

HICR Interview

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Interview with James Rowe

Conducted by Emma Bowick and Kate Turner

Transcribed by Emma Bowick

Emma Bowick: Awesome, should we get started?

James Rowe: Sure.

Emma Bowick: And you are in the Environmental studies department, correct?

James Rowe: Yeah, exactly.

Emma Bowick: Great, so first could you describe any work that you've done that pertains to the histories and local relations of UVIC, including the lands on which the university is located, if that applies to some of your work at all.

James Rowe: Yeah, I haven't. I know that I shared information with maybe one of you two or another research assistant. I know that for our ES200 class that we teach as our introductory class, there were some resources developed by Brenda Beckwith who used to be an instructor here. She now lives near Nelson, but she does work with Nancy Turner, who has done a lot of work with nations across British Columbia, including local nations here with WSANEC folks and Songhees folks. Brenda had done some useful research around the actual lands of UVic and whose families this land was and very specific information. So I remember that. It wasn't my research but it came up in the context of our teaching of ES200 and some of her work in introducing students to this landscape and its history.

Emma Bowick: Interesting. We will definitely have to reach out to her.

Kate Turner:

I think you shared that one of your earlier emails.

Kate Tuner: And so within the context of teaching environmental studies classes do the classes often touch on kind of the environments and lands of UVic as well?

James Rowe: Yeah. Yeah, it sort of depends who's teaching it. A key part of the class is that we do a plant walk where students are introduced to this campus. Students are introduced to 10 native species along with their traditional use and how they were used by First Nations, and specifically how they were used by the Songhees in particular. There's the Living Lands and Living Labs initiatives, and I get the two confused, but those are two initiatives on campus right now. One involves a really beautiful restoration project of the courtyard outside of the David Turpin building, that is where we usually start the walk, which is why I'm bringing it up. But this is where a lot of plants that are really important to the Songhees are being restored, and so anyway, a big part of that class is around introducing students to those local plants as a way of introducing them to the to the environment and the local environment, but also to the peoples whose land this has been since time in memorial.

Emma Bowick: I think I was in a geography lab, and I think we did a similar sort of thing. I'm not sure who ran that walk, but we walked around the David Turpin building. It was years ago and they were talking about how they needed to get some more people to keep restoring.

James Rowe

Yeah, and that project is now is now a foot! Nancy Shackelford is a Prof in environmental studies who's sort of the supervisor of that. And then, I'm blanking I don't know her last name, but Larrisa is a Songhees woman who is taking a co-lead on that project, and so she would obviously be very interesting to speak to as she would have a lot of information, I'm sure. But yeah, if you were interested in talking to her, Nancy Shackelford would be the sort of go through.

Emma Bowick: Yeah that's great. We've talked to Darcy Matthews and he mentioned her name as well, so we reached out to her, and I think we'll talk to her closer to the end of the summer.

James Rowe: Perfect. The other name actually, and that's the best I'm going to offer is other people you should talk to who are going to be way better informed than me. But, Pamela Spalding, I don't know if she's been on your radar yet, but she actually revamped our materials for the plant walk in ES200. She's another student of Nancy. Like so is Darcy, was also a postdoc of Nancy, so a lot of this is constellating around Nancy Turner. Obviously, if you can get a hold of Nancy, she'd be a fountain useful information for sure.

Emma Bowick: Great, we'll definitely do that.

James Rowe: Perhaps Pamela probably more, you could probably get a hold of Nancy relatively easily, but Pamela, Pamela's around and you should be able to get ahold of Pamela for sure.

Emma Bowick: Amazing, we will look into that for sure!

Kate Turner: And so in your ES200 class do you do this walking collaboration with like a specific elder or community member or is it just kind of information that has been gathered over time?

James Rowe: Yeah. Yeah, it's information that that came originally from Brenda working with Nancy, who is working with local elders and knowledge holders I should say. And then Pamela then has sort of more recently revamped that information. It could use another, and in fact actually we got feedback just recently that, like we include the common name for the plant, we include the Latin name for the planet, but we haven't been including the Lekwungen name for the plant. And so we were like, oh, and so that's the next step that needs to happen, and there are many next steps that need to happen but that's one of them that would need to happen. So yeah, it's been something we've been running internally within the class but part of the challenge is that, and this is something that Darcy may have spoken to you, but you know there's this desire, this rightful righteous desire to include local Indigenous voices as much as possible and whatever we're doing. And yet

they have their own priorities and their own capacity issues. So, while it seems like the right thing to do is always to have an Indigenous knowledge Elder present, especially when you're talking about Indigenous knowledge, if we were to do that, they wouldn't have any time left to actually work within their own community and to pursue their resurgence efforts to put themselves in a better position of strength vis a vis these colonial forces that they're having to negotiate with. So it's this delicate dance of wanting to be in regular conversation with indigenous knowledge holders but not but not be super extractive of their time and resources, so that they have the time to do the work that's primary to them.

Emma Bowick: Definitely, thank you for speaking on that, because it's so true. I think phase two, right now we're kind of in phase one of this project, which is interviewing professors on campus and people with ties to the university and then phase two will be much more thought through and hopefully speaking to some more community members but being cautious of their capacity.

Kate Turner: So, I think the next kind of the next question really flows from that and we've already been talking about it a lot, but are there any other projects that you know of on campus that are looking at these histories? You talked about the Living Lands project, and I think we've connected with some folks who are working on that. Are there any kind of other projects that you've heard of in your department or elsewhere that are looking at the histories and local relationships of the land here?

James Rowe: Yeah, so again living labs and living lands, which are, I understand are two different things and I think Jeff [Corntassel] might actually be involved in both so its very confusing. But yeah, those are two that I'm aware of. And then and then this might actually fit within one of those two, but I know Reuben Rose-Redwood has been, in conjunction with Jeff as well, leading an initiative around place names on campus around including *ləkʷəŋən* and potentially *SENĆŌTEN* place names on campus, so that's another effort afoot. Reuben was also, I think, part of efforts to have the Trutch residence building renamed the number of years ago, which then led to the renaming of the street in Fairfield. So yeah, those are the sort of more formal like, I had some students in a class in the fall who did a project on some, and this is less campus oriented, but it nearby was around some of the sort of signage at Cadboro Bay. They were in conversation with the Senate City Council around potentially amending that signage to be more real about colonial history, which currently just isn't really attended to in the in the signage, but that's that was a student project that I don't know where it stands now and given that this semester is done.

But yeah, living lands, living labs, and then if Reuben's work around place names is separate than those two, then that's the third.

Emma Bowick
Amazing. Thank you.

Kate Turner: Yeah, thank you. We really appreciate you sharing all of these projects as we're trying to get kind of oriented, it's really helpful.

James Rowe: Yeah. Well then you'll then get all the information and be able to share it with the rest of us so that we were actually better informed.

Emma Bowick: In that case, what research would you like to see conducted about UVic moving forward.

Kate Turner: Or knowledge that you think would be helpful for students and faculty?

James Rowe: I think that you know some of what I started with around you know the real specificity around, you know who's whose lands these are how they were being used. Because we do, we've got the official UVic territorial acknowledgement that was, I understand, produced in conversation with knowledge holders from local nations. But, but even just getting more drilled down specificity and it's would be multiple stories because UVic occupies a relatively large chunk of land, but having more of that specificity would just bring home, I think, for me and for others the disruption that the colonial process has wrought, you know, and just like being able to associate like specific family names with these places. Like, these are the specific people who were dispossessed that you know, if that that knowledge is something that knowledge holders are wanting to share or is available that I think that would be compelling information for us to have some of that might already be fully available and I'm just clueless to it, but that would be that would be worthwhile. Yeah, like I think you know finding ways in the long run, this is less about what about specific research, but like from my vision, UVic has a lot of land and obviously the phrase of land back is this injunction from indigenous communities right now, which makes complete sense and that's what decolonization is ultimately about is the return of Indigenous authority to Indigenous lands. And so I know that UVic would be very hesitant

about handing authority over, but personally it would be lovely to have land returned if possible and and so any research that basically helped build a case for that I would like to see. I know that UVic themselves probably wouldn't as an institution, but a number of us who are affiliated with the institution would love to see that.

Kate Turner: Yeah so some of the work we're hoping to do is tracing back the who owned the land, who had the land, how the land came to be passed to different hands. So we'll try to find some of those answers or talk to people who might have them but yeah, that's definitely a large part of our project.

James Rowe: Yeah and this is, I'm just kind of brainstorming now and this is kind of beyond the scope of your work but and, but I'll just throw it in the mix anyways. This is more present centered than historical, but an idea I've heard thrown around a few times would be, like given some of the capacity issues I started talking about within local nations. I'd be interested in some research that sort of laid potentially the groundwork for some new positions funded by UVic. Where UVic was providing salary to members of nations to sort of serve as liaison folks for the campus community, and this might be something that's like just impossible because of the number of demands coming. But I just know for myself that like students who I work with, umm, when they're doing work involving indigenous nations, they always want to consult the nation. But they very rarely hear back because the nation is just completely inundated with requests for their time, and they have to prioritize and so if UVic were able to fund positions where people could come and ask those folks on campus like this is what we're this is what we're thinking and those folks would be able to maybe triage and prioritize and be maybe authorized by the community for like things that are relatively low stakes. So they could be like yeah, go ahead and here's some guidelines that you should pay attention to or whatever, but I don't know how feasible that model is and how to conduct it in the most ethical way but it does strike me as if it would maybe begin to address some of the challenges of, like the campus community wanting to do the right thing and consult but they're being this diminished capacity because of colonization within communities themselves. Like how do we solve that? And I don't know the answer and I don't know if a funded liaison positions is how you do it research is how you figure out how to do it. Anyways, that's kind of beyond the historical scope of what you are doing, but I would love to see that some problem related to and some creative ideas generated.

Emma Bowick: Yeah, absolutely. I think that would be good, even in the ethics proposals and the way that the process goes, at least for human ethics proposals that I've completed, the way it's set up may kind of deter people. Like you said, there are issues with capacity or and there's so many different hurdles you have to jump over, which is good because you

want to be as ethical as possible, but that process is really convoluted right now I think. This is outside of our scope, but I think that could help here.

James Rowe: Yeah.

Kate Turner: Yes, thank you for sharing that, I think it's something to keep in mind going forward and, in our work, and just in general.

Kate Turner: I guess our last kind of question, very open-ended again and this is something we were asked in our interview and is I think it's a really good question. How would you describe the history of UVic and the territories that occupies to a curious first year student staff or faculty member from somewhere else?

James Rowe

Yeah, that's a good, good question. Well, gosh, I I'm not even going to answer. I will answer but, but I'll also maybe start with the meta point which is that part of the difficult, and we note this in the territorial acknowledgement that we have where you know it's Lekwungen speaking peoples and then goes on to name also though WSANEC as well, and you know, there's conflict over the land and among indigenous nations themselves. And so it's not just a straightforward story about these are Songhees lands, or these are Esquimalt lands or these are WSANEC lands, there's overlapping jurisdiction as my understanding. Just one story, you know when Mount Doug was renamed PKOLS. I was there for when they did the sort of ceremonial renaming of PKOLS, and it was with WSANEC folks who did that renaming and a few years ago I was at an event where a Songhees elder was like that's not the right name for that place, that's not how we understood it. And so you know, as a settler person, I feel like I'm doing the right thing by using the SENCOTEN or PKOLS name for Mount Doug and yet there's conflict over that and a lot of that conflict is exacerbated of course by the colonial process. But anyways, that's the context, and UVic is also in shared jurisdiction of colonial governance where we've got like Oak Bay and Saanich and Victoria, so its a bit of a messy place in that regard. But yeah, I would probably describe it as a place of competing and overlapping jurisdictions of both colonial and settler. I would describe it as a lands used historically by Songhees and I'm not sure if Esquimalt we're using it just given geography, but they may have been, and I honestly just don't know. But lands used by Songhees, Esquimalt and WSANEC peoples that have then been historically dispossessed through the colonial endeavor and renamed as University of Victoria I think in the 60s it at some point and now we're here living in that legacy of colonialism and doing many of us on campus what we can to begin to unravel and undo the colonial injustices that were enacted. But they were already been enacted, and so there's no, like undoing them. There's

just trying to find rectitude and some level of justice, given that given that history. But again, the sort of lodestar for me around decolonization is around returning indigenous authority to indigenous lands, and these are historically indigenous lands, even if indigenous folks have themselves some of their own competing jurisdictions, but that's something that all needs to get sorted out.

Kate Turner: Thank you, that was a really good answer.

Emma Bowick: Yes, I didn't know that think about PKOLS.

James Rowe: Well, yes and this is all you know, well the fact that it's PKOLS is not anecdotal, that's fact, but like this is one individual, one Songhees individual, and like how much of that is widespread I have no idea. So that's my one anecdotal experience, but it just helped plant the reminder that and that these are very complicated matters, so.

Kate Turner: Yeah, absolutely.

Emma Bowick: Definitely, thank you so much. Is there anything we didn't ask about that you were thinking about that?

James Rowe: No, no, I don't think so. The only other you guys, you all have heard this but just for my own well being to make sure I check that box and said this. Of course the other person local knowledge holder who has been very involved both with Nancy and with Brenda, but then I know Jeff has worked with her a lot, but Cheryl Bryce as well, so I'm sure you've heard her name many times already, but she would be someone in the second phase of the research that would be wonderful to be able to speak with her. My guess is she is who Brenda got that more specific information about families, like some of the families here, so yeah.

Emma Bowick: Cheryl is the one who led, or had her own walking tour, right?

James Rowe: That's right, the decolonial walking tour or something like that, yeah.

Kate Turner: Well thank you so much, we really appreciate you sharing and pointing us

towards some other people as well. We're definitely in like a knowledge gathering phase and so we really appreciate sharing your knowledge and sharing other people who might also know a lot.

James Rowe: Yeah, my pleasure. I'm really excited about what you all develop out of this it's going to be really helpful for all of us. So thank you so much for the work that you're doing.

Emma Bowick I hope so. We'll let you know what we come up with. We'll be in touch.

James Rowe: Yeah great. Awesome.

Emma Bowick: Thank you so much.

James Rowe: Yeah, ok, thanks so much. Have a great rest of your day. Bye.

Emma Bowick: You too, bye.