

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

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Corbett, Evans and Romano



The concept of memory is integral to theorizations of both displacement and placelessness, especially when a sense of place exists only in memory or imagination for members of dispersed communities. Collective memories deployed to restore, re-establish, repatriate territory and reconnect a people with its original homeland reveal the symbolic significance embedded within place, as well as the value of collective memory as a strategy of resistance and viable political tool. The challenge is to find ways that enable aboriginal communities to document, share and reflect on their place-based memories and knowledge, and in doing so re-establish identity, culture, and language, which in turn will facilitate the re-appropriation of contested places. Geographic Information Technologies (GITs) are increasingly pervasive in aboriginal communities in documenting aboriginal knowledge and land use and occupancy information. Many communities use GITs for a range of purposes, including land-use planning, cultural documentation and territorial claims. The Geoweb is the GIT platform for Web 2.0 digital social networking applications. In its current state, the Geoweb is a tool for spatial representation rather than a platform for spatial analysis as with traditional GIS. Because of the interactive capability and ease of use of Geoweb technologies, they offer great potential for storing, managing and communicating land-related knowledge to both decision-makers and community members themselves. The Geoweb's ability to compile and mash-up photographs, audio and video through a map interface gives it great potential for presenting place-based memories and knowledge, including

toponyms, oral histories and stories. This presentation reports on a community-based Geoweb project with the Metis Nation of British Columbia, a distinct Aboriginal group in Canada. It specifically examines the potential for Geoweb technologies to capture, communicate and comment on community memories in this dispersed community and how the Geoweb medium alters information flow and the nature of the knowledge being shared.

Jon Corbett, Assistant Professor in Community, Culture, and Global Studies and Co-Director of the Centre for Social, Spatial, and Economic Justice, University of British Columbia – Okanagan, Kelowna British Columbia, Canada.

Mike Evans, Professor and Head of School, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW, Australia.

Zach Romano, Research Associate, Centre for Social, Spatial, and Economic Justice, University of British Columbia – Okanagan, Kelowna British Columbia, Canada.





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...

Here collective memory and history are intertwined

This observation is shared by people writing in the field of the ‘invention of tradition’ history

Though for us, unlike many scholars working in this area, this is a constitutive and not contrived process. In other words we do not see this as a false or fiction process, rather an intrinsic component of the formation and reimagination of community

We will make this case through this paper by using the case of the Métis Nation of BC



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”

He furthers that “collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified and endowed with political meaning” (Said 2000, 165).

Place and placelessness

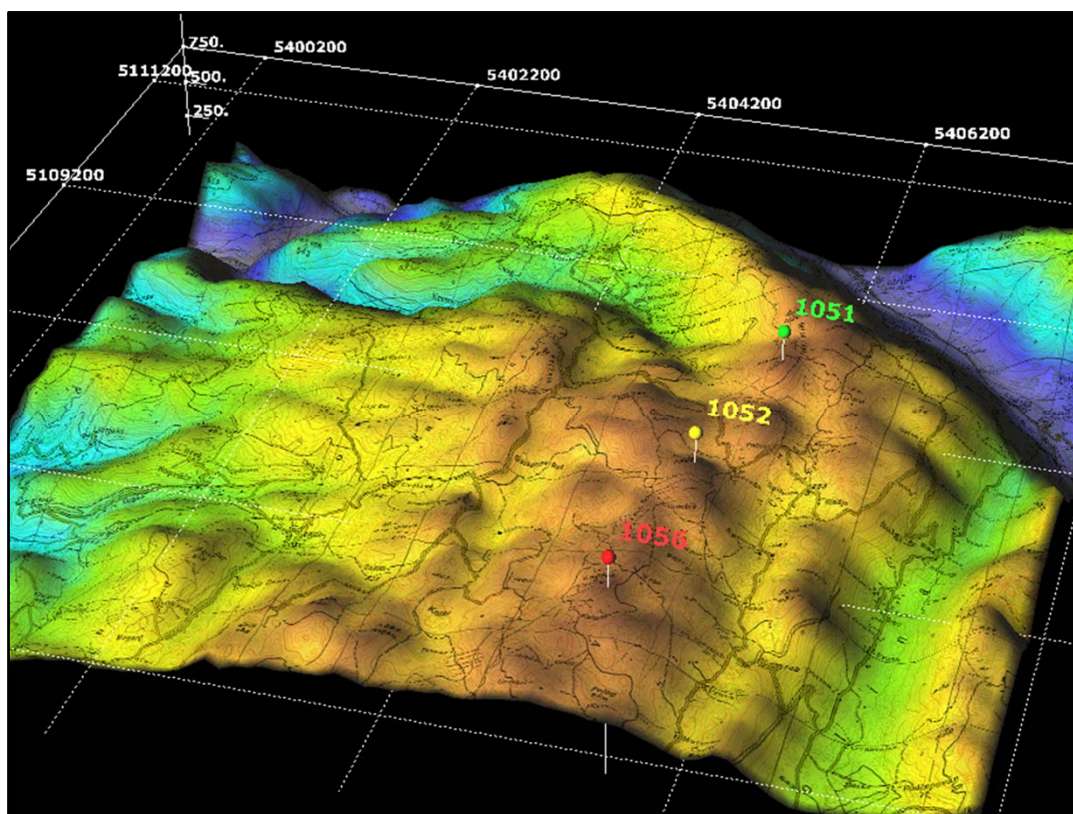
- Said argues that memory is increasingly called on to reestablish identity, culture, and language, and, in post-colonial contexts, to re-appropriate historically contested places.
- Especially in the case of displacement and diaspora

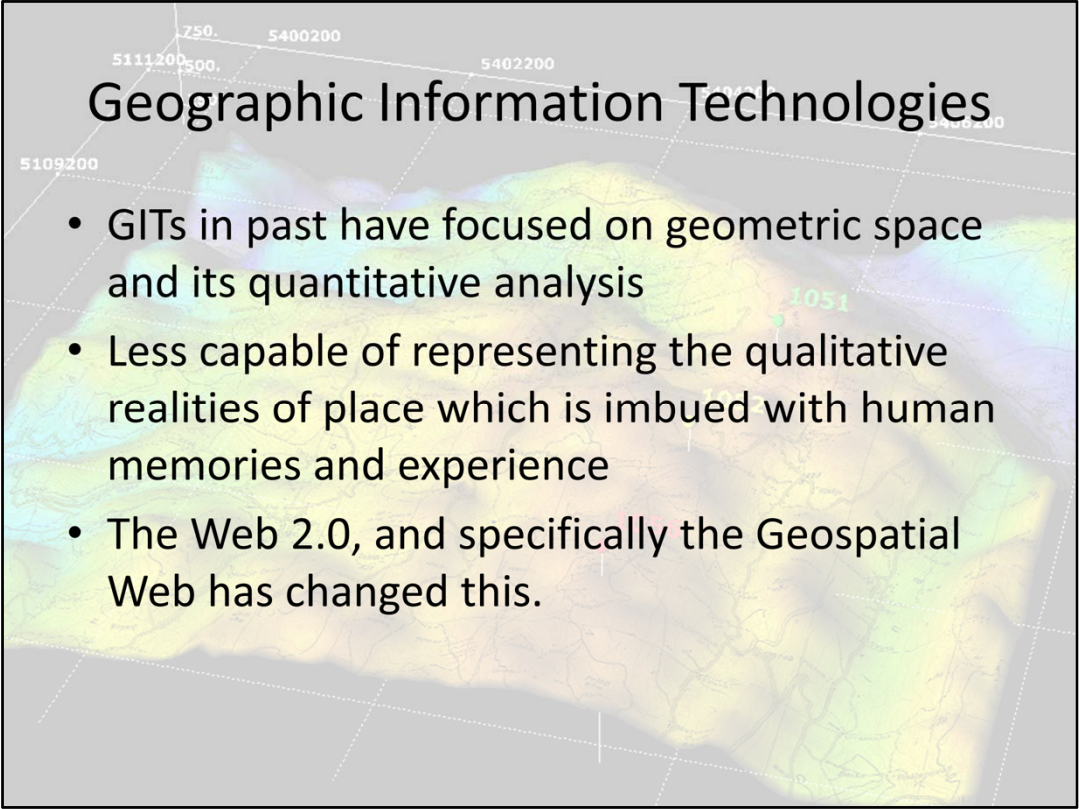
Fig. 66. Métis camp and hunters. ROM946.15.70; crIV-69.

COURTESY ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM,

Said (2000, 182-184) argues that memory is increasingly called on to support subaltern groups struggles to reestablish identity, culture, and language, and, above all, r

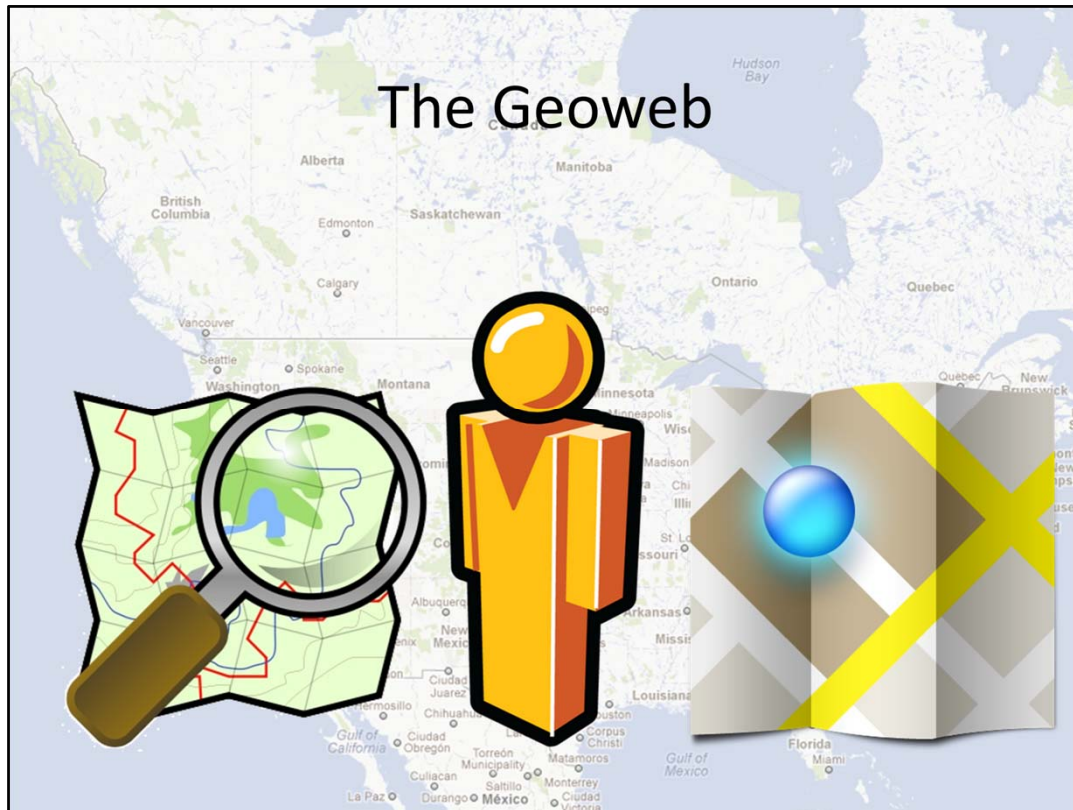
The challenge is to find ways that enable aboriginal communities to document, share and reflect on their place-based memories and knowledge, and in doing so reestablish identity, culture, and language, which will facilitate the re-appropriation of contested places.e-appropriate historically expropriated territories and contemporarily contested places.





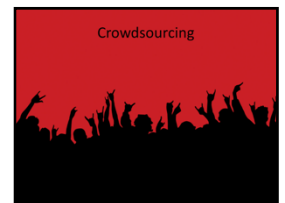
Geographic Information Technologies

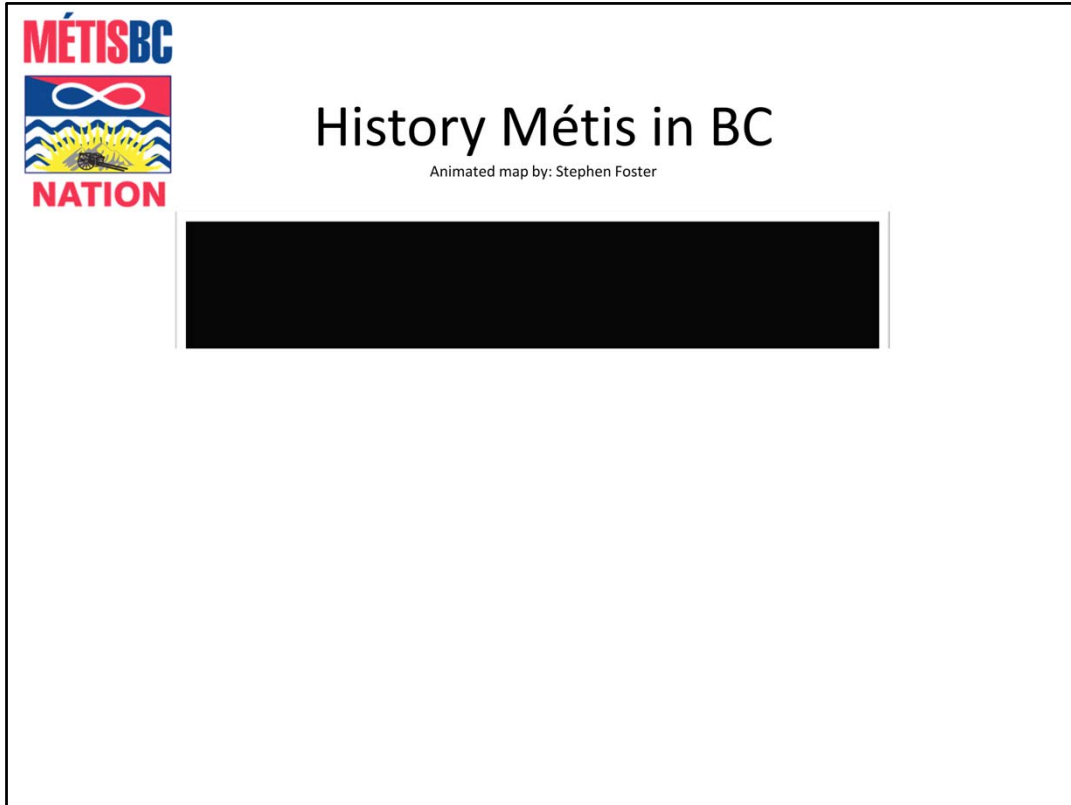
- GLTs in past have focused on geometric space and its quantitative analysis
- Less capable of representing the qualitative realities of place which is imbued with human memories and experience
- The Web 2.0, and specifically the Geospatial Web has changed this.



The Geoweb is the GIT platform for Web 2.0 digital social networking applications. In its current state, the Geoweb is a tool for spatial representation rather than a platform for spatial analysis as with traditional GIS. Because of the interactive capability and ease of use of Geoweb technologies, they offer great potential for storing, managing and communicating land-related knowledge to both decision-makers and community members themselves. The Geoweb's ability to compile and mash-up photographs, audio and video through a map interface gives it great potential for presenting place-based memories and knowledge, including toponyms, oral histories and stories. For community based work, especially in the context of dispersion and diaspora, crowdsourcing is key!

Crowdsourcing is the act of outsourcing tasks, traditionally performed by an employee or contractor, to a large group of people or community (a crowd), through an open call. The term has become popular with businesses, authors, and journalists as shorthand for the trend of leveraging the mass collaboration enabled by Web 2.0 technologies to achieve business goals. However, both the term and its underlying business models have attracted controversy and criticisms. The term "crowdsourcing" is a neologistic portmanteau of "crowd" and "outsourcing," first coined by Jeff Howe in a June 2006 Wired magazine article "The Rise of Crowdsourcing". Howe explains that because technological advances have allowed for cheap consumer electronics, the gap between professionals and amateurs has been diminished. Companies are then able to take advantage of the talent of the public, and Howe states that "It's not outsourcing; it's crowdsourcing."





Movie Map not accessible:

Brief historical focus on:

HISTORY

SCALE (NUMBER OF CITIZENS AND THEIR RANGE)

SCOPE

RESOURCES

EMBEDDED IN PLACE

GEOGRAPHIC CONNECTIVITY THROUGH TRADING NETWORKS AND INTER-MARRIAGE

RESISTANCE AND SUPPRESSION BY THE CANADIAN STATE

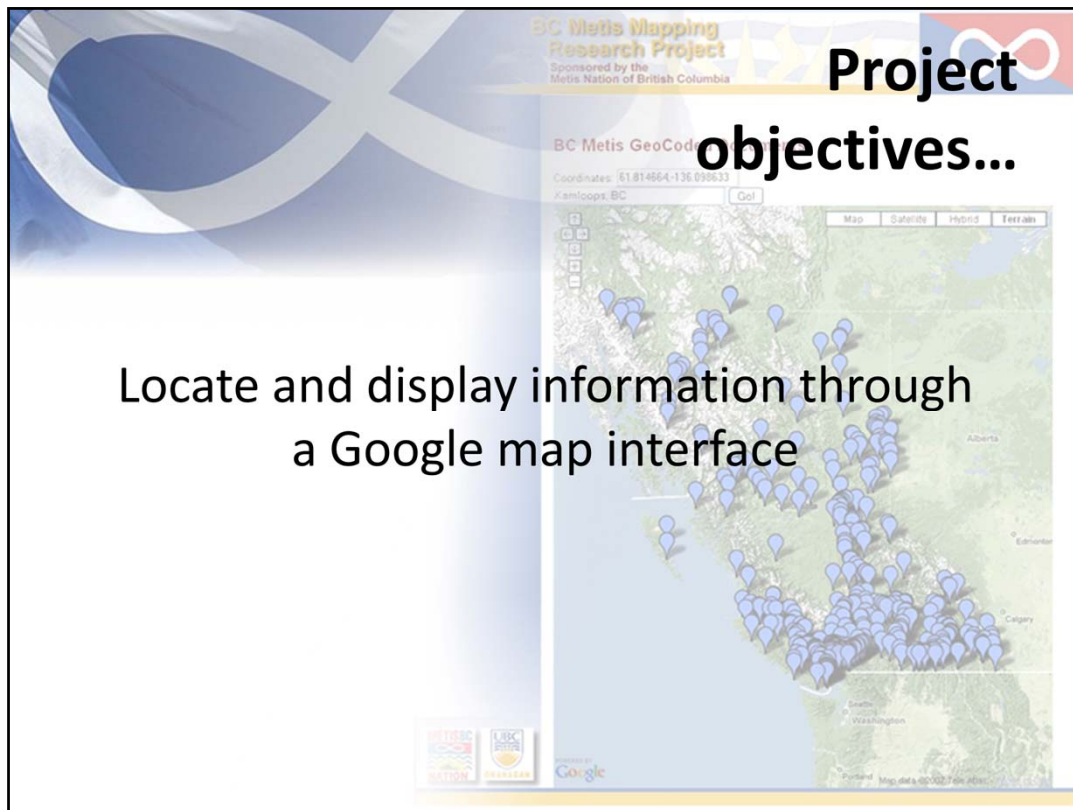


After Batoche a Dispersed society became a diasporic one



Project aim...

Develop the capacity to create and share historic
and present-day Métis BC community
information using Google Maps



By geolocating documents and creating an interactive index ...

BC Metis Mapping
Research Project
Sponsored by the
Metis Nation of British Columbia

[Public Resources](#)
[Metis Nation of BC](#)
[Metis Owanagan](#)
[UBC Research](#)
[Historical DB](#)
[Document Indexing](#)
[Harvester Survey](#)



Project objectives...

Harvester: ZR1 - Harvest Area

Coordinates: 51.44716,-118.707275 Kamloops, BC

Map Satellite Hybrid Terrain

Elk River Watershed

Big Game - Deer - Whitetail

Grand Forks

Lethbridge

Map data ©2007 Tele Atlas - Terms of Use

Allow community members to geo-locate and upload their own materials



Volunteered by community members

including digital video and images

Managed and checked by a human being

Before being incorporated into the map

Some statistics...

Statistics as of Aug 2010

Public page visits (All users not including Research Team)

Total Documents	15,556	Aug 08 - Jan 09	77,110
Accessible Documents	7,829	Feb 09 - July 09	170,630
Indexed Documents	7,062	Aug 09 - Jan 10	54,123
Place Indices	6,784	Feb 10 - July 10	42,492



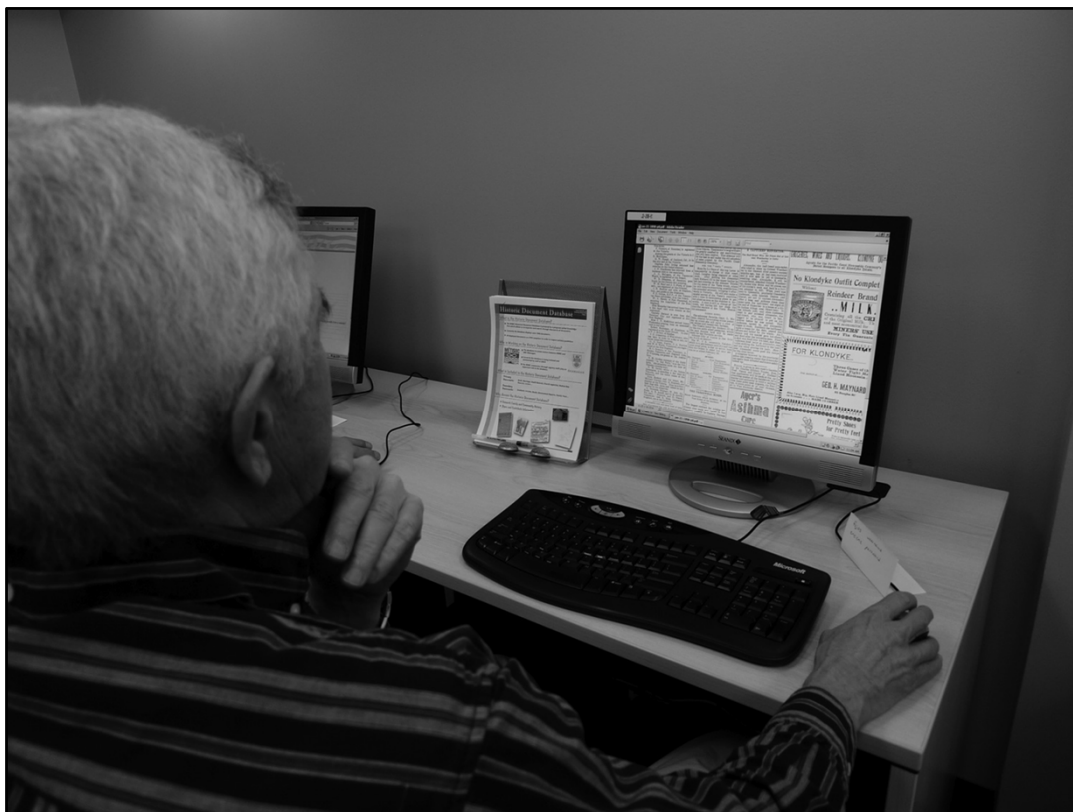
Discussion ...place

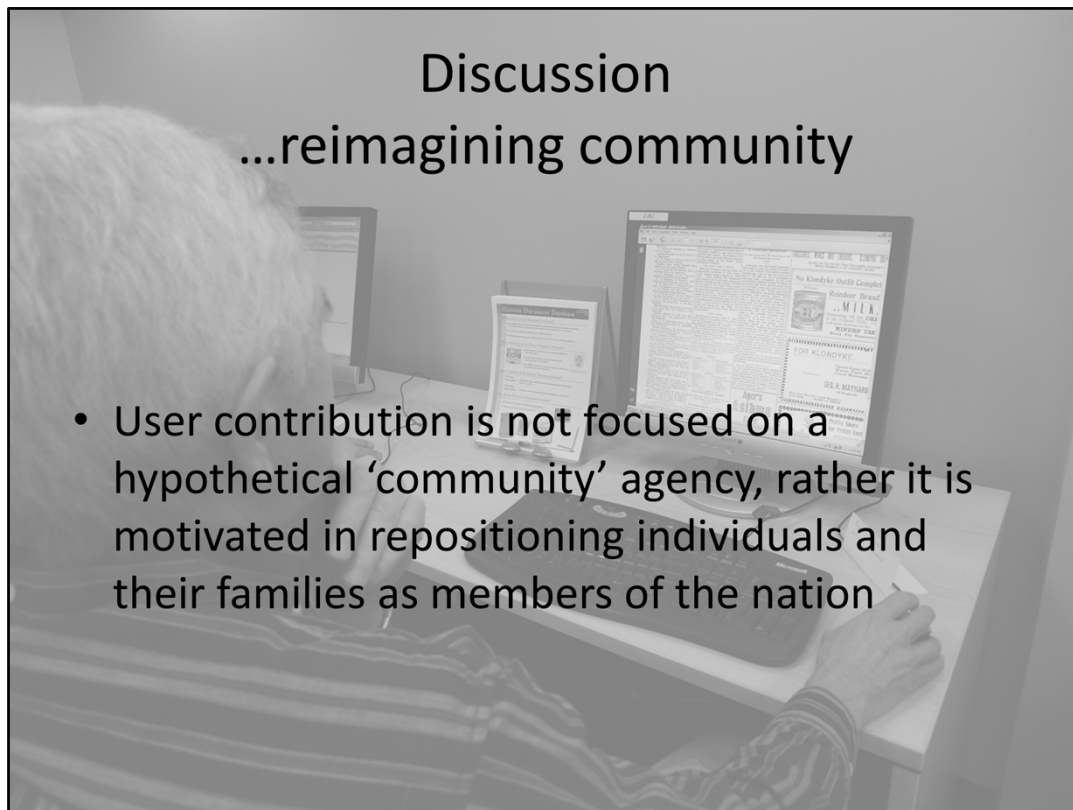
- Different actors have different motivations...

Both groups are motivated to use and populate the database, but are motivated by completely different reasons.

Métis government see the need to identify the location of memories in order to assert rights around lands and resources

Yet individuals are motivated to use of the DB to support their own purposes mainly proving genealogical links to prove citizenship.





Discussion

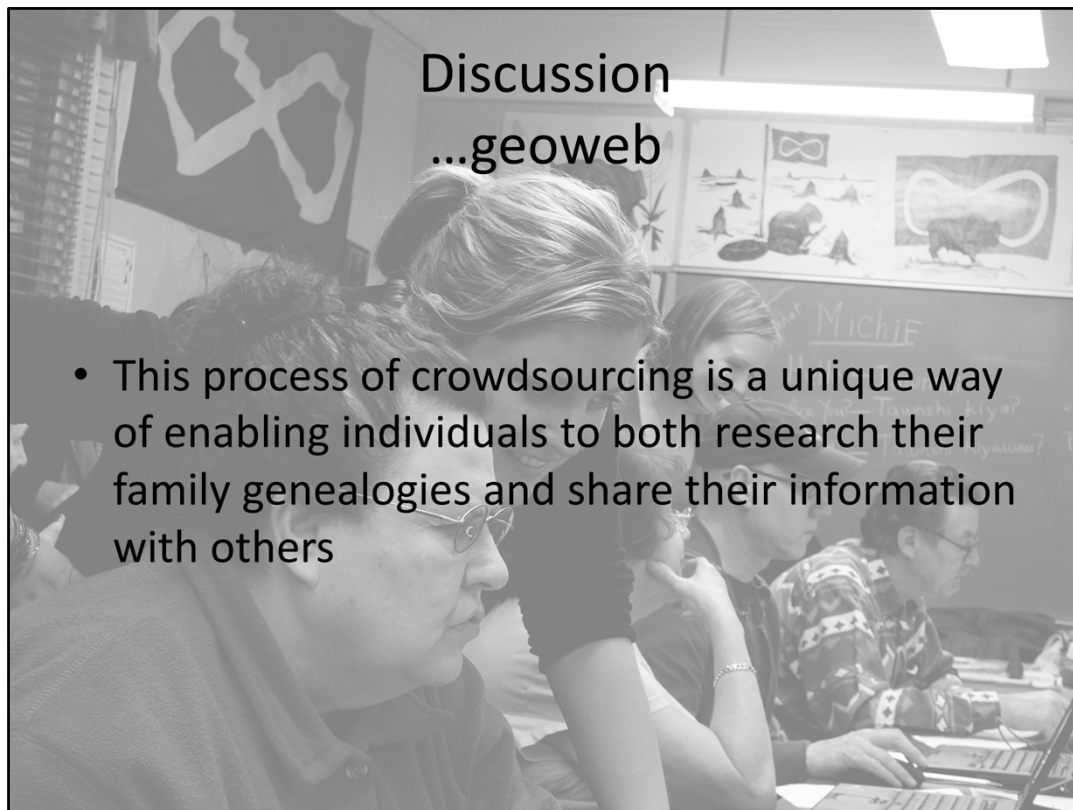
...reimagining community

- 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

As well perhaps as crafting that map to their own likeness.

They see the process of sharing information using the DB as a way of staking a claim over their citizenship – literally putting themselves onto the Métis map



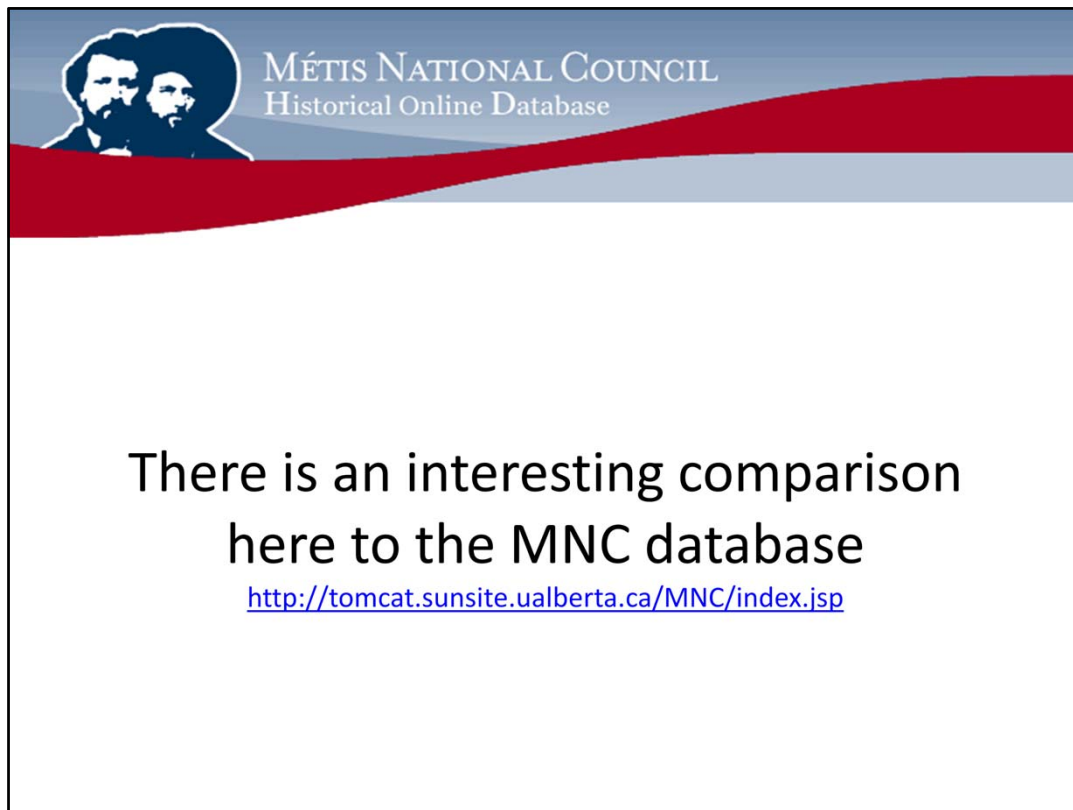


Discussion ...geoweb

- 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

There is an intersection here with MNBC citizenship processes which are very carefully validated, but the database is open, as is its possible uses.

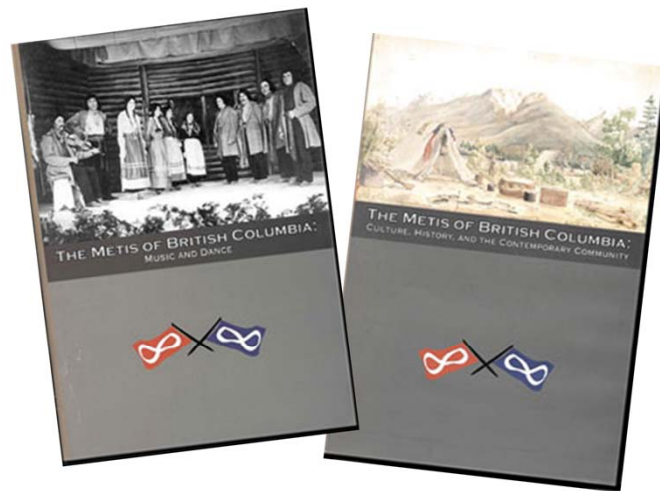


The MNC database is a highly structured one, based on a restricted range of documents which reflect an highly structured and institutionalized approach to authorizing data. While a useful resource for people, , the database is has no element of crowd-sourcing.



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)
Erin Dolmage (Research Associate)	Kasondra White (Research Associate)
Zach Romano (Research Associate)	Gabrielle Legault (Research Associate)