

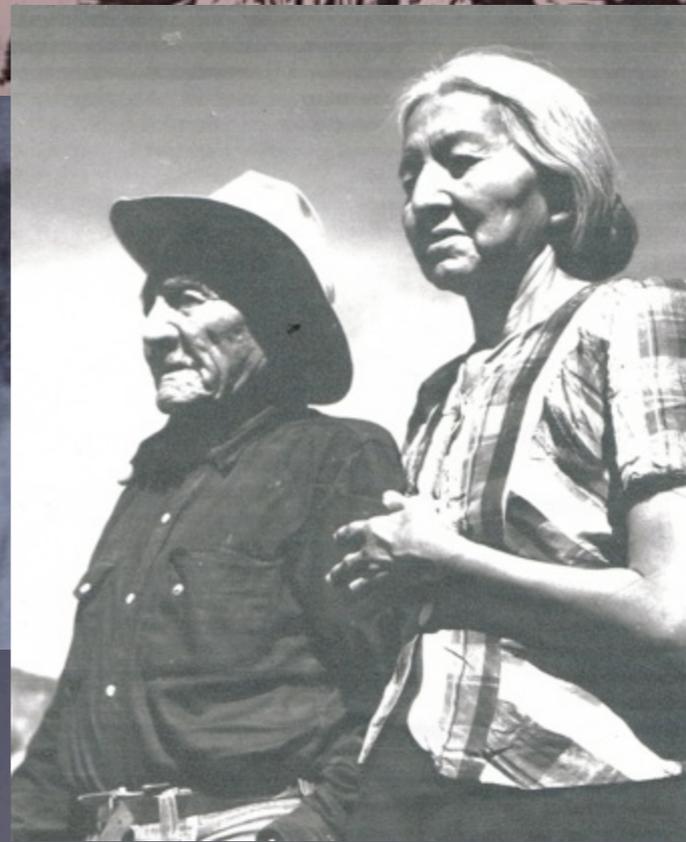
# Yiri7 re skwestúl'ecwems: Secwépemc Sense of Place



Marianne Ignace and Chief Ron Ignace  
Skeetchestn, Secwepemc Nation

Simon Fraser University & SFU First Nations Language  
Centre

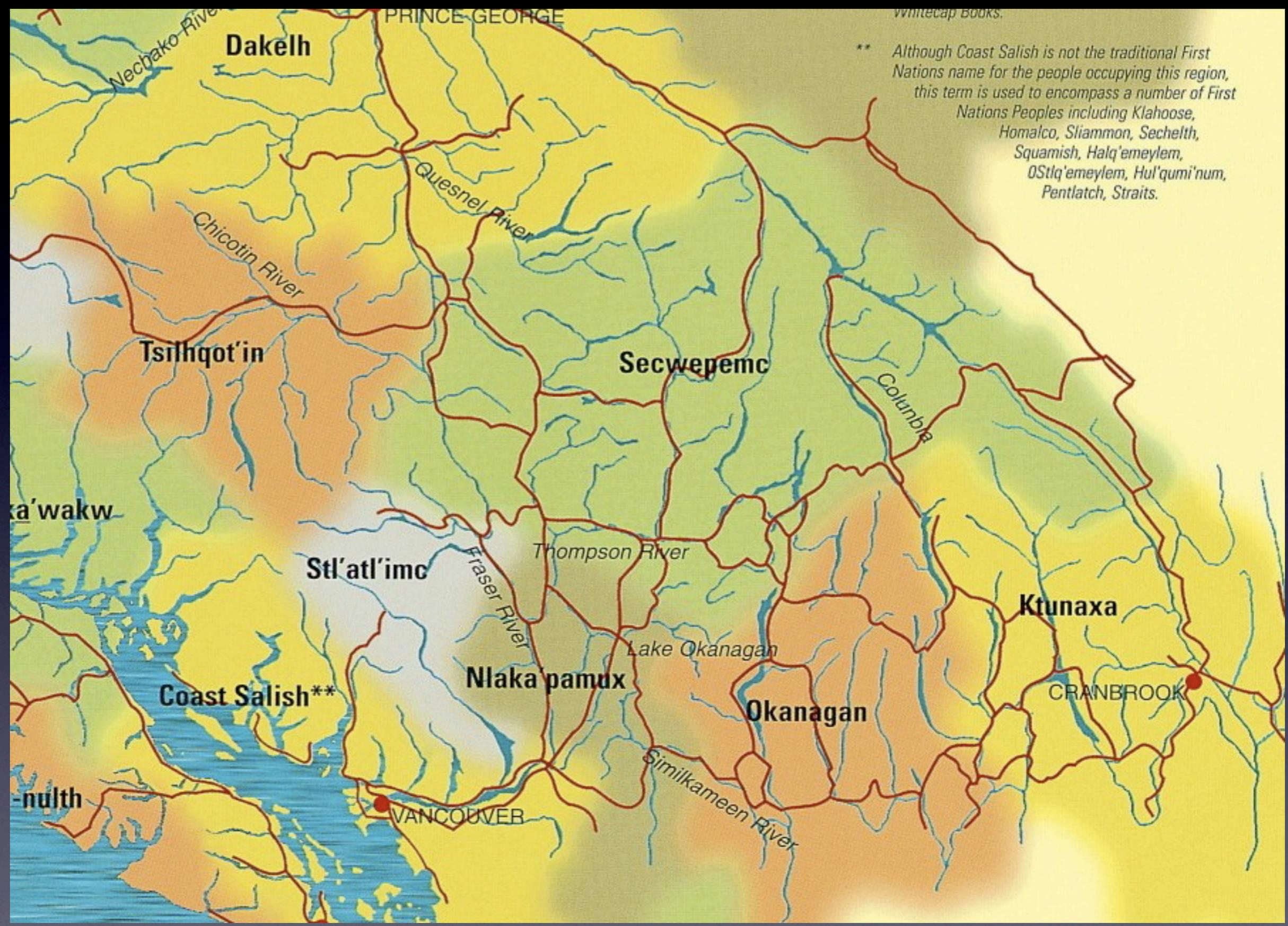
Ron: Raised by elders born in the late 1870s  
whose own parents were born in the 1830s-40s





• Our elders and teachers from all 17 communities in the Secwepemc Nation, including Chris Donald, Selina Jules, Theresa Jules, Aimee August, Adeline Willard, Daniel Seymour, Christine Simon, Sam Camille, Ida and Louis Matthew, Lina Bell, Cecilia DeRose, Victorine Alphonse, Nancy Camille, Bridget Dan, Mary Thomas, and many others. Wenécwem yiri7 re skukwstsetse!

\*\* Although Coast Salish is not the traditional First Nations name for the people occupying this region, this term is used to encompass a number of First Nations Peoples including Klahoose, Homalco, Siammon, Sechelth, Squamish, Halq'emeylem, OStlq'emeylem, Hul'qumi'num, Pentlatch, Straits.



**Dakelh**

Nechako River

PRINCE GEORGE

Chicotin River

Quesnel River

**Tsilhqot'in**

**Secwepemc**

Columbia

ka'wakw

**Stl'atl'imc**

Fraser River

Thompson River

**Ktunaxa**

**Coast Salish\*\***

**Nlaka'pamux**

Lake Okanagan

**Okanagan**

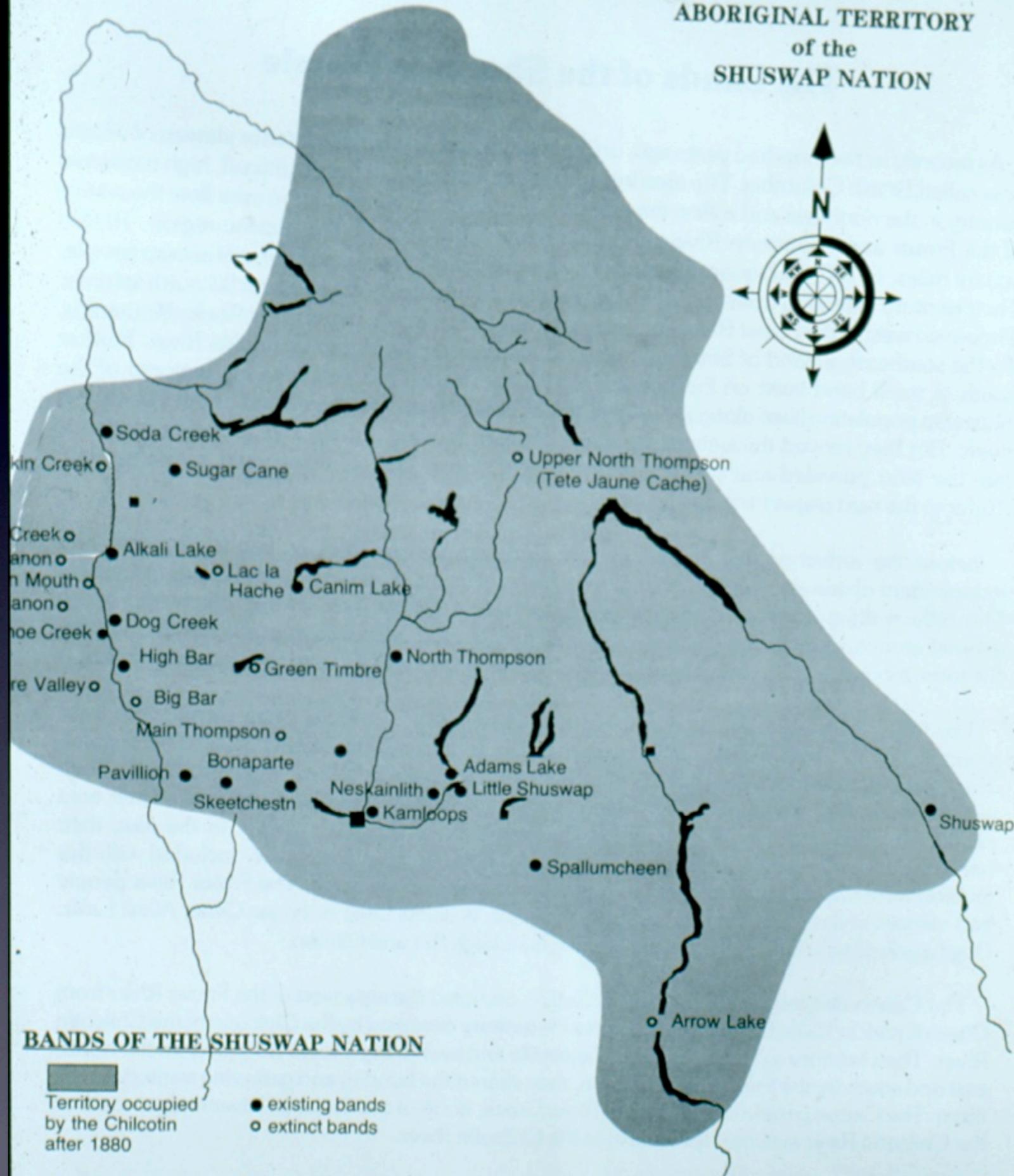
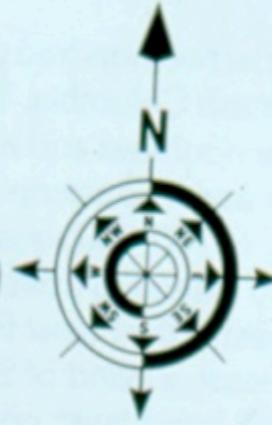
CRANBROOK

-nulth

VANCOUVER

Similkameen River

ABORIGINAL TERRITORY  
of the  
SHUSWAP NATION



\* Maps derived from James Teit reports 1900

# Secwepemctsin - Shuswap language:

- about 7,000 Secwepemc people; about 60% of them live on 17 reserves in the Shuswap Nation (south-central Interior of B.C.)
- Secwepemctsin (Shuswap) is one of the three northern Interior Salish languages - two dialects (Eastern and Western Secwepemctsin)
- A 1995 assessment of the state of the language showed that only about 3.5 % of Secwepemc people were fluent in the language. Most of them were in their 60s and over.
- ca. 2011-12: less than 150 speakers - probably 100 or less now; some communities have no speakers.



The current landscape took shape 10,000+ years ago as the Thompson River and Fraser River dug their trenches through the sediment deposited by the melting glaciers

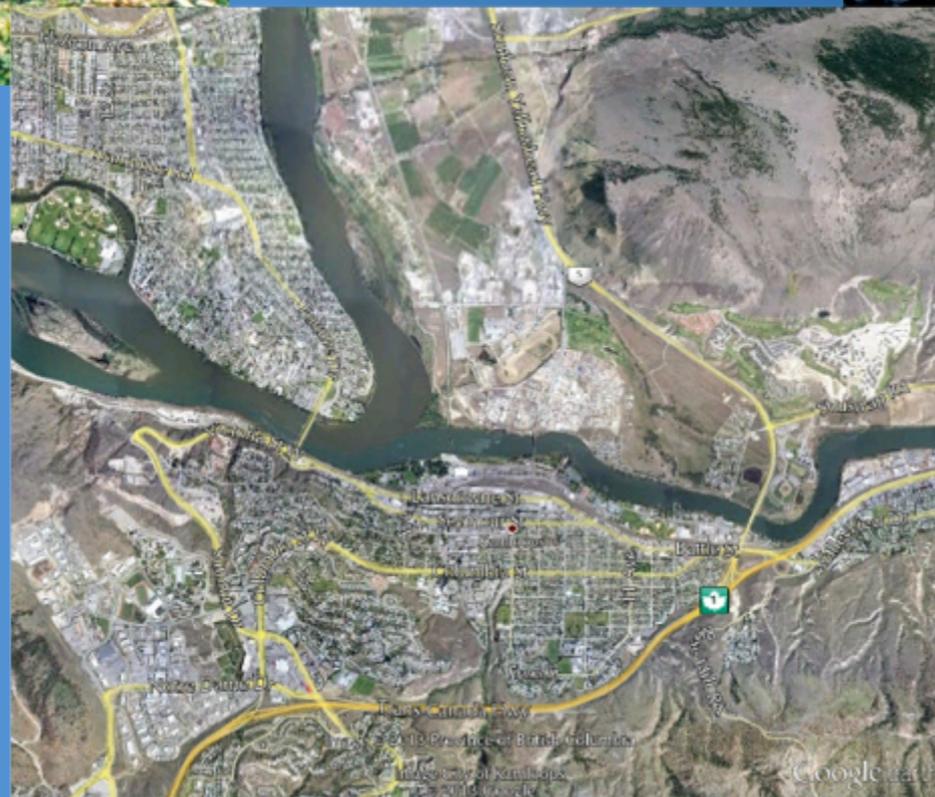




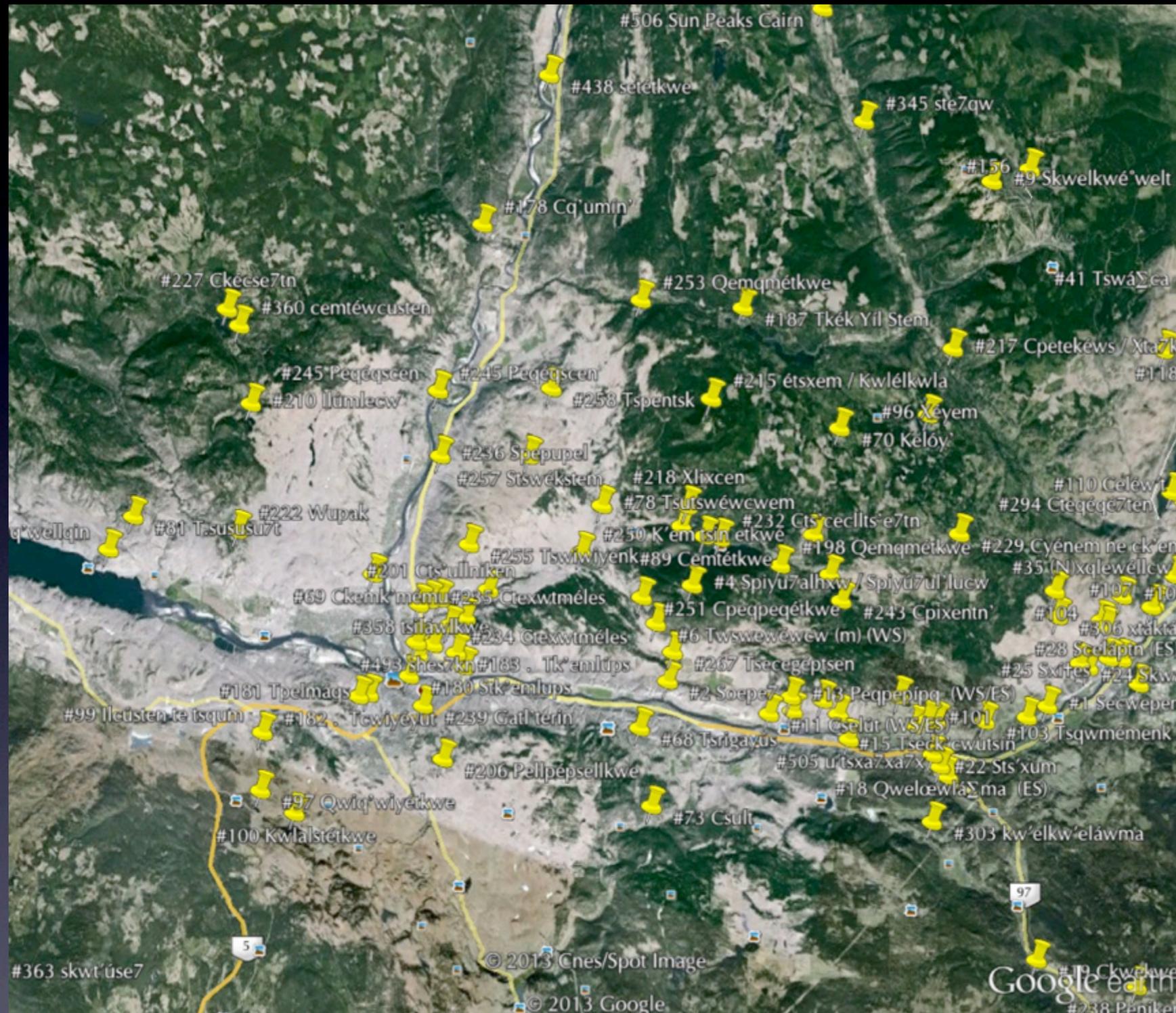
9 biogeoclimatic zones  
... many micro-habitats

# The Land is deteriorating

- Mary Thomas: “Everything is deteriorating – the surface of the soil where we used to gather our food, there's about 4-6 inches of thick, thick sod and all introduced [weeds and grasses]. And on top of that the cattle walk on it, and it's packing it to the point where there's very little air goes into the ground “



# Mapping and recording Secwepemc toponyms

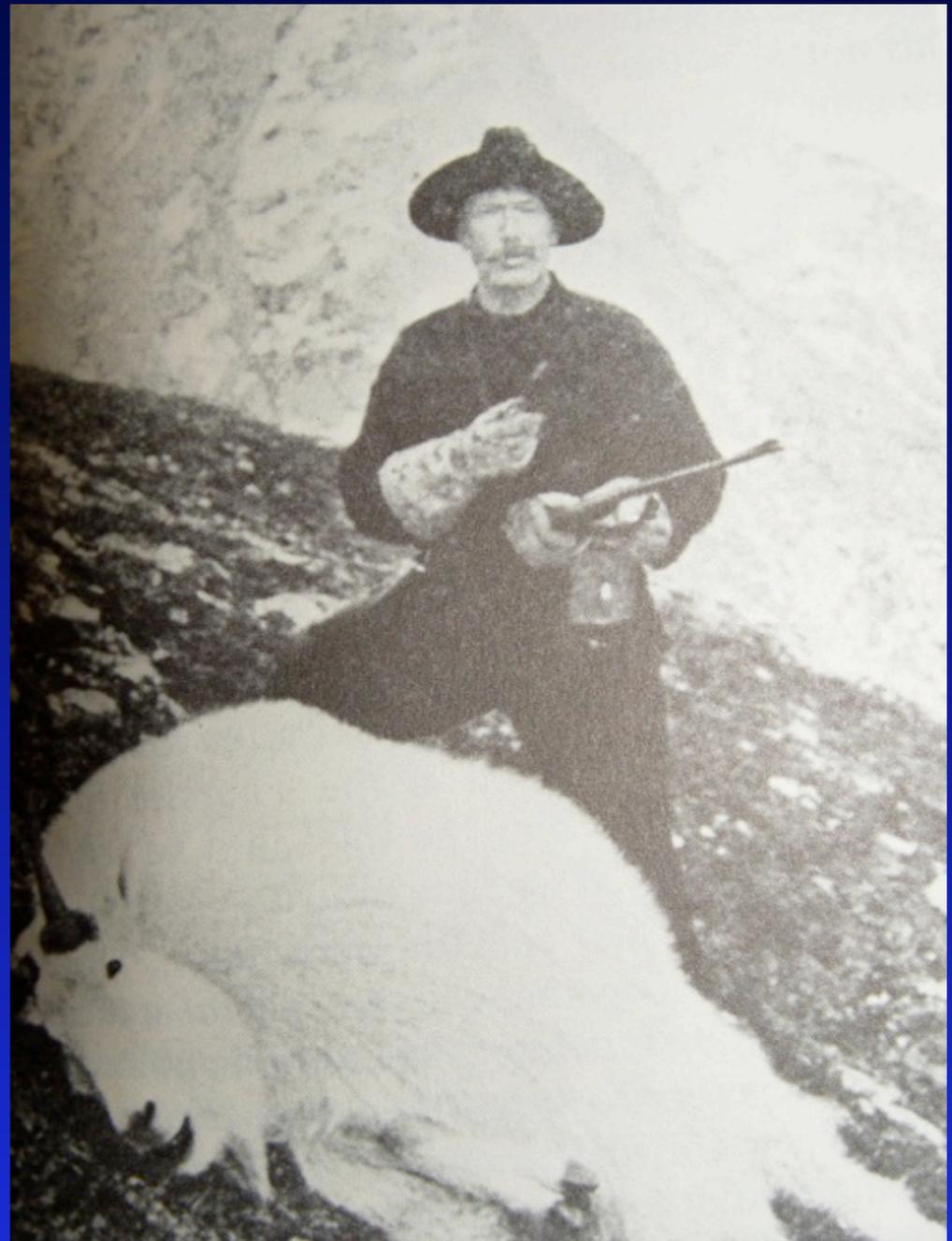


some 500+ names mapped so far - in total there are likely some 1,200-1,500. Some are inevitably lost.



George M. Dawson -  
Canadian Geological  
Survey - some 300  
names for  
Secwepemc and  
Interior Salish –  
1880s

## Earlier research



James A. Teit – ethnographic  
Research 1890s-1920s

<i>Indian name.</i>	<i>Name adopted, or description of place on the map.</i>	<i>Meaning given for Indian name.</i>
Spi-al-hw. ....	Eagle Hill.....	Eagle.
Spilim-āt'-lē-la. ....	Near mouth of Cāche Creek.....	Brook at the flat.
Spil-mā-moos .....	Maiden Creek .....	Little flat.
Spil-pāl'-nm'.....	Clinton Creek.....	Prairie flat.
Spit'-poo-tlum .....	Marble Cañon.....	Narrow valley which opens.
Spit-ti-kwous'.....	Pass from Hat Creek to Jack's Creek.....	The defile.
Stā-ai'-in or Ste-in.....	Stein Creek.....	
Stlim'-what-kwa. ....	Fraser River near Lillooet.....	Lillooet's river.
S'tl-pō'-mun.....	Upper part of Hat Creek valley.....	Opening out.
Swuz-uk-ain' .....	Botanie Mountain .....	
Tai-a-ka .....	Tai-a-ka Lake .....	
Ta-t'h. ....	Small stream 1 mile north of Fourteen-mile Creek.	
Ti-ni'-mia.....	Stump Lake.....	
Tik'-māx' .....	Tranquille River.....	Point (river).
Til-kwo-kwē'-ki-la .....	Tranquille River, near mouth.....	Name of a root.
Til-kwa-sī-shoo .....	One of the Red Lakes .....	
Titl'-whiloom .....	Three-mile Creek.....	
Tlirt-lī-put-ām' .....	Macaulay Creek .....	Balsam-spruce ravine.
Toon-kwa .....	Toon-kwa .....	Goose lake.
Tow-il-ta-kaī.....	Eight-mile Creek.....	Mountain brook.
Tshi-it'-lin-atum .....	Eating Lake.....	Eating.
Tshil-tshil'-nuts. ....	Lakes in Highland valley.....	Slightly saline.
Tshī-mīmt-sim.....	Blue Ravine.....	Washed out.
Tshī-poo-in. ....	Summit of pass near Chī'-poo-in Mountain.....	A cāche in the ground.
Tshī-wō'-us.....	Mountain 3 miles north of Za-kwas'-kī.....	
Tsho-ha-mous .....	Cayocsh Creek.....	
Tshoo-loos' .....	Name applied to Gulchon Creek.....	
Tshoo-whēla' .....	Choo-whēls' Mountain.....	Many ravines.
Tshū-tshū. ....	Murray Creek .....	
Tsi'-kwus-tum.....	Cāche Creek, lower part.....	Cracked rocks.
Tsil-tsālt .....	Tail-tsālt Ridge .....	
Tsin-tsoon'-ko .....	Tsin-tsoon'-ko Lake.. ..	Island lake.
Tsoo-tsi-wowh.....	Lytton Mountains .....	Streama.
Taco-weh' .....	Texas Creek.....	The stream.
Tsot-in-aut-kwa.....	Tsotin Lake.....	Rattle-snake lake.
Tsuk-ā-tā'-tum.....	Forks of Tranquille River .....	Red place (earth?).
Tsuk-tsuk-kwālk'.....	Reservation on North Thompson.....	Red place (trees).
Tauk-ōx .....	One of the Red Lakes.....	Red lake.
Tuk-a-mukēn' .....	At head of Criss Creek .....	Bare ground.
Tuk-too'-la-hum.....	Tuk-too'-la-hum Lake.....	Saline.
Wā-lia .....	Napier Lake.....	
Za-kwas'-kī .....	Za-kwas'-kī Mountain.....	

# Elders' Oral History reach back into the 19th century



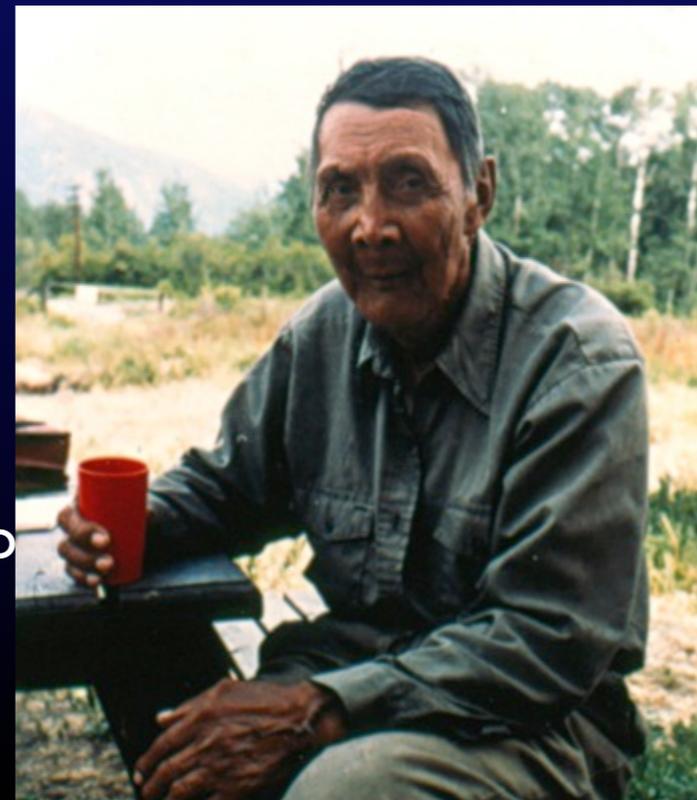
Ida William's and Josephine Wenlock's grandfather was George Sisylecw who told stories to Teit!



Francis Ignace knew stories from his grandmother, Cecile Melmenetkwe, born in the late 1830s



Louisa Basil knew stories about Tli7sa and his Brothers



Chris Donald

# working with elders in the 1990s and to present – focus groups in Skeetchestn, Williams Lake and southern communities



# What is named?

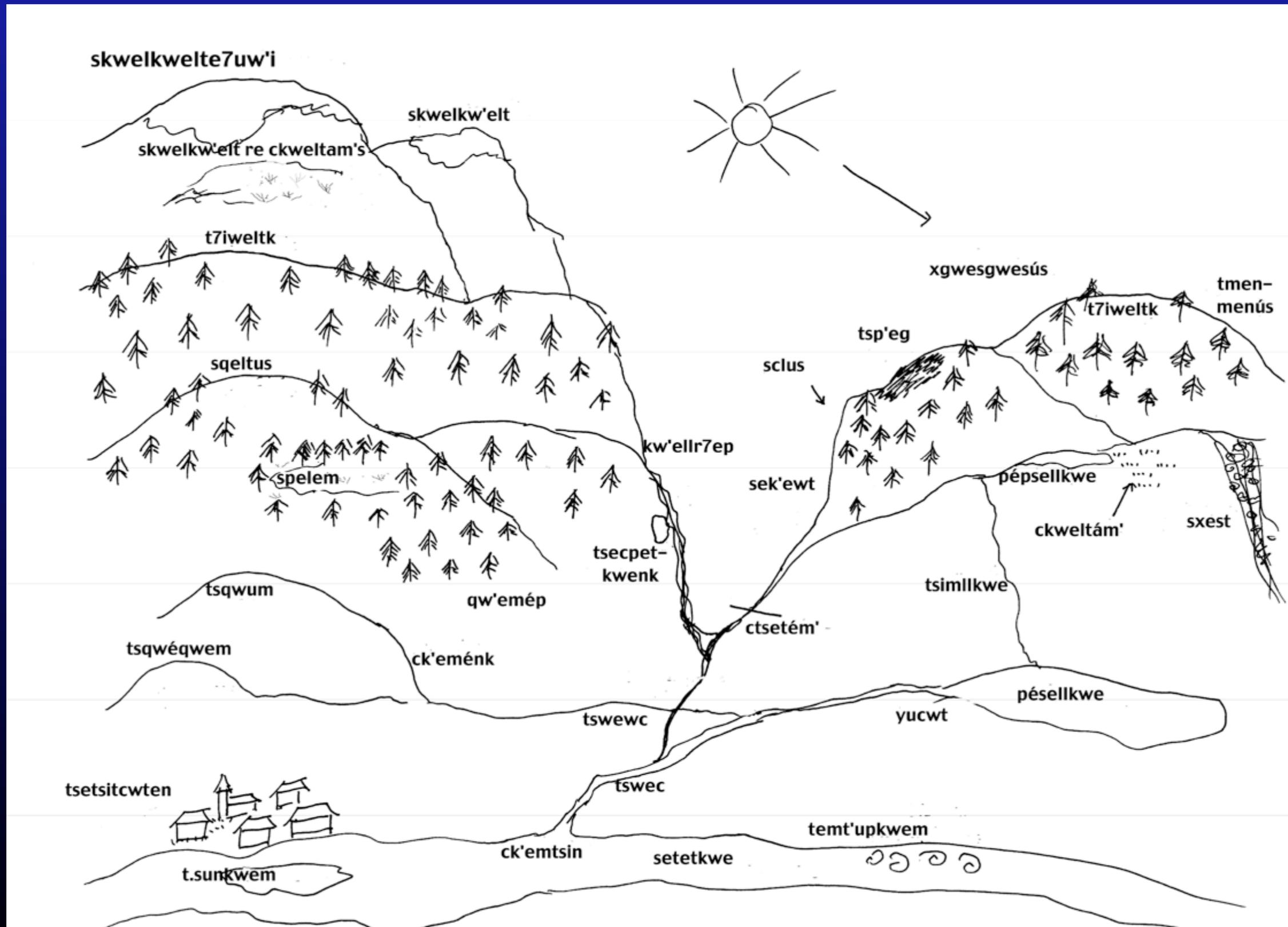
- place names describe the lay-out of the land conceptually, in the ways the language categorizes it, and people know it
- place names refer to important resource gathering areas (plant communities)
- place names reference resource gathering areas elliptically or metaphorically - and sometimes in relationship to something that happened there
- place names involve storied sites
- stories are lost, and ethnographers de-placed them
- a few place names are untranslatable and un-analysable - probably means they are very old
- a few place names are borrowed (Ts'wen)

# What is *not* named

*(entirely corresponds to principles and practices of indigenous place naming in other parts of North America and the rest of the world - Basso 1995, Hunn, Cruikshank, etc.)*

- no place name is after a “great man” - the way colonized spaces have been named
- no place name is overtly named after a person
- large or major geographical features in the landscape are often not named (Kamloops Lake, Shuswap Lake, Fraser River, Mountain ranges, e.g. Monashees, Selkirk, Rocky Mountains). Instead, particular places along these have names, “from point to point.”
- there are certainly ways to refer to the major rivers, lakes, creeks, mountain ranges by way of associating them with areas in Secwepemcul’ecw (Sexqéltk=upriver wutémtk=downriver; t7iwelk=on the plateau; sextsine = in the river valley; or referentially - e.g. xyemétkwe - “Big Lake”)

# Tslexemmúl'ecwem - Sense of Landscape



# And additionally.... demonstrative deixis

- Salish languages (and many other languages) are rich in a multi-dimensional inventory and system of demonstrative deixis that functions something like a “mental GPS” - it allows narrators to position themselves in a landscape in relationship to experience, action and events (levels: near me, near addressee, away from both of us; absent/present; visible/invisible; direction of movement, kind of movement).

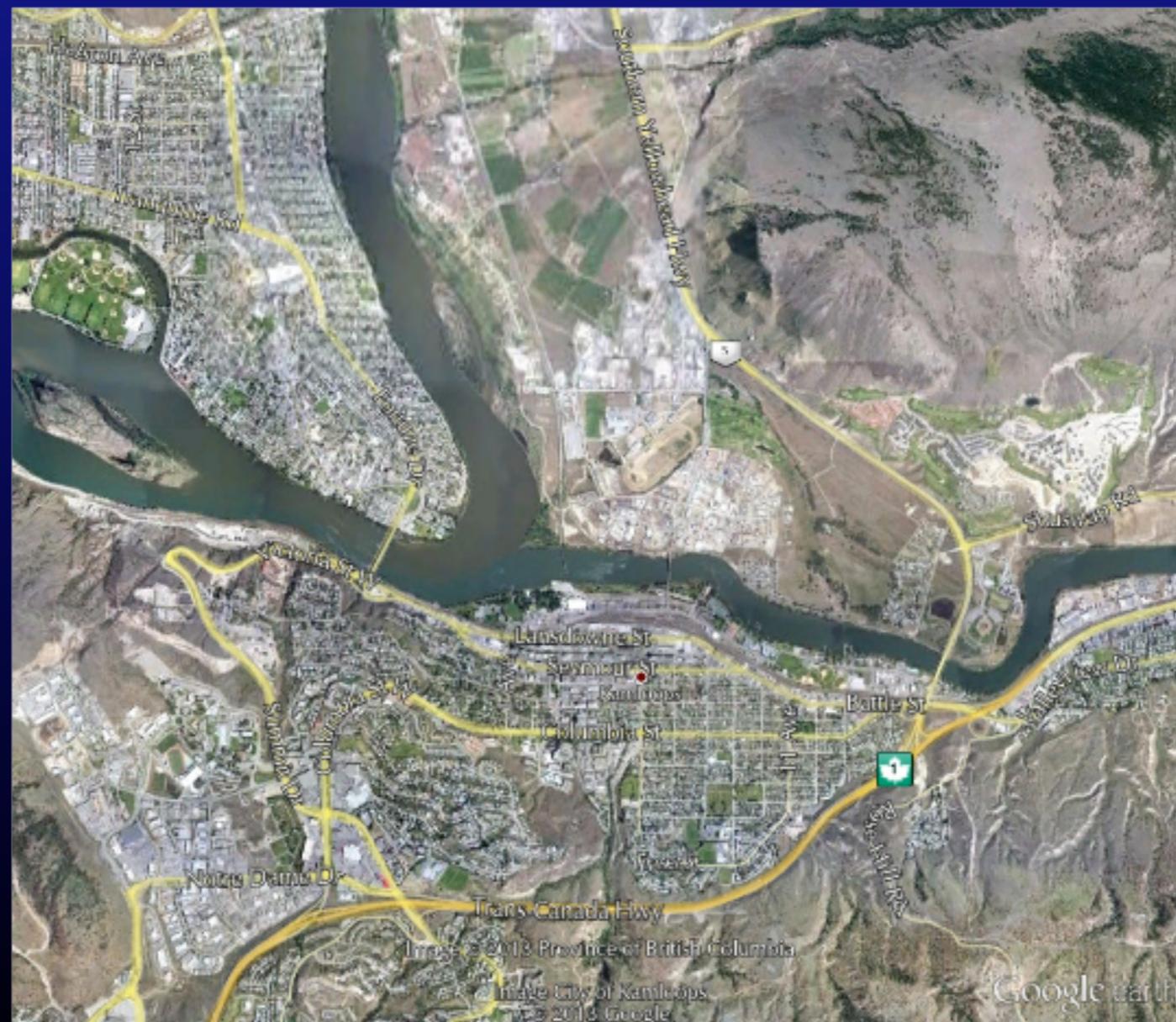
# How does place-naming work in Secwepemctsin?

- Place names that reference the “lay of the land” include a lexical prefix (t- “on top”, c- on the inside of, area; k’well - underneath; s- nominalizer) plus a lexical root (CVC, most often followed by a lexical suffix)
- body lexical suffixes are commonly used to “write the human body on the land” to describe landscape - “head”, “foot”, “nose-shape”, “back/ridge”, “hand/fingers”, “buttocks” - these are deployed creatively and poetically
- consonant reduplication is common in place names, distinguishing a member of a class (common noun) from a proper noun (e.g. tseqwtseqwélqw = red osier dogwood; tseqwtseqwélqwel’qw = place name)
- some place names use old lexical suffixes and prefixes no longer used in recorded spoken Secwepemctsin: n-prefix; l/ll stative infix; [é]xtsk lexical suffix for instrument

tsq'eyúl'ecw - how the land got  
*marked or written on* - and the  
connection to “writing” and “rights”

- tsq'ey' = marking, writing
- tsq'eyúl'ecwem = marking on the land
- yiri7 re stsq'ey's-kucw - it is written by the ancestors- it's marked, it is deeded; it's in writing. It's our right.

Tk'emlúps = t-k'em-l-úps -on top of+two  
surfaces (rivers) coming together at an  
angle, + perpetual marker -l + ups = high -  
buttocks ..... Kamloops





Ck'emqenétkwe - c- inside+k'em=two  
surfaces coming together at an angle +  
qen=head+etkwe = water  
“Scheidam Flats”





TK' eméqs - coming together at an angle  
+ nose shape

# Elliptical names

- subtly reference the seasonal round activities of people in a place without naming particulars: c7emtsín'ten = “sitting on the shore” = “setting up camp on the shore at a certain place on the North Thompson River to wait for spring salmon going by” - obviously to catch them
- c7emtúsem - “inside of/area+sit+at cliff/rockface+ intransitive process” - a guardian spirit training site in a particular area near Adams Lake



C7emtsín' ten - “sitting by the shore” -  
North Thompson River

# Kewkwéw' - “a drifting place where people do something” - Fishing Weir



This prehistoric fishing weir was in use for more than 1000 years between 1520 BP and 120 years ago, according to radiocarbon Dates obtained by Nicholas et. al (2002) fFrom a sampling of the more than 1,100 stakes that remain visible at Low water on the south Thompson. The site of this weir stretches more Than 1 mile from just west of Lafarge cement plant

# Resource producing locations

- often with prefix pell- “has”; “this is what people do here at a certain time”
- references some areas with prominent plant growth, but not in all cases
- many of these botanical sites have been changed
- a few place names, but not many, reference occurrence of animals

Pellqweq'wile - “has *Lomatium macrocarpum*” - flats at mouth of Tranquille River west of Kamloops



Google earth

feet 3000  
km 1



# Pellskwenkwikwnem' - "has Indian Potato" - *Claytonia lanceolata*



It now exists in name only

Pelltnilmen - “has Indian hellabore” -  
*Veratrum viride*





Story sites - Sésq' em - Chris Donald, Simpcw 1985-  
The spiritual site of a transformation – “Saskum Lake”



Sk' atsin - vomiting contest between Coyote and "cannibal" (Bouchard and Kennedy 1979)

# Stseq.qíqen' "they set it on top" - Balancing Rock - Theresa Jules 1998

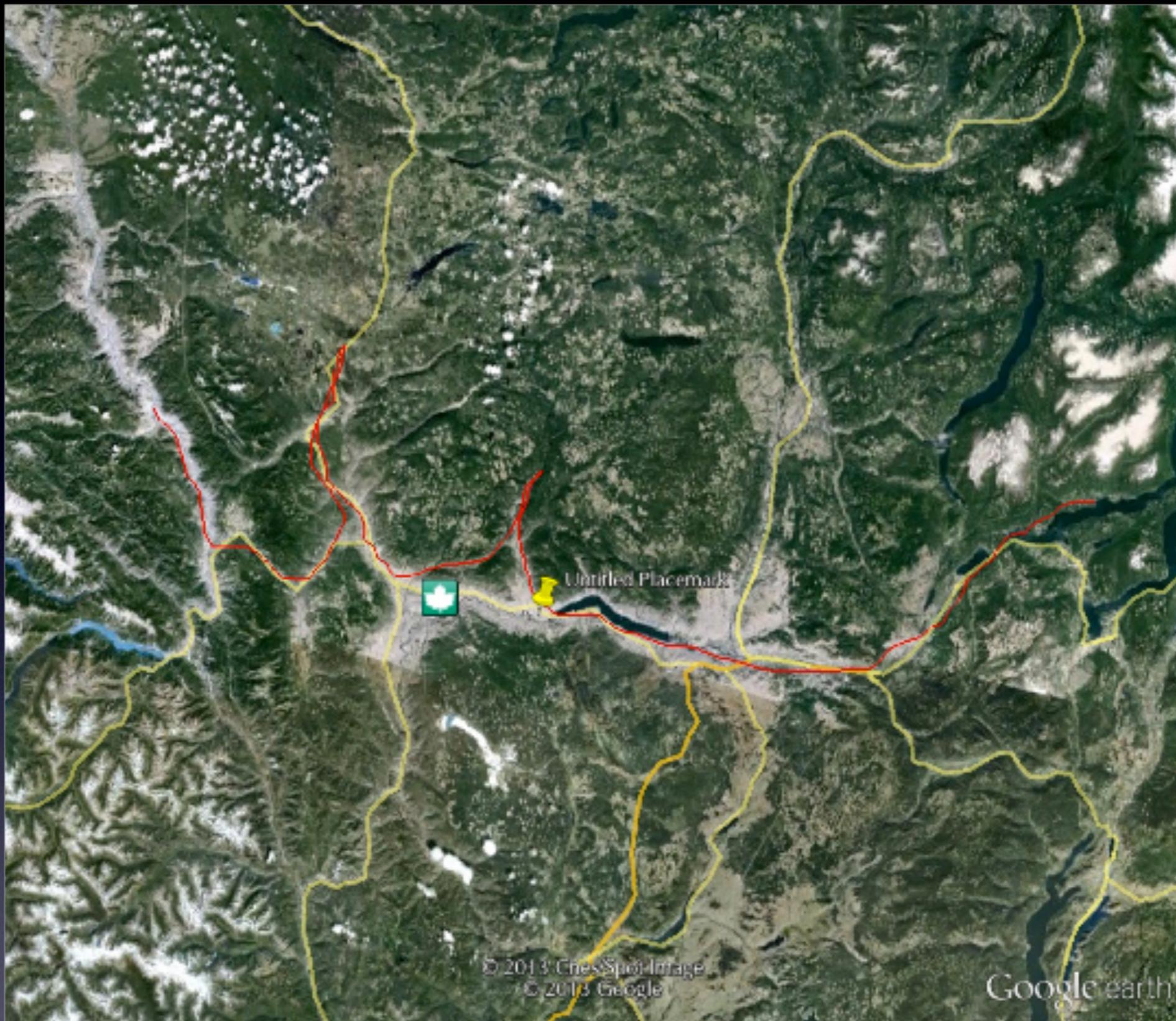


Not a Coyote Rock  
at all! Instead, a story of  
warfare between  
Secwepemc and Syilx!



# Travelling Transformers

- our triangulation of archaeological, historical linguistic, DNA, and oral history data suggests that around 5,000 years ago, Salish speaking people came into the Interior and melded with the “Coyote People” who were already living there.
- various oral history accounts of “transformers” [stsptékwle] exist.
- they left place names and marks on the land as part of their epic journey.



Google earth



# The Journey of Tlli7sa and his brothers

# Tkemk'mémq̓s “Hoffman’s Bluff”



# Sk'emqín - "Steelhead Park"



Sxwet'éqs - "Goat-nose" - "above the Husky [Gas Station] at Cache Creek"



# Spetpút'emten - “come out into the open” place (put') Marble Canyon



# Ncén'ctem - inside the stony hollow, the “Painted Chasm”





# Re-living epic journey, travelling, praying, celebrating and trying out storytelling



Challenge: Proposed  
Gold and Copper  
Mining around Pípsell -  
the lake of the Trout  
Children and the  
Water people



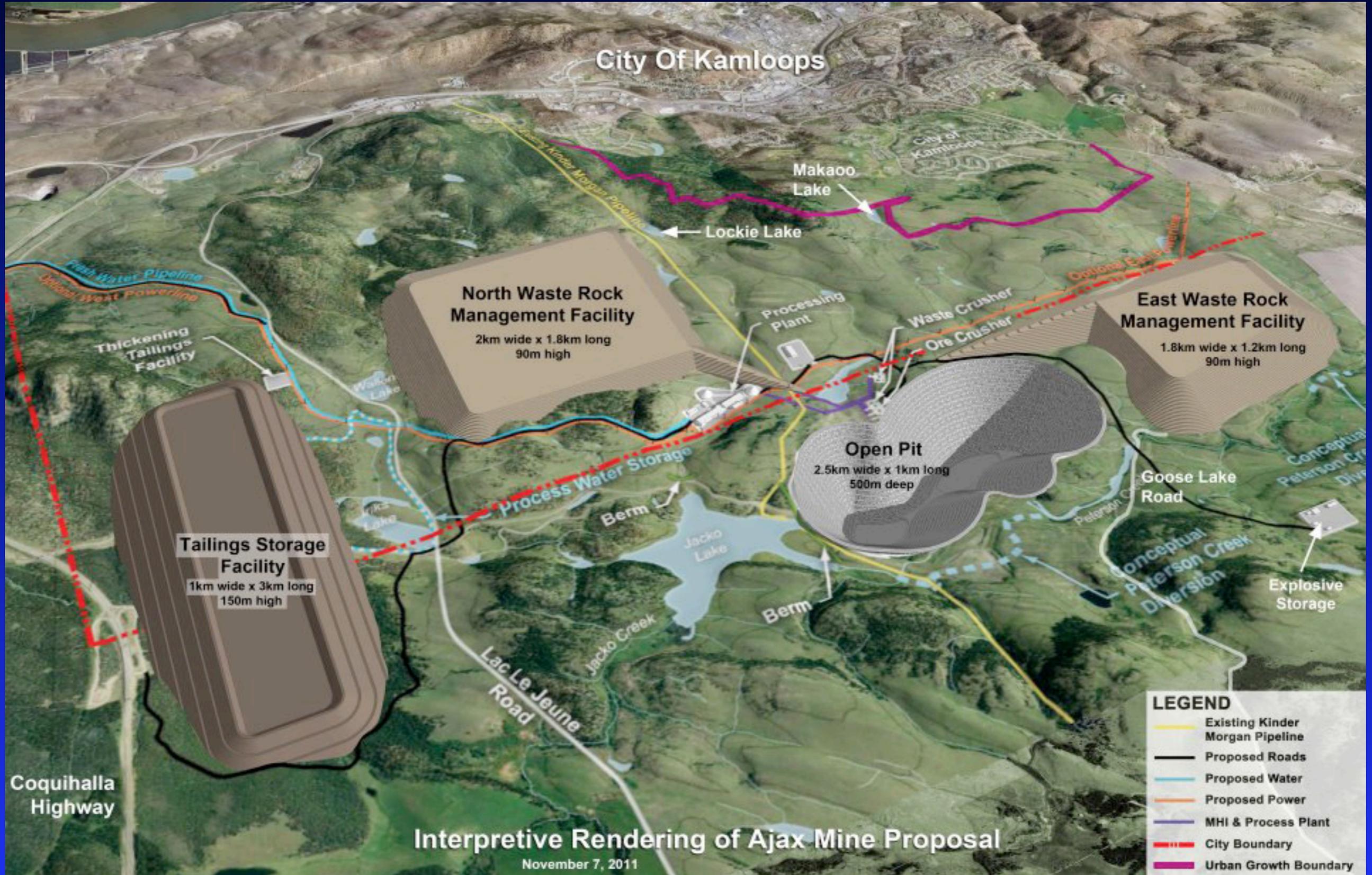
Pípsell - Jacko Lake

On the trail which leads from Kamloops toward Trout Lake (*Pip'-tsutl*), where it runs over the bare, grassy hills about a mile north of the crossing place of Peterson or Jacko Creek, the scanty remnant of an old stump protrudes from among a few stones which are piled about it. In passing this the Indians always throw some little offering upon it. When I saw it in 1890, several matches had recently been laid on the stump, and a fragment of tobacco or shred of clothing is often placed there. The name of this place is *Ka-whoo'-sa* ("crying"), and the Indians say that it nearly always rains when they pass, as though the sky wept. The story attaching to it is as follows:—

Long ago there was an old woman who was called, or represented in some way, a grizzly bear, and who had neither husband nor children and was very lonely. For the sake of companionship she procured some pitch and shaped from it the figure of a girl, which became her daughter. She strictly enjoined the girl, however, that when she went into the water to bathe she must not thereafter sit or lie in the sun to get warm. This special order the girl obeyed on three occasions, but on a fourth, overcome with curiosity and not understanding the reason of the injunction, she sat down on a stone in the sun,

Dawson 1892

Removed from location in Teit 1909; Kuipers  
1974; Bouchard and Kennedy 1979



# Yiri7 re skukwstép- kucw

- All the elders, past and present, who have shared their knowledge of Secwepemc place
- We thank: Skeetchestn Indian Band, Kamloops Indian Band, Adams Lake Band, High Bar First Nation, Simpcw FN, Shuswap Nation Tribal Council
- The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada