Memory, placelessness and the Geoweb. Exploring the role of locational social-networking in reimagining community.

(Presented at Digital Humanities Conference, Canberra March 2012)

Corbett, Evans and Romano
Outline

1. Memory
2. Place and placelessness
3. Geographic Information Technologies
4. The Métis in British Columbia
5. The Métis Historical Document Database
6. Discussion
Memory

• “Memory represents the past and the present as connected to each other, and consistent with each other.” (Fentress and Wickham 1992, 24).

• Our experience of the present and imagination for the future is directly influenced by our recollections of the past...
Memory

• Memory as “a social activity and an active binding force of group identity” (Hoelscher 2003, 600).

• Said (2000, 179) notes that social groups rely on memory, “especially in its collective forms...to give themselves a coherent identity, a national narrative, a place in the world”
Place and placelessness

• Said argues that memory is increasingly called on to reestablish identity, culture, and language, and, in post-colonial contexts, to re-appropriate historically contested places.
• Especially in the case of displacement and diaspora.
in past have focused on geometric space and its quantitative analysis

- Less capable of representing the qualitative realities of place which is imbued with human memories and experience
- The Web 2.0, and specifically the Geospatial Web has changed this.
Crowdsourcing
History Métis in BC

Animated map by: Stephen Foster
Develop the capacity to create and share historic and present-day Métis BC community information using Google Maps
Project objectives...

Locate and display information through a Google map interface
Indexed BC Metis Documents

Results:

- Criteria: Fur Trade
- Total Places: 864
- Total Unique Documents: 1584
- Patronym (Family Name): Fur Trade

Places

- Select a Place to view-related Metis documents or to see where related Metis people or events have been documented.

Database

- Search for documents by name, type, or relevant data.

Add a new document

- Add a new document to the database.

Contribute Files

- Upload any old photos, letters, or documents from your family collection for inclusion in the Historical Document Database.

Métis Historic Document Map

- View a map of documents according to their index.

This map contains a large amount of data and may take a minute to load.

Harvester Survey and Mapping

With the help of local Métis leadership, we are surveying hundreds of Métis harvesters across BC in order to understand the scope and density of harvesting practices in BC.

Relationships between family members harvest practices are being surveyed and mapped. This project will help us understand how harvesting practices and traditional knowledge are passed on from generation to generation.

Harvest Areas by Age and Species Group

- This map shows harvesting frequency in BC from the initial survey information.
Allow community members to geo-locate and upload their own materials
Project objectives...
Some statistics...

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<th>Statistics as of Aug 2010</th>
<th>Public page visits (All users not including Research Team)</th>
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Discussion

...place

• Different actors have different motivations...
Discussion

...reimagining community

- User contribution is not focused on a hypothetical ‘community’ agency, rather it is motivated in repositioning individuals and their families as members of the nation.
Discussion

...geoweb

...This process of crowdsourcing is a unique way of enabling individuals to both research their family genealogies and share their information with others.
There is an interesting comparison here to the MNC database

http://tomcat.sunsite.ualberta.ca/MNC/index.jsp
Sites of Interest:
http://document.bcmetiscitizen.ca/
Metis History DVD:
http://ubc.bcmetis.ca/dvd/
MNBC and UBC Okanagan Collaborative Research Program

Mike Evans (Principal Investigator)  Gary Ducommun (MNBC Staff)
Jon Corbett (Co-Investigator)        Dean Tremblay (MNBC Staff)
Stephen Foster (Co-Investigator)    Laurel Katernick (MNBC Registrar)
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