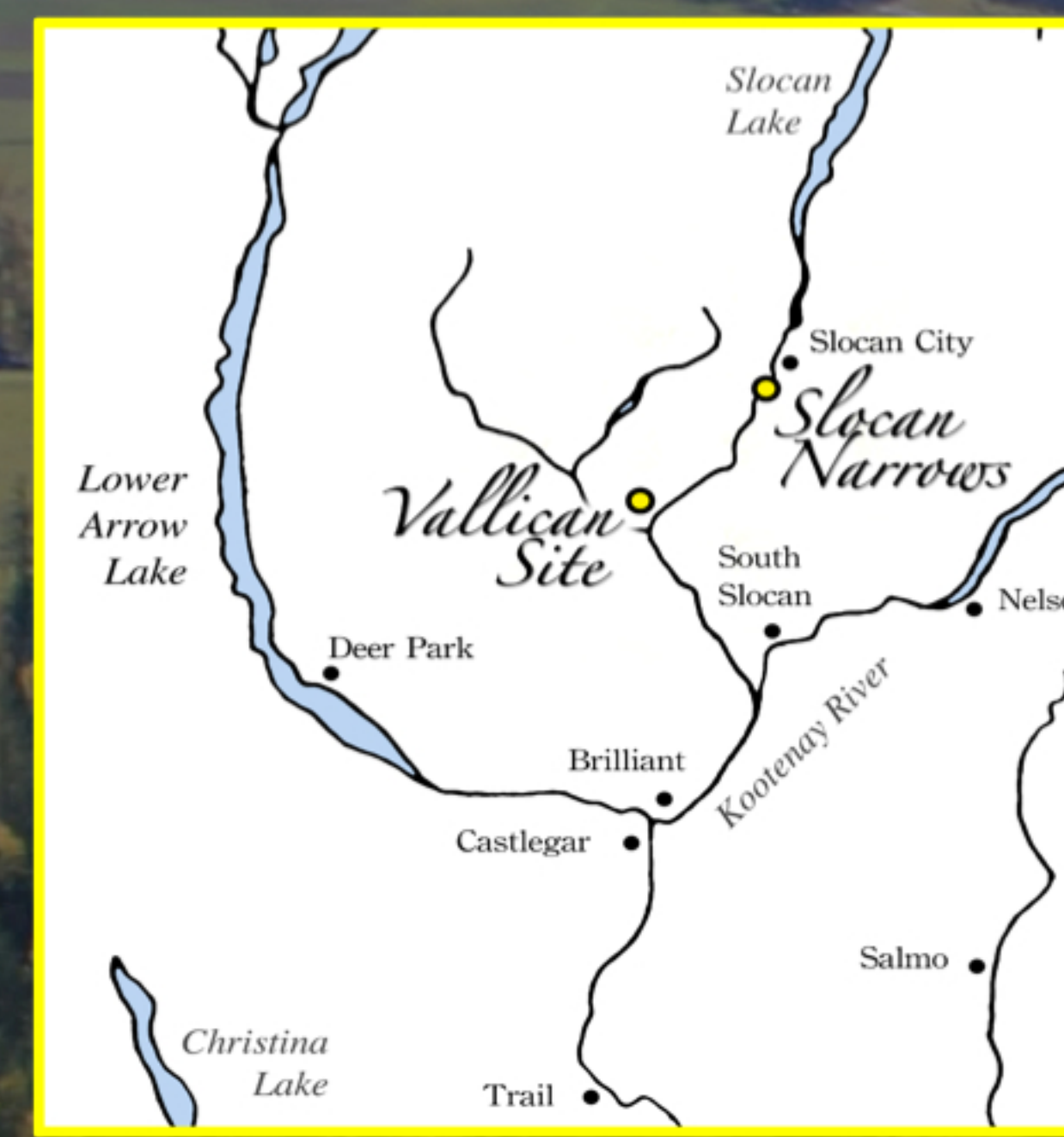
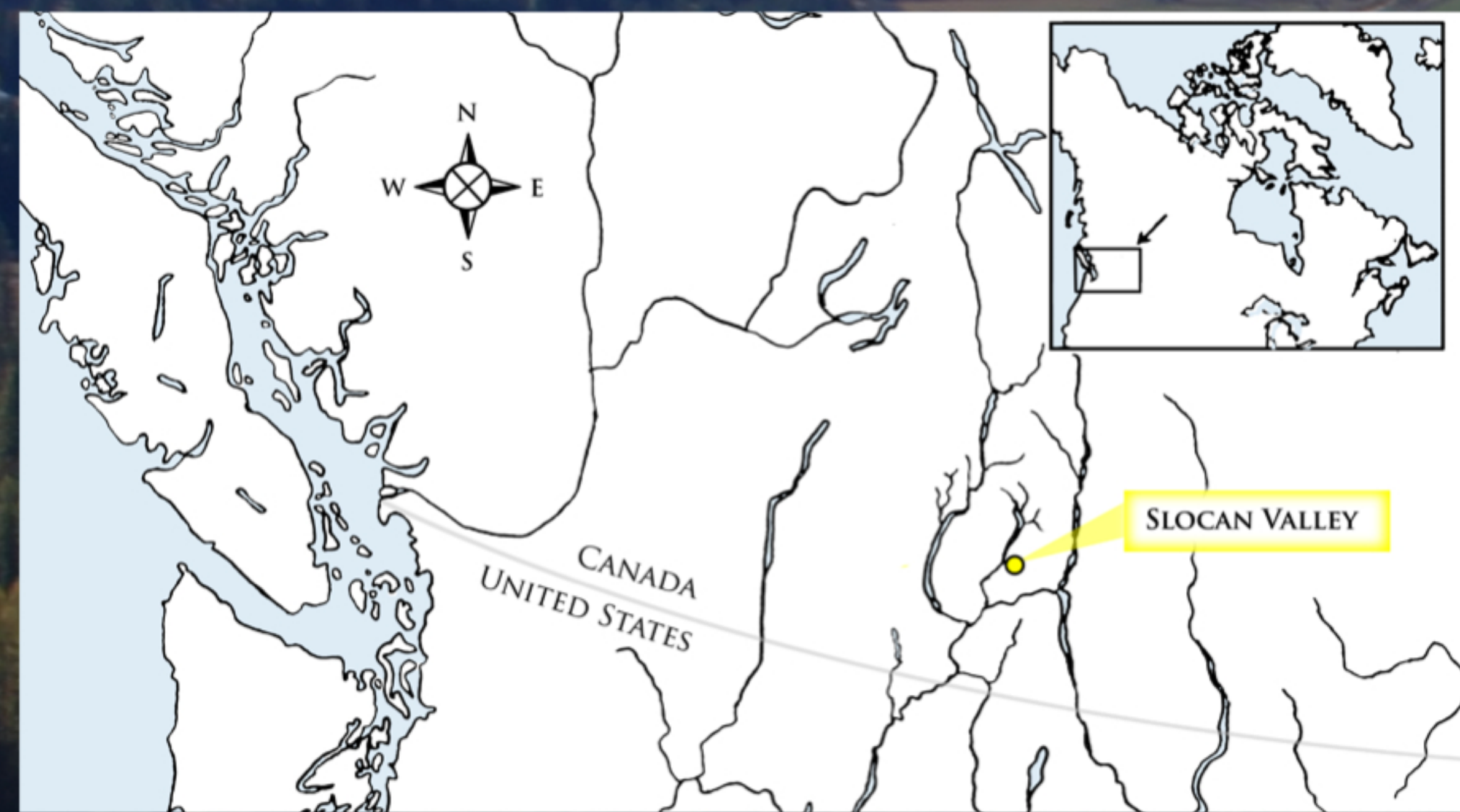


# Heritage Happens Here: Divergent Contemporary Uses of Pit House Village Sites in British Columbia's Slocan Valley

Erica Kowsz, Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts Amherst

## A Site-Based Approach to Divergent Heritage Practices and their Effects

Heritage is increasingly defined not as a static *thing* to be passed down through the generations, but as a social *process* through which people re-create values and meanings through reference to the past. However, many heritage studies still start from a *priori* assumptions about what counts as heritage, rather than asking how particular sites, objects, and practices come to be treated as heritage through real action that plays out on the ground. Here, I use a case study to explore the processes by which particular places on the landscape become *activated* as heritage sites. This research rests on the work of other heritage scholars who have insisted that heritage sites, objects, and practices do not just inherently exist *as* heritage (Byrne 2013; Smith 2006; Waterton and Smith 2010) they must be made to signify, made to *mean* something about how the past relates to the present. Importantly, who controls heritage activity at a site influences the kind and content of information produced about the past and who owns that knowledge.



## Pithouse Villages in the Slocan Valley

Up until the turn of the 19th century, the region was home to Aboriginal people who, according to the archaeological and ethnographic interpretation, lived in villages of semi-subterranean houses in the winter and moved to various seasonal camps during the rest of the year. In the Slocan Valley, there are two large winter villages, which are today controlled by different groups and used for different heritage activities. Both villages have, at some point since the 1960s, been the subject of archaeological investigation. Sinixt activists have been occupying Vallican since 1989, using the site for meetings, organizing, cultural and spiritual activities, and even educating the local community. The Slocan Narrows village, on the other hand, remains a site of authorized heritage activity today, namely an academic archaeological field school. These two village sites make for an ideal case study contrasting forms of heritage. Who has access to these places? What uses do they make of these sites in their heritage practice? The timeline at right lists activities & outcomes at Slocan Narrows and Vallican from the 1960s to the present.

### Vallican Site (DjQj1) *nkweio'xsten?*

This village site is controlled today by the Sinixt Nation Society, the organization of Lakes activists working to maintain their cultural traditions in Canada and be recognized as Aboriginal people of Canada. The Sinixt were once recognized in Canada as the Arrow Lakes band but were declared extinct in 1956 after the death of the last registered band member living on the Oatescott Reserve, despite the survival of Lakes people elsewhere.

### Slocan Narrows Pithouse Village *ka'ntca'k?*

This site, located south of the village of Slocan, consists of two archaeological sites registered with the BC Archaeology Branch. DkQj 1 is located on the east side of the river, on public land, and is accessible via the Slocan Valley Rail Trail. DkQj17 is on private land on the east side of the river. Excavations have been carried out at the site and there is interpretive signage on the nearby rail trail.

In this study, I combine ethnographic and archival research to examine the past thirty years of heritage activity in the Valley. I consider the perspectives of archaeologists, First Nations leaders, local residents, artifact collectors, and others) in order to contribute to emerging understandings of the interaction between subaltern and authorized heritage practices in the Slocan and elsewhere.

## Vallican Site (DjQj1) *nkweio'xsten?*

1956: Arrow Lakes Band is declared extinct for the purposes of the Indian Act

Gordon Mohs conducted the first excavations at the Vallican site (DjQj1) before the construction of a bridge at the site. Locals found the Vallican Archaeological Park Society to advocate for the creation of an interpretive center at the site.

In 1989, Lakes people living on the Colville Reservation in WA, USA found out that their ancestors' remains were had been disinterred at the Vallican site during the earlier excavations and might be disturbed again during the construction of a new bridge across the Slocan River.

Fire destroys teepee at heritage site in Vallican

A group of Lakes headed to the site, set up a blockade, and occupied the site. This controversy is well-remembered in the Valley today, by both Natives and non-Natives.

During the 1990s, Lakes people occupied the Vallican site and advocated for the return of their ancestors for reburial at Vallican. (At left, the signpost for the park; at right, Sinixt elder Eva Orr and the Dalai Lama at Vallican 1990 [Pryce 1999])

Sinixt activists and their supporters built an encampment at the Vallican site (above left), including a small kitchen-house where elders could stay and a cabin for the appointed guardian of the site to stay in. Lakes leaders, with support from the Colville Confederated Tribes in the U.S., buy the property adjacent to the Vallican site (above right). These grounds are used to organize a Sinixt Barter Fair, Thanksgiving celebration, as well as various events and fundraisers.

2010: Sinixt Nation and supporters help build a traditional pit house at Vallican

SNAP field school students take a tour of Vallican with Marilyn James (2011)

2000s: A site for teaching, spiritual practice, and meetings for Sinixt people & visitors

The Sinixt Nation Society continues their grassroots activism. In addition to events and fundraisers at Vallican, in 2013 set up a cultural use camp in a cut block on Perry's Ridge in the summer of 2013 (photo by Alissa Nauman).

## Slocan Narrows Pithouse Village *ka'ntca'k?*

1960

1990

2000

2010

2015

First comprehensive heritage legislation enacted in British Columbia: the Heritage Conservation Act of 1960 (Klassen et al. 2009)

DkQj 1 & DkQj17 recorded by Christopher Turnbull as part of his PhD research

The 1970s saw a dramatic increase in cultural resource management (CRM) in BC

DkQj1 & DkQj2 mapped by Gordon Mohs (1977) pre-inundation survey

SNAP 2000: First excavations; archaeological field school co-directed by Dr. Prentiss of University of Montana and Dr. Kuijt, then of Lethbridge University

Several archaeological publications result from the work at Slocan Narrows in 2000 (Goodale 2001; Goodale et al. 2004) presenting evolutionary perspectives on changes in environment, subsistence, and lifeways in the Upper Columbia.

SNAP 2009: Hamilton College Archaeological Field School: Test excavation to radiocarbon date the village, public event, artist's reconstruction drawings

Archaeological findings and expert testimony appear in *Campbell v. British Columbia*

SNAP 2011; 2nd Bi-annual Hamilton College Archaeological Field School. Further excavations at DkQj1 & DkQj17 result in radiocarbon dates for all of the housepits in the two sites. Photos clockwise from upper left: a student excavating, presentation at public site tour (~300 people attended), students and teaching assistants during a lunch break at DkQj17, and the beach north of Mon Amie where the field school resided.

SNAP 2013; 3rd Hamilton College Archaeological Field School. Excavation of a house pit floor at DkQj1. At left: tours of the site, excavation block in foreground (photos by David Gluons). At right: Dr. Goodale gives a talk to Nelson Learning in Retirement group (photo by A. Nauman) and the field camp at night.

Unless otherwise noted, all photos were taken by the authors or SNAP project contributors.