



Maps are cool! They help people find destinations. But they also help us understand where we've come from.

Lucky for you. I'm a great example. I'm the Arrowsmith Map. You might think it odd that I, an 1857 map of North America, have a voice. Until you realize, I've been opened on tables, hung on walls, viewed on websites galore. I've absorbed many conversations around me.

It seems, the people who open me with most enthusiasm are of Dakota Nations on the Prairies. There are three Dakota communities in Southwest Manitoba. Canupawakpa, south of Virden, Sioux Valley, west of Brandon and Birdtail, near Birtle. And they **all** have a quarrel with the government of Canada. Let me explain.

I was made before Canada became Canada. And before the prairie Treaties were signed. At the time, Britain wanted to offer prairie land to farmers. But they didn't want to fight to get the land. They were tired from wars in Asia. They decided to sign treaties instead. First, they needed an accurate map of North America that would identify each Indigenous Nation's territory,

so they'd know with whom to negotiate.

The man who drew me, John Arrowsmith, was a well-known British mapmaker. He never came to North America. So, how could he draw an accurate map? Well, mapmakers relied on previous maps, on information from the British military and on the Hudson's Bay Co. The Hudson's Bay Co. got **its** information from fur traders. Like Peter Fidler. Peter was the district manager at Brandon House for a time, but he traveled throughout Northwest Territories, from Fort Gary to the Rockies. Peter loved to draw maps. So I'm kinda fond of him.

200 years ago fur traders didn't have satellite images to get a bird's eye view needed to draw accurate maps. Maps of Turtle Island drawn in Europe were pretty wonky. Peter wanted to improve this. And, he knew, that Indigenous travelers had the needed broad perspectives.

One day Peter Fidler was sitting with Blackfoot Chief AcKoMokKi. Near the Rockies. As they discussed business, AcKoMokKi drew Peter a map. It was a detailed map of the Prairies, including names of rivers, mountains, and travel

time between them, naming 32 Indigenous communities populating the region. Remember, in the early 1800s there was lots of business happening between Indigenous Nations and Fur Traders. There was not yet talk of Treaties or Settlement. Peter sent AcKoMokKi's map to Hudson's Bay headquarters. Mapmaker John, used Peter's information to make me.

But, why is this important? Well, the Canadian government insists that Dakota Nations have no claim to land in Canada. Because, they say, the Dakota came to live in Canada after battles won and lost with the US cavalry in the 1860s and 70s. But, I clearly show the Dakota as a primary Indigenous Nation of the central Prairies in the early to mid 1800s. Their territory reached from what you call Iowa in the south, to north of today's Calgary. The Dakota point to me as proof that they lived, hunted and formed communities in Canada. Other Indigenous Nations know this to be true, but it seems convenient for the Canadian Government to ignore it.

Well, that's the story I tell. I hope it helps! I can only do what I can do.

Arrowsmith Map is based on an elder interview, (Oswald McKay) and, a story in Vantage Points II.

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