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SESSION 2.2: Mapping and Managing Cultural Landscapes in Secwepemcúl’ecw

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Mapping and Managing Cultural Landscapes in Secwepemcúl’ecw

The mountains, grasslands and waterways of Secwepemcúl’ecw are landscapes of intersection, connecting people, resources and ideas for millennia. Today, these landscapes remain vital to Secwépemc cultural, political and economic life. Like other landscapes across British Columbia, this area also exists at the intersections of multiple resource extraction projects, which have impacted indigenous peoples’ abilities to access, protect and make decisions on their lands.

This paper discusses recent research by Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc (TteS), in Kamloops, BC, to document cultural heritage values and assess impacts in relation to an impending resource extraction project. Rather than taking a conventional, site-specific approach to impact assessment, the TteS research team developed an innovative landscape-level approach to recording cultural values across the territory. Grounded in local protocols and community verification, this methodology brought together Secwépemc oral histories, digital maps of contemporary land use, and historical, archaeological and environmental data to produce a rich understanding of the spatial and temporal relationships between cultural values, practices and places.

Data analysis revealed seasonal use patterns across 10 geographically distinct – but connected – areas, which the research team called Secwépemc cultural landscapes. Each cultural landscape was associated with a discrete set of cultural values, practices and resources critical to maintaining the integrity of that area. The concept of interconnected Secwépemc cultural landscapes helped the research team reframe impact assessment to highlight how impacts to one landscape element could have a ripple effect throughout Secwepemcúl’ecw. This study also has broader implications for TteS approaches to resource management, community planning and governance.