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Making the map speak: Indigenous animated cartographies as contrapuntal spatial representations

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 'That's what we're gonna use… their own medicine.' – Michael Kanentakeron Mitchell, *You Are on Indian Land* (1969)

Introduction: Maps as (colonial) power

With the discovery of the so-called 'New World' and the exploration of its lands by European nations, mapping became the ideal tool for comprehending and mastering the unknown territories that would become Canada and the United States of America. Teams of surveyors and cartographers explored the continent and participated in the vast enterprise of charting its terrain.[1] With the help of Indigenous communities, they sought paths westward, and transformed what they considered a wild and blank space into a legible mapped territory, opened for resource extraction and profit.[2] Cartography was an instrument of power, used to master the territory and inscribe its frontiers and resources. In the vein of Denis Wood, John Pickles, and J. B. Harley, this paper places itself within the strand of critical cartography that emerged in the 1980s with the aim to 'deconstruct the map'[3] by analysing maps as creative and ideological constructions making reality as much as representing it, shaping the political identities of the people inhabiting it.[4]

Maps were instrumental in the formation of a national narrative, constructing *an 'imagined, unified territory', as noted by Wood.*[5] *Conjuring borders where none existed in the 'New World', they represented the* 'graphic performance of statehood',[6] uniting disjointed regions and politically disparate people under one common spatial entity. This explains the crucial role performed by the surveying teams in the birth of Canada and the United States as colonies, and young nations later on. This role is mirrored in the place they play in the narrative of the 'Nation' formulated in films. Indeed, from the 1940s to the 1960s, the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada commissioned a series of documentary films about seminal cartographers, such as David Thompson and Vilhjalmur Stefansson, who charted Canada's Northern and Western territories.[7] The maps presented in these films depict Canadian territories as wide empty spaces, where only topographic characteristics stand out (such as rivers, lakes, and mountains).[8] Tracing the travels of the great explorers and the discoveries of the land's resources, they render all human – and more specifically Indigenous – traces invisible. Those films depict map-making as an objective rendering of natural features, coupled with an adventurous spirit for discovery. In *Land for Pioneers*, North America is described as a 'new world: a land that was rugged, vast, and empty', open for resource extraction, overshadowing any trace of colonial history. With this use of maps as instruments of propaganda, the NFB films 'settle' the 'Nation' for general consumption.
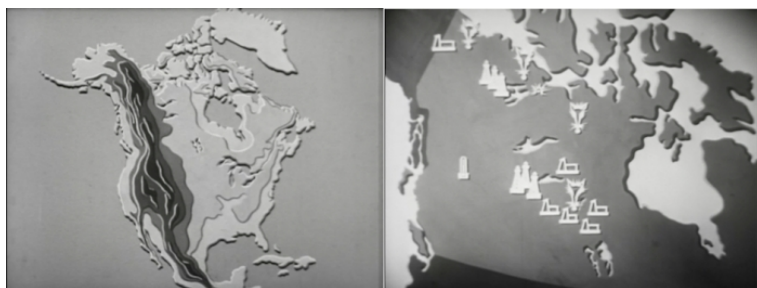

Fig. 1: National Film Board of Canada, Land for Pioneers ©1944 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.

Allowing colonial powers to control territories and extract their resources 'at a distance',[9] maps were the 'weapons of imperialism'.[10] Writing over the lived territories of Indigenous peoples, and imposing new geographies and borders, maps were tools for European empires and subsequent North American nations to claim lands and resources. This process was to the detriment

of the so-called 'primitive' other, deemed unable to understand the detached synoptic vision implied in the cartographic measures.[11] The control and oppression of Indigenous populations underlay the construction of Canada as a modern nation. Borders enabled the colonial powers to define who did or did not belong in the Nation, exercising control through what Jon Anderson calls the 'power to transform space'.[12] Influenced by the Foucauldian theories of power and space, critical geographers like Anderson, Harley, and Pickles have studied the ways in which maps coded subjectivities and imposed a dominant worldview upon Indigenous communities.[13] Gwilym Lucas Eades's *Maps and Memes* (2015) – among other recent publications – reveals the continuing influence of this critical turn. In it, he focuses on the impact of maps on Indigenous subjectivities and identities, writing that Indigenous reserves act as 'metaphors for the disciplining of Indigenous bodies' through spatial restrictions.[14] In turn, Eades and several other scholars turn to alternative forms of cartographies that enable Indigenous subjectivities, voices, and memories to be retrieved and represented.

Historical studies of Indigenous cartography are still relatively scarce (with Warhus, Lewis, and DeVorsey), although geographers have recently paid renewed attention to the potentials of digital cartography in land claims and political endeavours.[15] In this article, I offer to look at Indigenous mapping initiatives from the prism of documentary cinema and its activist potential. Through their documentary film practices, Indigenous filmmakers such as Alanis Obomsawin (1932-) and Michael Mitchell (birthdate unknown-) before her reveal the ideological and colonial underpinnings of maps, and restore an Indigenous experience within the national space of Canada. Using maps in their films becomes a way to claim land and resource rights, in what Matthew Sparke has termed a contrapuntal cartographic practice. However, if their films use the weapons of settler colonialism to subvert their intentions, how can Indigenous filmmakers create alternative cartographies, avoiding colonial frameworks of representation?[16] Therefore, I will also focus on alternatives to Western cartographic representations, using cognitive mapping to formulate a more embodied and personal conception of space and the land. Finally, I will problematise the very notion of 'counter-mapping', by reflecting on questions of ownership and control in relation to community collaboration in documentary filmmaking.

However, before delving into the subject, I need to address the socio-historical conditions of this analysis. As a European doctoral student living and working on unceded traditional Kanien'kehá:ka land in the city of Montreal

and doing research on the Indigenous appropriation of colonial tools of power and domination, I must acknowledge the fact that my own research takes place within a context of settler colonialism. With this article, I do not intend to provide a single and reductionist reading of the Indigenous films that I study. They originate from very different cultures and places, and cannot be reduced to one interpretation. Furthermore, they respond to very specific geographical, historical, and social contexts, and do not stand for Indigenous cinema in general.[17] My comparisons rely on their common use of cartography as an empowering tool for knowledge and land claim. Furthermore, this article encapsulates only a small portion of what Indigenous art is and can be. I hope this essay will encourage the reader to research the history of the land they live in on websites like native-land.ca or nativemaps.org. They provide powerful examples of Indigenous digital mapping, revealing the borders, reservations, and roads that overwrite the Indigenous lands and impose boundaries and separations where there were none.

Contrapuntal cartography: 'Using the master's tools to destroy the master's house'

Paralleling the growth of the Red Power and the American Indian Movements, in the late 1960s and 1970s an increasing number of Indigenous protests and occupations took place in Canada against the appropriation and exploitation of their land by the government and private companies. First Peoples developed counter-mapping initiatives to claim ancestral land and resources, mapping their own territory in order to construct legal proofs of their rights to the land. The most famous example of these initiatives is *The Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project*, published in 1976.[18] This three-volume mapping project documented Inuit hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering patterns, past and present, from an insider perspective. Covering 33 communities, it recorded their perceptions of their relation to the land, compiling data on 'history, place names, linguistics, subsistence techniques, campsites, and other cultural information'.[19] The Inuit maps went on to play a key role in negotiations with the state, functioning as evidence that enabled the communities to assert an Aboriginal title to the land known today as Nunavut. The Inuit became the earliest First Peoples to achieve self-government, inspiring many other counter-mapping Indigenous projects.[20] Such exam-

ples of Indigenous mapping paralleled a growing interest in critical cartography by professional geographers, influenced by feminist and post-colonial theories. Critical cartography, as defined by Jeremy Crampton and John Krygier, 'challenges academic cartography by linking geographic knowledge with power, and thus is political'.[21] It also calls for a more ground-up and diffuse movement, opening up the academic discipline to the people.[22] Informed by North American civil rights movements such as the American Indian Movement and the Red Power Movement,[23] in the late 1960s Indigenous groups began to react to the attempts of the government to assimilate them into the Canadian population and impose several massive projects on their lands such as the James Bay Hydroelectric Project (starting in 1974 on Cree and Inuit land in Northern Quebec) and the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Proposal (in Northern Alberta). Indigenous communities began to turn to maps as a tool for resistance.

However, I should note that although the mapping of Indigenous land was done for and with Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous professional cartographers, who mastered the necessary tools of cartographic representation, primarily completed the work. Mac Chapin, Zachary Lamb, and Bill Threlkeld stress that university researchers are more familiar with the scientific Western approach, lacking examples that incorporate traditional ecological knowledge in their method.[24] Besides, it allows the community to use their results to lobby governmental institutions and industries. However, in the end, the Indigenous viewpoint is incompletely represented, as the conventions remain Western ones.[25] Similarly, several of the films discussed here are directed and funded by cultural outsiders, in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Therefore, the question of education, training, as well as that of ownership and control of the end product, needs to be addressed. How can map-making truly become a community endeavour, employed and owned by Indigenous peoples?

In the 1960s, the National Film Board's Challenge for Change program voiced its commitment to social change for First Peoples by funding a series of films devoted to their situation, which contributed to a national debate over the politics of representation.[26] This dialogue, and the success of Colin Low's *Fogo Island* series, raised the question of community-controlled media. As a result, in 1968 the Challenge for Change program instituted its first Indian Film Crew (IFC), trained by the NFB and given the opportunity to make their own films. Although not directed by a member of the IFC, the documentary film *You Are on Indian Land* (1969) involved many of its members

and became one the greatest successes of the program. The film documents a protest by the Mohawk community of Akwesasne in Ontario, opposing unjust custom charges. It was shot by Mort Ransen after a member of the IFC, Michael Kanentakeron Mitchell (member of the Mohawk Nation), asked George Stoney (head of the Challenge for Change program) to dispatch a film crew there to record the events 'from the Indian viewpoint'.[27] Today, however, the NFB officially recognizes Mike Mitchell as the director of the film, troubling notions of authorship in relation to Indigenous collaboration.

Centred on questions of land rights and occupation, *You Are on Indian Land* opens with Mitchell asserting: 'this land is ours' and has been wrongfully appropriated and fragmented by arbitrary borders. Following this statement, an animated map of the reservation of Akwesasne (or St. Regis) with the voice-over of an Indigenous man situates the location and history of the place. The narrator describes the unjust duties imposed upon the Indigenous communities by the Jay Treaty and the custom houses:[28] '[t]hat line was not meant for Indians and our right to cross it with our belongings, paying no duty, was confirmed in the Jay Treaty of 1794.' On the map of the island, an animated line arbitrarily cuts through the Mohawk territory along the St Lawrence River. Here, state logic disrupts the logic of the land, as half of the territory is progressively marked as American, and the other Canadian. By animating the map, the filmmakers formulate an argument about the randomness and partiality of borders and the state's disregard for Indigenous cartographies. As Michelle Stewart writes:

> [t]he paradoxical power of this evidence is not that it is 'hard evidence' of an immutable boundary. Instead, it is the animation of the border that constitutes the 'proof' – on the one hand, that maps and borders are devices of political power and contestation, and on the other, that Mohawk lands have been arbitrarily divided and appropriated. Most importantly, the animation points to the way in which the act of filmmaking here is meant to write over the physical reality of these expropriated borders.[29]

Norman Thrower points out that animated maps 'approach the ideal in historical geography, where phenomena appear as dynamic rather than static events'.[30] Indeed, animating the demarcation of the border as a process enables Mitchell and Ransen to historicise this phenomenon and complicate its perception as a static and immutable line. Once animated, the border reveals its colonial and nationalist underpinning.
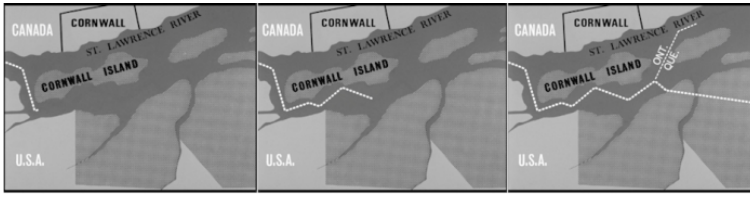
Fig. 2: Michael Kanentakeron Mitchell, Mort Ransen, You Are on Indian Land
©1969 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.

If this documentary uses cartography to reveal the absurdity of invisible borders, the barricades constructed by the Mohawks to block the access to the international bridge materialise the violence and concreteness of such boundaries. It is implied that sovereignty, for the Indigenous militant group, lies in the power to identify and demarcate a territory as their own, and assert their right to exercise control over it. As Bruno Cornellier writes:

'*You are on Indian Land: No Trespassing.*'By barricading (and thus signifying) the land as un-Canadian*and yet*Indian, they intervened in making ever so visible the binary opposition that is constitutive of settler colonialism and yet needs to remain invisible – that binary between Natives and Canada (or Québec) as mutual absence of each other.[31]

The blockade instituted by the Mohawks materialises the confrontation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Canada. If borders and boundaries are central to this film, they become a reminder of the political power implied in spatial delimitation, including and excluding populations from the settler colonial space.

With its critical and popular success, *You Are on Indian Land* soon became a model for the documenting of Indigenous protests and occupations in Canada. Almost three decades later, Alanis Obomsawin's film on the 1990 Oka crisis, *Kanehsatake, 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), similarly revolves around the visual trope of the barricade and the physical border.[32] The narrative of the film can be seen as organised along a series of building and destruction of barriers both by the Canadian army and the Mohawk groups (the protesters of Kanehsatake, the Mohawk Warriors, and the other Mohawk sympathisers of Kahnawake). Here again, the power to draw borders and exercise control is at stake, as both groups constantly try to find ways to circumvent the barricades and redefine new boundaries.

Fig. 3: Michael Kanentakeron Mitchell, Mort Ransen, You Are on Indian Land (left) ©1969 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved. Alanis Obomsawin, Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance (right) ©1993 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.

In both of these occupation films, Indigenous groups use the weapons of settler colonialism to subvert its intentions. 'That's what we're gonna use … their own medicine', declares Mike Mitchell in *You Are on Indian Land*, while brandishing a notice by the Director of Indian Affairs stating that all trespassers on Indian Reserves are guilty of an offence. Using 'the master's tools to dismantle the master's house' becomes the main way in which the Akwesasne residents claim and occupy their land. In 1995, Bernard Nietschmann declared:

> [m]ore Indigenous territory has been claimed by maps than by guns. And more Indigenous territory can be reclaimed and defended by maps than by guns.[33]

Maps – specifically animated maps – can indeed become a weapon in the hands of Indigenous activist groups to fight for the recognition of their rights to the land. In *The Space of Theory*, Matthew Sparke refers to such reappropriations and subversion of Occidental maps as 'contrapuntal cartography', inspired by Edward Said's 'contrapuntal reading' of colonial literature. In the vein of Said, Sparke describes the way that Indigenous mappings, when superimposed onto the contemporary Canadian landscape, can introduce ruptures in the dominant colonial discourse and break down any singular and unidirectional reading of the national space. The confrontation of those two types of mappings reveal 'the palimpsest produced by the whole series of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial inscriptions',[34] rather than producing a 'cartographic national anthem'.[35] The ambivalence described by Sparke is similarly at the core of *You Are on Indian Land* and *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. Both films confront two different visions of one space, colonial and pre/post-colonial, thereby breaking down the imperialist dis-

course of land appropriation and exploitation. They do not try to fully dismiss the official national cartography but present a contrapuntal reading that introduces dissonance and heterogeneity. If Sparke focuses on the context of the courtroom and the legal disputes over Indigenous land rights, I offer to expand his approach of contrapuntal cartography to the ways in which Indigenous filmmakers use animation to subvert colonial maps and offer an alternative, multivocal cartography of the Nation(s).

The appropriation of colonial documents (including maps, photographs, paintings, films, and written declarations) plays a significant role in many of Alanis Obomsawin's documentaries. In them, the Abenaki director often includes historical and geographical sections where she presents archival documents that depict the colonisation and oppression of Indigenous lands and peoples in Canada and the United States.

Fig. 4: Alanis Obomsawin, Is the Crown at War with Us? ©2002 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.

In *Kanehsatake*, for example, she retraces the arrival of French colonisers on Indigenous sites that were to become Montreal, and the appropriation of land and resources that forced communities out of their homes. In this section, Obomsawin's voiceover subverts the historical documents and reveals their oppressive nature. She uses those as instruments to subvert state power and colonisation. To them, her films oppose counter-evidences of land rights in the form of Indigenous maps. In *Kanehsatake*, a Wampum belt functions as

an evidence of an early map of the Indigenous territory, while *Our Nationhood* (2003) contrasts the drawing of a Mi'gmaq grand chief representing the Mi'gmaq nation and its seven districts to a westernised map.

Fig. 5: Alanis Obomsawin, Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance ©1993 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.

Fig. 6: Alanis Obomsawin, Our Nationhood ©2003 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.

For Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins, Obomsawin's revisionism 'here serves not only to disclose or rectify the past but to reveal how history continues to repeat itself', through the failure of officials to recognise treaties and land rights.[36] As such, the title of her film recalls a history of oppression and avoids a representation of the Oka crisis as an isolated event, but rather part of a longer genealogy of resistance.

In an interview with Christine McDonald, Obomsawin declares that if each of her films contains a historical section that contextualises the community she documents,

> [it] comes from the fact that people are not educated about the history. And it falls on our back to educate people.[37]

Indeed, she often stresses her role as an educator, and the power of her films to bring light to communities often overlooked by the government and mainstream narratives of the Nation. Her films carry the trace of this commitment to education. Re-reading history enables her, and the communities she works with, to re-write an alternative geography of Canada, reclaiming,

for example, Indigenous names. This form of corrective education is in-debted to and inscribed in a tradition of post-colonial pedagogy, focusing on how imperial knowledge has estranged colonised subjects from themselves. Restoring an Indigenous subjectivity, in turn, implies a deconstruction of co-lonial texts and images, which is one focus of Mitchell and Obomsawin's films.

However, Bruno Cornellier stresses in his article on 'Obomsawin's Indi-anness' the complexity of the relation between education and media images in these films, as such images function both as tools of decolonization, and 'instruments of colonial control'.[38] Rather than the burden of representa-tion, he implies that Indigenous filmmakers are confronted with the 'burden of education'. With the films of Mitchell and Obomsawin, funded by the NFB in order to give a voice to a discriminated community, 'the state's benevo-lence requires the Native or the minority subject to educate an allegedly neu-tral and indistinct "public"' in return'.[39] 'Giving voice' to the voiceless al-lows the NFB to obtain a mediator in the figure of the filmmaker, capable of 'restoring the communicational rupture' assumed to be responsible for the Oka crisis.[40] With this in mind, the NFB's involvement with the financing and distribution of Indigenous documentaries appears to be a tool of govern-mentality that captures the Indigenous experience within the national frame. Produced and distributed by a national institution, while denouncing the co-lonial and imperialist underpinning of Canada, the films of Mitchell and Obomsawin are embedded in the dual move of contrapuntal cartography. Indeed, they produce alternative readings of the national space from the in-side, while addressing (in more and less straightforward ways) the contradic-tions and compromises it implies. Their films, and the discussions and de-bates that followed, embody the tactics and negotiations of using 'the master's tools to dismantle the master's house', both in terms of cartographic norms and funding.

Lastly, if Obomsawin and Mitchell use maps to reveal their colonial ide-ology and the violence that they inflict on Indigenous bodies, I want to nu-ance this type of resistance through appropriation. Although they manage to claim archival and cartographic materials as proofs of the spatial violence of colonial states, and Indigenous rights to the land, they remain within the realm of Western cartographic conventions. How can Indigenous filmmak-ers provide alternative ways to map one's territory and experience, avoiding to be subsumed in a colonial framework of representation? In his study of Native American maps, Mark Warhus writes that Indigenous mapping was

originally primarily oral, often illustrated by transitory drawings. Mapping was one way to inscribe one's experience of the world, and took the form of stories of interaction between man and nature: '[r]outes, landmarks, sacred sites, and historical events formed a "mental map" that wove together geography, history, and mythology.'[41] As we will see, mental maps are perhaps more fitting to represent Indigenous spatial imaginations and representations than traditional Western criteria.[42] If Indigenous maps are fundamentally embodied and performative, how can film provide an appropriate medium to depict them?

Mental maps and animated cartography: The lived experience of settler colonialism

In Adam Loften and Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee's short documentary *Counter Mapping* (2018), Jim Enote, a Zuni farmer and director of the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center in New Mexico, declares:

> [t]o assume that people would look at the earth only from a vantage point that is above and looking straight down doesn't consider the humanity of living on the landscape. Saying that there's a pond, there are cattails, there are turtles in that water – that is a different view that expands the human experience of a place.

A central concern of Indigenous mapping, as stressed by Margaret W. Pearce, is the question of expressing 'the geographies of human experience and place in the map', far from a view of the land from above, devoid of life and interactions.[43] How can a map become a testimony of the Indigenous experience and subjectivity? An answer to this question lies in the practice of cognitive, or mental, mapping. This type of map-making, simply put, captures the representations of people's perception of an area, of their 'imaginary relationship to [their] *real* conditions of existence'.[44] Originally developed in relation to the urban experience of a fragmented space, it was then used in various situations as an alternative to scientific cartography.[45] For her video installation *Memory Cards* (2013), Mohawk artist Hannah Claus, member of the Tyendinaga Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte (birthdate unknown-), collaborated with First Nation communities from Carleton-sur-Mer, Listuguj, and Gesgapegiag in Quebec. She invited people to draw personal maps of familiar places of their choice (their 'favourite territories'), and filmed the process of their drawing. Using a self-constructed apparatus, she filmed their drawings'

evolution through (slightly transparent) paper. As a result, one can see the image appearing out of nowhere, and our eyes follow the animated line traced by the pencil with a sense of indeterminacy. Sometimes, the drawer's hand casts a shadow on the paper, giving a sense of embodiment and diffuse presence to the maps. Her installation, a floor-based projection, superimposes two drawings or more, creating a play of transparency and inscription. Refusing a single interpretative frame, the superimposition of images insists on the communal aspect of counter-cartography and on the multiplicity of perceptions of a given space.
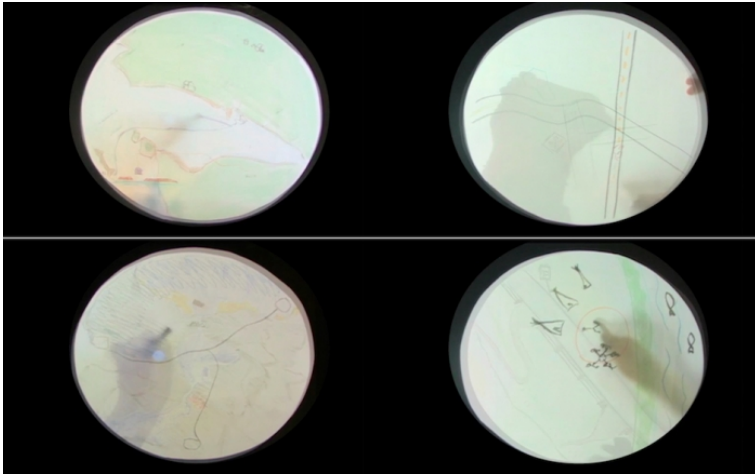

Fig. 7: Hannah Claus, Memory Cards, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

Here, the film depicts map-making as a subjective process, and not simply a product. The original French title of her work, *Cartes Mémoires*, explicitly links maps (*cartes*) to memory and subjectivity. In the hands of non-professional communities, they become a tool for thinking about space in an embodied and personal way, cut off from scientific measurements and objectivity. With her work, Hannah Claus returns to the Indigenous tradition of map-making illustrating one's personal stories. The performative aspect of Indigenous maps is further transmitted through the immediacy of the apparatus, and the use of film as a recording device. Rather than an argument about land ownership and use, *Cartes Mémoires* presents a more intimate framework, transcribing the subjectivity and memories of the community against their erasure by official state maps as noted by Eades. Furthermore, Claus complicates the colonial state's demarcation and bordering of Indigenous territory. Rather than conforming to scientific cartographic codes, the circular shape of

the paper allows for an alternative representation of space. Whereas some maps mirror the format of the frame and use a circular composition, most of them seem to bleed out of the framed space and expand in the mind of their maker.

By giving the means of animated cartography to Indigenous communities, Hannah Claus and other filmmakers claim a new kind of representation of space, one that includes different bodies and experiences and contains the potential to threaten a colonial geography. In one scene of Jack Pettibone Riccobono's (birthdate unknown-) controversial documentary *The Seventh Fire* (2015), William 'Bill' Brown, an Ojibwe community member of the White Earth Indian Reservation (Minnesota) draws a map of the reservation to help the filmmaker locate Rob Brown, the person he is looking for. This scene is shortly followed by an aerial shot of the land in question, which starkly opposes the imagined and lived geography with the synoptic view characteristic of American survey teams.[46]
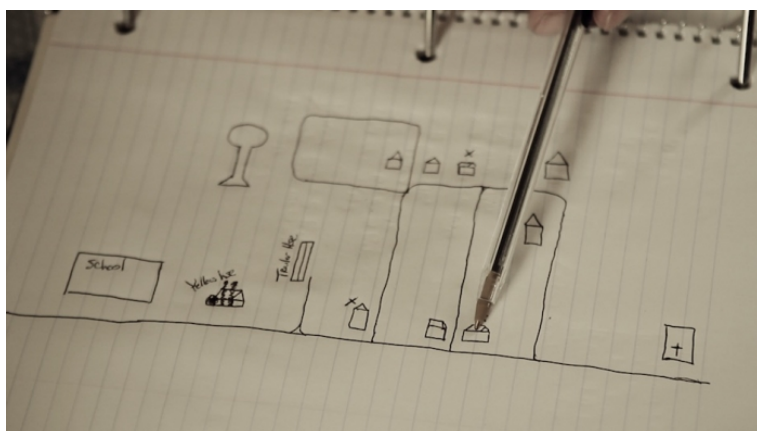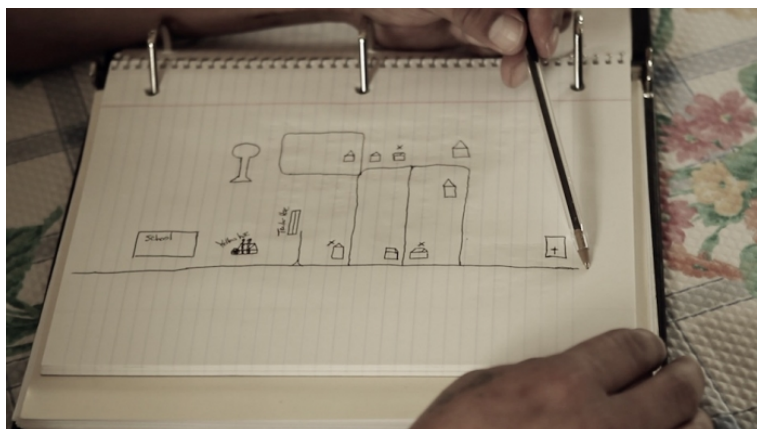
Fig. 8: Jack Pettibone Riccobono, *The Seventh Fire*, 2015. © All Rights Reserved.

Against the disembodied, impersonal rendition of the reservation, character-istic of official governmental maps, this scene conveys the experience and perception of a colonial space from the inside. It reintroduces subjectivity (not only the narrator's but also the people he mentions) into the spatial im-aginary of the reservation. Through the drawing and the voice of the map-maker, we are also told an indirect narrative of Rob Brown: where he lives, who he is close to and visits often, his habits, etc. The voice, followed by the movements of the camera over the drawing, directs us through the space of the reserve in a linear way, similar to the panning of Obomsawin's camera over the historical documents she is commenting on. The question of scale and perspective, as noted by Martin Mitchell, is at the centre of an Indigenous approach to mapmaking.[47] In Obomsawin's and Riccobono's films, cartog-raphy becomes a way to emphasise the relationality inherent to space, the links between places, people, and things, as Jim Enote describes in *Counter Mapping*:

> [m]odern maps don't have a memory. For me, the whole landscape around here is home. I have patterned languages that help me to remember how I get from one place to another. I go to my field in the summer. I collect wood in the fall and winter. I may be pinion picking or going to collect tea. This whole constellation of what makes up a map to me has always been far beyond a piece of paper.

If, as we have seen, the animation of maps in documentary cinema becomes a tool to subvert settler colonial discourses and claim Indigenous rights to the land, voice-over seems to be the ideal means to introduce Indigenous subjec-tivities in the map-making process. In her 1971 animated film *Christmas at*

Moose Factory, Obomsawin asks a group of Cree children of the Algonquin nation to draw familiar places, while recording their oral description of the scenes. Opening the film, she says: '[h]ere, they speak with their drawings about life around them and how they feel when Christmas time comes.' Moving in and out of the drawings with close-ups and panning shots, Obomsawin's camera follows the children's narrations of daily events, favourite pastimes, and Biblical tales. Through it, she animates the otherwise static drawings, while remaining faithful to the children's choices. To their voices, she adds recorded sounds from their surroundings, like songs, animal noises, wind, radio excerpts, etc. Drawing, sounds, and narration become entangled tools to depict an Indigenous perception of space. Similar to *The Seventh Fire*, *Christmas at Moose Factory* indirectly produces a cartography of a colonial space that is imprinted by Catholicism and educational institutions. In opposition are the tales of daily life and traditions, transmitted performatively through the filmic medium.

Conclusion

Whether they are artistic projects, educational documents, or community endeavours to be used in a land claim, Indigenous mappings and counter-mappings disrupt colonial spatial strategies. They provide alternative representations of the land and its impact on its inhabitants, subverting national and colonial borders. Cinema is a powerful tool to bring visibility to a community and formulate its own (spatial) representation. On film, maps become more than static images and take on the performative potential of orality. Indeed, all the films discussed in this piece tend to return to oral forms of spatial representation, confronting two modes of inscription: oral and written, performative and static. Through this, they counter the silencing of Indigenous voices by colonial cartography.

Whether they are screened in festivals, official national channels, or in the space of museums (as with *Cartes Mémoires*), they were all created for and by the communities they depict and share a common political concern for land rights and use. Critical and mental maps allow Indigenous communities to return the colonial gaze by 'producing new ways of seeing, new readings of the past, as well as new images of inter-racial looking relations'.[48] The development and democratising of the access to digital technologies and online mapping systems opens the possibility for the growth of Indigenous

counter-mapping projects and their complete ownership by the community. However, one must be prudent with the appropriation of these tools, which remain within the frame of Western representation. The future of a non-Westernised Indigenous mapping may lie in a return to oral forms of spatial representation, combined with a practice of cognitive mapping, in the vein of what Gwilym Lucas Eades terms 'place-memes': 'durable, but ever-evolving, cultural constructs made, essentially, out of stories', containing information about a place.[49] Transmitted intergenerationally from peer to peer, this knowledge about place is fundamentally oral, performative, and durable. In this concept, Eades sees the potential for Indigenous mappings to look to the future and influence youths by reconnecting them to their spatial belongings. This, in turn, could unsettle the colonial geography of Canada and its spatial violence. Although the distribution system set up in the films discussed here does not follow the vertical model of transmission described by Eades, as they are mostly transmitted horizontally, the potential of Indigenous mappings to be transmitted from peer to peer can be fulfilled through new practices of online mapping. Today, counter-mapping initiatives are developed on the model of earlier ones on the Internet, opening vast potentials for contrapuntal and mental cartographies.[50]

Author

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Notes

[1]   See Felipe Fernا[]ndez-Armesto. 'Maps and Exploration in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries' in Woodward 2007, pp. 738-759.

[2]   See Lewis 1998, pp. 14-26; and Short 2009, on the collaboration of Indigenous peoples and Western explorers in the 16th century onward.

[3]   Harley 1989.

[4]   See for example Crampton 2001 and Pickles 2004.

[5]   Wood 2010, p. 31.

[6]   Ibid., p. 32.

[7]   The National Film Board produced, among others: Bernard Devlin, *David Thompson: The Great Mapmaker*, 1964, 28 min.; *Stefansson: The Arctic Prophet,* 1965,16 min.; also *Land for Pioneers*, 1944, 14 min.

[8]   For a discussion of the politics of production of wilderness and emptiness by colonial empires, see Banivanua-Mar 2010.

[9]   Eades 2015, p. 80.

[10]   Harley 1988, p. 282.

[11] See Cosgrove 2008, p. 91: '[c]olonists took the view that the Native American population was so much a part of nature (literally savages: "of the woods") that its members were incapable of intellection. Even their most sympathetic observers deemed the disembodied, synoptic vision implied in the geometrical measure of European cartography beyond them.'

[12] Anderson 2009, p. 76.

[13] Early colonial maps of Canada use blank spaces in lieu of the traditional Indigenous settlements, constructing these spaces as natural and objective facts, ready for appropriation. These maps operate what Cole Harris terms a 'cartographic erasure' (Harris 2002).

[14] Eades 2015, p. 88.

[15] See Chapin et al. 2005, Johnson et al. 2005, Hunt 2014, Taylor 2014, as well as journal special issues like *Cartographica*'s Volume 47, No. 2, 'Indigenous Cartographies and Counter-Mapping' (2012), and *Cultural Geographies*' Volume 16, No. 2, 'Indigenous Cartographies' (2009).

[16] While I am aware that the word 'cartography' risks subsuming Indigenous mappings under Western notions, I choose to refer to these spatial representations as 'cartographies' in an attempt to stress the 'shared space' that Indigenous and Western representations inhabit, and through which they can be compared and translated. As Johnson, Louis, and Pramono stress, the assertion of such a 'shared space' requires 'the recognition that distinct knowledge systems are locally produced and not "universal", as Western science has claimed'. (Johnson et al. 2005, p. 85)

[17] For a discussion of the 'burden of representation' imposed on minorities – and Indigenous artists and filmmakers in particular – see Ella Shohat, and Robert Stam, 'The Burden of Representation' in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media,* 2nd ed (London-New York: Routledge, 2014: 182-188).

[18] Freeman 1976.

[19] Chapin et al. 2005, p. 624.

[20] A note on terminology: Inuit communities, as Métis communities, do not consider themselves part of Canadian 'First Nations'. Here, I choose the term 'First Peoples' to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, as used by Lorna Roth in *Something New in the Air: The Story of First Peoples Television Broadcasting in Canada* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

[21] Crampton & Krygier 2005, p. 11.

[22] Ibid., p. 12.

[23] Wood 2010, pp. 129-130.

[24] Chapin et al. 2005, p. 629.

[25] See Chapin et al. 2005, p. 2005.

[26] See Stewart 2007 and Baker et al. 2010.

[27] Rosenthal 2010, p. 173.

[28] The Jay Treaty, signed in London in November 1794 between the United States and Britain, stipulates that merchants and Aboriginal people from both countries would have free access to lands on either side of the border.However, the treaty installed duties on goods, which the demonstrators challenge in the documentary. The Indigenous blockade was successful, as Ottawa agreed to recognise the right to duty-free passage in 1969. However, in 2001, the debate was reopened, and the Supreme Court of Canadaruled that the right to cross the border without paying duty is not an establishedAboriginal right. From an early period, treaty making practices between the Canadian government and First Peoples have defined the relations between both parties in terms of land property and mutual recognition. Cartography was and still is at the core of this practice of self-definition and national recognition. *You Are on Indian Land* is the first of a long line of Indigenous films documenting protests against older, unjust, and unequal treaties. Treaties are a cen-

tral part of the political cartographies of colonialism that frame First Peoples filmmaking in Canada, and would deserve a separate intervention. For a historical map of Canadian treaties, see 'Historical Treaties of Canada', *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada* (accessed 12 November 2018), http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/htoc_1100100032308_eng.pdf.

[29] Stewart 2007, p. 62.

[30]   Quoted in Fidotta 2014.

[31] Cornellier 2012, p. 8.

[32] One could also note her previous film *Incident à Restigouche* (1984), but also Nettie Wild's *Blockade* (1994).

[33] Quoted in Wood 2010, p. 135.

[34] Sparke 2005, p. 19.

[35] Ibid., p. 4.

[36] Martins & Lúcia 2009, p. 159.

[37] McDonald 2004, p. 36.

[38] Cornellier 2012, pp. 2-3.

[39] Ibid., p. 4.

[40] Ibid., p. 11.

[41] Warhus 1997, p. 8.

[42] Mitchell 2014.

[43] Pearce 2008, p. 17.

[44] Jameson 1991, p. 51.

[45] See Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960).

[46] See note 9 (Cosgrove 2008), and James Corner and Alex MacLean, *Taking Measures: Across the American Landscape* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996).

[47] Mitchell 2014.

[48] Kaplan 1997, p. 219.

[49] Eades 2015, p. xix.

[50] A model of Canadian digital mapping following the line of mental maps is the website 'Ota Nda Yanaan, We are Here', led by Michelle Smith in collaboration with the people of Camperville, Quebec. There, the reader can navigate the space of Camperville and discover the Michif language through recordings of elders about the places they inhabit. Smith declares that she 'see[s] it as a political act of reclaiming a place through the language, stories and experiences of the people who inhabit it' (http://www.otandayanaan.net).