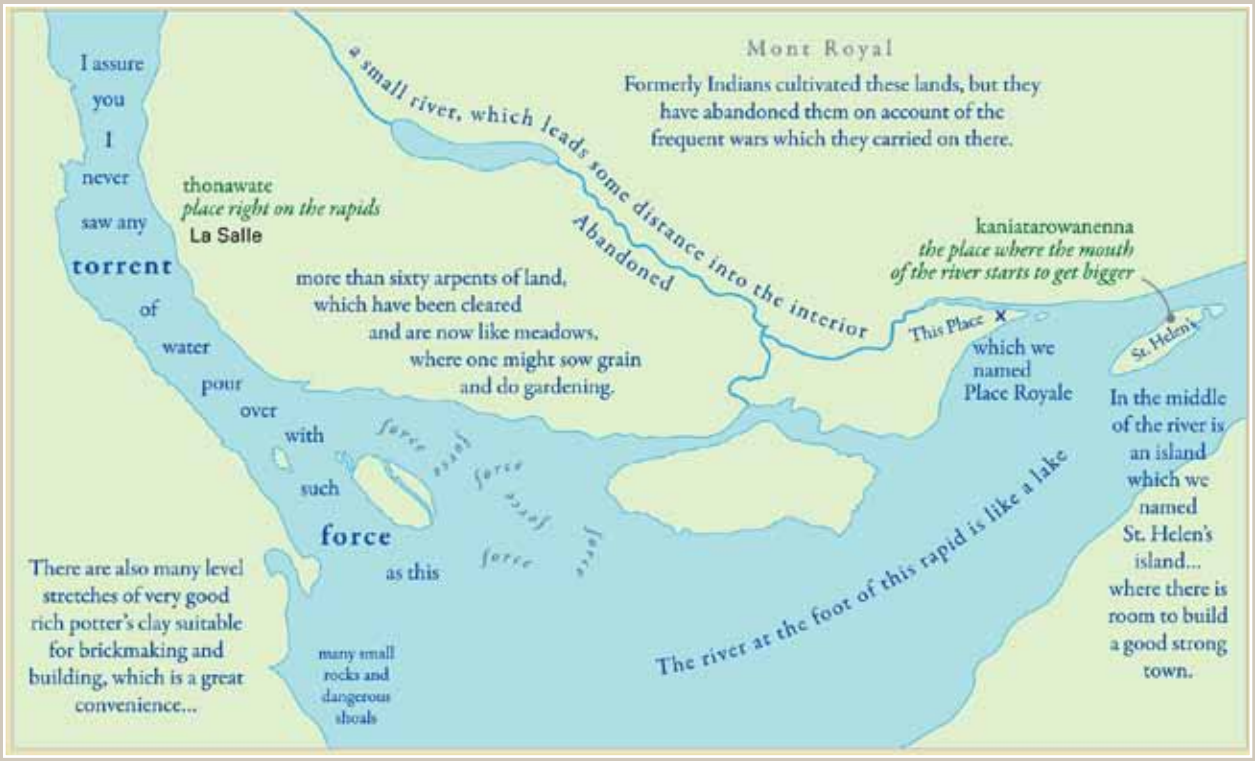
Left: The complete set of small multiples for 1603–1616.

Below: Travel extents for 1610, 1611, and 1612.



TYPE AS A DESIGN ELEMENT

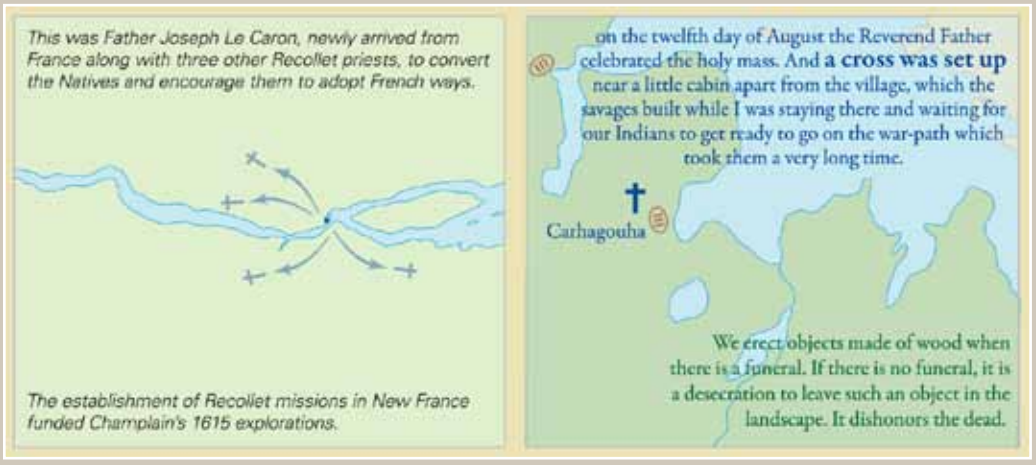
Many of Champlain's descriptions have to do with the river currents, and many of his stories unfold on the water. In this series of panels where the story occurs, type was used to reinforce the current as it flows along with the story. The type also locates the place where the description occurs, as in the following example where Champlain describes what is now called the LaChine Rapids. The word 'force' is used as a graphic element to symbolize the swirling rapids. Champlain continues to tell the story of a drowning and the type is placed to suggest drifting with the current. Scale and color become design elements as well: the scale changes to reinforce the helplessness of the situation. As Louis drowns, the color palette darkens, and water returns to blue in the final panel.



Examples of using text as a design element.

NATIVE VOICE

Native voice was introduced to the map as a counterpoint to Champlain's voice. This voice was represented in several ways based on Champlain's interpretation, ethnohistorical interpretation, and placenames. In the first example, the ethnohistorical record was used to create a response to Champlain's symbolic act of erecting a cross at a village site. This practice was interpreted differently by the two cultures, and the map provides both views. In the second example, the Native placenames delineate a peopled landscape, in contrast to Champlain's own maps of emptiness in the same spaces. Many of the placenames remain in use today, a lasting legacy that stands in contrast to Champlain's practice of renaming places.



The inclusion of Native placenames adds context to a landscape that Champlain often refers to as empty or barren. The reader can see where several names have remained as modern placenames, such as Bobcageon and Couchiching (below).