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The Manito Topos Project - Recovering the traditional place names of the Pecos Wilderness

This poster presents the results of a place name documentation project dubbed the Manito Topos Project. From its conception in 2014, the purpose of this project has been to contest toponymic silencing in Nuevo México. As defined by Harley (1988, p.66), toponymic silencing is the cartographic practice by which “[c]onquering states impose a silence on minority or subject populations through their manipulation of place-names.” Thus, the federal government’s Board on Geographic Names has, in the name of ‘standardization,’ radically erased from cartographic representation the geographic naming practices of Indohispano Nuevomexicanos as well as numerous indigenous groups. In a sample of 16 topographic maps depicting the Pecos Wilderness, less than 20% of the place names provided are accurate representations of Indohispano oral tradition. This paper presents the results of two past periods of intensive fieldwork (Fall 2014 and Fall 2017). So far, I have worked with scholar Roberto Valdez (Northern New Mexico College, Department of Geography) as well as partners from the communities of Las Trampas, Truchas, Pecos, Terrero, Cañoncito, Rowe, San José de la Cebolla (Ledoux) and Mora and together we have documented over 150 corrections and additions to the official name database. This information was processed in three ways: 1. to create new maps showing the names from oral tradition 2. to create an “accuracy index”, quantifying the accuracy with which USFS Topo maps represent Nuevomexicano place naming practice 3. to infer a typology of linguistic strategies used by the Board on Geographic Names to arrive from the traditional names at their “official” names. References Harley, J. B. (1988). Silences and secrecy: the hidden agenda of cartography in early modern Europe. *Imago mundi*, 40(1), 57-76.