

GOVERNMENT AND INDIGENOUS PROTEST: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
RESPONSE TO IDLE NO MORE – IGNORED NO MORE

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By

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Abstract

This dissertation examined how the Idle No More movement, particularly during the peak of Indigenous activity in 2012-13, affected government policy and practice in Canada. It studied the role of social movements in shaping public policy, specifically how the federal and two provincial governments responded to the movement. The research categorized the way public policy scholars present their work using a policy, rights, or relationships lens and how each of these lenses is used collectively in Indigenous mobilization efforts. These three lenses bring forward discussions that are significant when examining mass movements. The relevance of natural laws in Indigenous mobilization are identified as integral to the process. The research is presented through an examination of the Idle No More movement (the movement), arguably the largest, most sustained, and most effective demonstration of Indigenous determination in Canadian history, as way to demonstrate the governments' responses to Indigenous democratic protest. The responses of the federal government as well as the two provinces of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick are the focus of this study. Media reports, interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Respondents, and government documents are used to determine whether there has been a change in attitude, planning processes, or substance in the governments' responses to the movement. The research included a study of the impact of the movement on government officials, administrative processes, programming, and policy and determined how the movement influenced government policy and administration.

The Idle No More movement had an explicit impact on agenda setting. It gave off-reserve Indigenous people a chance to voice their concerns about government, Indigenous leadership, programs, and services. The long-standing practice of dealing directly with Indigenous leaders had stopped government from meeting with community members in open forums. For many, Idle No More liberated Indigenous people to speak out and be heard. This was particularly true for off-reserve Indigenous peoples who felt largely ignored by Indigenous and public government representatives. Giving voice to Indigenous peoples and seeking to offset the authority of both *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) governments and the public governments of Canada, was the founding aspiration of Idle No More.

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I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my PhD supervisor, Dr. Ken Coates for taking me on as his PhD student and supporting me throughout my work. From our first meeting, he challenged me to look at new spaces, beginning with my PhD dissertation topic. Exploring the governments' response to the Idle No More movement gave me the opportunity to explore areas I didn't already have experience with, given my work history in Indigenous politics. Ken believed in me, he guided and encouraged me to continue onward, because he always knew I could finish this work. His belief in me was a major driving force to persevere. I am deeply honored to have had the opportunity to work with him and I can never thank him enough for what he has taught me and how much I learned from him. He is a true warrior spirit.

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I want to acknowledge our Kôhkums (Indigenous Grandmothers), who continued to teach the younger women about the leadership roles within their communities and the kinship systems, their knowledges and their voices are inherent in Indigenous women, regardless of where we grew up, and how we were raised. Their resilience and endurance are found within our DNA, which we in turn pass on to our children. Their knowledge is sacred and inherent knowledge that created and drove the Idle No More movement and guided those who acted along the way.

As I wrote this dissertation, I had in mind the Sixties Scoop Survivors in Canada, many who refused to succumb to the state child welfare system that they were ensnared in. I think especially about those who never thought they would survive, whose resilience modelled for all Indigenous people how to stand up and use their voices. In my youth I was a statistic, a teenage mother, a high school drop-out, and a Sixties Scoop Survivor. I first came to university as a mature student. It was with the support of several relevant people in my life who were not role models, but instead served as significant people, because they helped me see there was hope and worked to guide me along the way.

I chose to undertake my PhD degree after a major life changing event where I found myself searching for personal meaning, for a way to value my own existence and to prove to myself that I could succeed in my journey. It did give me that value.

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Introduction

The relationship between mass movements and the policy process has not been examined in scholarly work. This relationship remains relatively unexplored by the academy and has not been a priority for governments in the past. The Canadian policy making system has not routinely taken mass movements into account, often dismissing them as irrelevant and insignificant to the policy cycle (Jenkins, 1983; Wilkes, 2006). Yet there are numerous instances when mass movements have managed to change government policy. This happened with the women's rights (suffrage) movement, prohibition, gay liberation, and the legalization of marijuana. In these cases, the voice of the people affected by government policies made a major difference and initiated policy change.

People who are part of mass democratic movements generally take part so they can make relevant change. In this dissertation the term mass movement is used to refer to social movements, grassroots movements, and mass democratic movements. This dissertation examines the Idle No More movement (sometimes referred to herein as "the movement") and demonstrates the responses from the governments of Canada and the selected provinces of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. The research question for this dissertation is: How do mass democratic movements affect public policy making processes in Canada? The research question can be applied specifically to Indigenous movements in Canada, such as: how did the Idle No More movement affect government policy and action, if at all? This dissertation looks at whether change took place and if so, how that change looked.

Over the past several years Indigenous people in Canada (including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) have increasingly demanded action and change to the policies that affect their lives. Many organizations and institutions have been created by Indigenous people for that purpose. A prime example is the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (the FSIN, formerly the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) which protects the treaty rights and lobbies for Aboriginal and treaty rights recognition for First Nations people in the province of Saskatchewan. This organization was built on the dreams and aspirations of Indigenous men and women who fought for implementation of their rights. Many of the Indigenous people who are seeking rights recognition carry on the legacy of their parents and grandparents who voiced the same demands

and fought for many of the same things. Over the past several decades, governments in Canada (federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal) have failed to respond to Indigenous aspirations, political protests, and pressures for changes in Indigenous public policy in Canada.

These pressures for change are increasing as Indigenous populations grow across Canada. Indigenous population growth is significant in some regions, and governments are forced to pay attention as Indigenous people are the: “fastest growing of any racial, ethnic or national group in Canada, now comprising 1.4 million people or 4.3 percent of the total population, an increase of 20 percent over the last 5 years” (Denis 2015, 210). The Indigenous population growth continues to increase faster than any other group in the country. This changes the policy framework and policy process in places where the population increases are more noticeable. Governments in those regions must pay attention. Saskatchewan and New Brunswick are prime examples of this. In Saskatchewan, Indigenous people comprise a larger percentage of the provincial population at 16.3% (Statistics Canada 2016), with a potential to become a significant presence. These numbers continue to grow exponentially and can have a major impact on policy planning. On the other hand, In New Brunswick Indigenous people do not comprise a significant percentage of the provincial population at 4% (Statistics Canada 2016). Because of this, Indigenous people in New Brunswick are simply not considered a priority for the provincial government (The Canadian Press, October 15, 2021).

Research Methodology

Media reports, government documents and interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous interviewees (referred to hereafter as “Respondents”) are used to determine whether there has been a change in attitude, planning processes, or substance in the governments’ response to the Idle No More movement. The research focused on studying the impact of the movement on government officials, administrative processes, programming, and policy and determining how the movement influenced government policy and administration.

For the purposes of this research, a total of 11 Respondents shared their knowledge related to Idle No More within the federal, provincial, and Indigenous governing bodies. The responses of the provincial governments in the two provinces of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, the

federal government, First Nations leadership, and one of the movement's principal founders were incorporated into this dissertation, providing invaluable data. Besides federal and provincial officials, interviews were conducted with Indigenous representatives from the movement and from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the regional First Nations organizations including the Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTO's) known as the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and the Union of New Brunswick Indians (UNBI).

The selection of the Respondents was based on their experiences within and outside of government (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and their positions and roles before, during and after the movement. Respondents were selected from Saskatchewan and that province was selected for this study because it was the home of the movement. Respondents were selected from New Brunswick and that province was selected for this study because of the prevalence of Indigenous protests before, during, and after the movement.

Selecting Respondents from Saskatchewan and New Brunswick was integral because Indigenous people in those two regions experienced a rocky relationship with government and Indigenous leaders leading up to, during, and after the movement. Respondents coming from the provinces of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick demonstrate that there were different factors that explained the responses of these two provincial governments. These collectively influenced, shaped, and determined the distinctness of the movement. The regional interviews aided in understanding the climate in each province at the time of the movement. These jurisdictions are relevant because of the level of resistance and the protest activity that took place in each province and how it reshaped the policy agenda.

The Idle No More movement was founded in Saskatchewan and protest activities began in Saskatchewan. The First Nations people in Saskatchewan have an indisputable history of speaking and acting from a strong treaty position and they are known for putting their treaty rights at the forefront of any policy discourse. In New Brunswick, the Elsipogtog First Nation was prominent as a non-treaty community that protested shale gas exploration and made public one of the biggest anti-fracking movements in Canada's history. The First Nations people in New Brunswick generally speak from an Aboriginal rights-based place rather than a treaty

rights-based place. Both regions have pressured government to comply with their Aboriginal and treaty rights under the Duty to Consult and Accommodate requirements set by the Supreme Court of Canada (The Canadian Press, October 12, 2021; McAdam, 2015).

The Respondents also included people who held elected political office and appointed administrative office who were asked about matters directly related to their work within government and matters related to their relationships with the movement, Indigenous peoples and/or relationships with other levels of government. The selection of Respondents was determined based on their level of experience with the movement. Some of them included Cabinet Ministers who were in office from 2012 to 2014. Others worked in government during the movement. Other Respondents were senior officials or political staffers who experienced first-hand the environment in the government circles. The Respondents' roles in government and with government relations at the time of the movement were helpful in providing data for the study. These senior officials, because of their roles and responsibilities, have advanced experience with representing their professional perspectives and the actions of the government. All Respondents were willing and eager to be part of the interview process and were anxious to speak to me about the movement. Most of them were extremely passionate about what came from it.

This dissertation examined how the movement impacted government policy and practice in Canada. The research included studying the impact the movement had on government officials, administrative processes, programming, and policy and how the movement influenced government policy and administration.

In this dissertation I wrote from my own diverse political background and experience. In doing so, I drew from two decades of work in the political arenas of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and with various First Nations and Tribal Councils in Saskatchewan. Incorporating the Indigenous tenets of humility, respect and honesty were key to my approach. These are principles that I was trained in and that were prominent in the teachings shared with me. The natural laws of reciprocity and relationality are relevant in this work and are at the forefront of Indigenous discourse. I was personally involved in aspects of the Idle No More

movement and have many activists who were connected to the movement among my relatives and friends. I understand the movement well, what I did not understand was the way the federal and provincial governments responded to Idle No More. Nor did I understand the degree to which responses altered Indigenous policy and government approaches in Canada.

Using media reports, extended interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Respondents, and government documents, this dissertation examined whether there was a change in attitude, planning processes, or substance in the federal and selected provincial governments' responses to the movement. The analysis uses several media reports to help track the progress of the movement. Media followed the movement closely and helped drive the messages of the movement from the beginnings of its inception. The ways in which technology was used to influence the actors was unique during the movement, through social media and the power of networking (Martineau 2015, 234).

This research helps to build on the established theories that suggest when social problems arise, they create an “open window” for change (Kingdon 2003). Kingdon discusses the concept of an “open window” in the context of agenda setting and although he might argue that there was no obvious policy in the movement, there indeed was, the two Omnibus bills (C-38 and C-45) provided the policy to help create the “open window”. Although Kingdon (1995) used policy, problems, and politics to consider the ways in which the “window of opportunity” opens, the social problems are what is relevant. The social problems examined in this study revolve around the policy, rights and relationships that exist. An example of the latter (relationships) is seen in this research when looking at how natural laws and ways of knowing comprised information asymmetry for Indigenous people within the movement.

This dissertation examined the work of several scholars (Coates 2014, Poelzer & Coates 2015, Hawken 2007, Jenkins 1983, Meyer 2003, Ostrom 1999, Bennett & Howlett 1992, Hoppe & Hisschemoller 1996, and Özen & Özen 2010) whose theories make the connection between protest movements and public policy. The main variables in this study are Indigenous people, government, and authority – those who act and those who have the power to act.

This dissertation examined the unforeseen impacts of failing to acknowledge the Indigenous understandings of the sacred relationship between Indigenous women and water in policy development. Indigenous women have begun to embrace these sacred roles over the past decade. One of the best examples of this is how Indigenous women are hosting and participating in an increased number of Full Moon Ceremonies throughout their territories. Indigenous women are working to heal the communities through the ceremonies that belong to them.

This dissertation provides an understanding of the ways the federal and provincial governments viewed the movement during and after Idle No More activities of 2012-2013. It was easy to find out what politicians and even a small number of civil servants said publicly about the movement; but this research produced some insight into discussions at cabinet tables and between politicians and senior civil servants and between the inner sanctums of government and Indigenous organizations. Following preliminary conversations with personal contacts of my own and my supervisor, I settled on an interview-intensive research design. I identified a cross-section of individuals, selected for their specific perspectives on Indigenous-government relations following Idle No More. These included several politicians, selected senior officials and key Indigenous representatives who agreed to speak candidly on the subject.

The research design incorporated deep insights and personal assessments of the Respondents rather than conducting surveys of a larger number of subjects. The goal was to gain a better understanding of political and administrative processes and to get insiders' perspectives on the unfolding of Idle No More. The interviews were lengthy, and all Respondents encouraged me to follow up with additional questions, which I did when necessary. In selecting Respondents for this dissertation, I opted for breadth rather than depth, where I looked at a variety of Respondents, coming from various backgrounds; not focusing on a single government but including federal and two provincial jurisdictions (Saskatchewan and New Brunswick). I was especially interested in the federal government's prominent role, including the resistance to the movement from Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Idle No More-informed transformative approach adopted by the Liberal government elected in 2015.

The two provinces of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick were selected for specific reasons. Saskatchewan is my home province, and I am familiar with the local Indigenous political scene. It was also the home base of Idle No More and I knew several of the key organizers well. I selected New Brunswick to gain a perspective on a part of the country I did not know well. My supervisor had strong professional contacts with the province and was able to secure interviews for me with key personnel. They offered valid and important regional perspectives on the movement which had been typically viewed as a national or federal government issue. The inclusion of the provinces proved prescient, for it turned out that Idle No More had significant implications for provincial governments who were involved in a very peripheral manner during the movement.

The list of Respondents included three high profile Indigenous leaders, a co-founder of Idle No More, a Regional Chief (Atlantic) for the Assembly of First Nations and a Vice-Chief for the Assembly of First Nations. These individuals are not, like the others, people inside the federal or provincial political and administrative processes. But they all had extensive contact with government before and after Idle No More. They brought unique perspectives and insights to the understanding of the impact of the movement on provincial and federal governments.

The 11 Respondents interviewed for this dissertation provided answers to seven interview questions. They were invited to address the questions as they applied to the federal and provincial political and administrative environments during and after Idle No More. In formulating their responses, I invited them to reflect on both their personal experiences and observations and their analysis of broader processes and structures within their respective governments.

This dissertation is framed on the data collected during the interviews conducted between June 2018 to April 2019. Interviews were conducted in person and by phone as circumstances dictated. Collectively, the interview transcripts run to several hundred pages. All the Respondents were exceedingly gracious with their time, responding at length and answering my follow-up questions quickly and efficiently. I was honoured that these high profile and busy people were willing to speak to me about the movement, to be so frank and to speak at such

length. They were, without exception, engaged with the subject and welcomed the opportunity to connect their experiences with Idle No More with the subsequent actions and approaches of public governments.

The Respondents are listed below in alphabetical order of surname:

1. Charlie Angus - NDP Member of Parliament Timmons, Ontario.
2. Roger Augustine - Regional Assembly of First Nations Vice Chief, New Brunswick/Prince Edward Island (former Chief of Staff to the Assembly of First Nations Chief).
3. Christopher Cornish - Executive Coordinator, Ring of Fire, Indigenous Services Canada.
4. Lillian Dyck - Canadian Senator (Saskatchewan), Liberal Party of Canada.
5. Anna Fontaine - Advisor on Indigenous Issues, Women and Gender Equality (former Regional Director General, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Saskatchewan Region).
6. Patrick Francis - retired (former Deputy Minister, Indigenous Affairs, New Brunswick).
7. Kim Jonathan - First Vice Chief, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (former Interim Chief, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations).
8. Thomas Mann - (former Deputy Minister, New Brunswick).
9. Sylvia McAdam - Professor at the University of Windsor (co-founder Idle No More).
10. Rob Norris - University of Saskatchewan Senior Strategist for Partnerships (former Saskatchewan Cabinet Minister and an advisor to the Premier of Saskatchewan on First Nations and Métis issues).
11. Clive Weighill - Chief Coroner in Saskatchewan (former Chief of Police for the Saskatoon Police Service).

This dissertation is the first detailed examination of the way Idle No More influenced and changed Canada's political cultures. In this regard, this analysis has inherent and explicit demonstration for its trustworthiness. It followed up on conclusions advanced in the first extended academic study of the movement, Ken Coates' *#IdleNoMore and the Remaking of*

Canada (2014), which argued that the movement had the potential to reformat and reorient the political and administrative systems in Canada. Individually, the Respondents included in this study agreed with this assessment and, more importantly, provided examples and analysis of the transitions and transformations that followed the most expanded and effective Indigenous uprising in Canadian history.

The interview questions were carefully developed in consultation with my supervisor Dr. Ken Coates. The questions posed to the Respondents and their subsequent responses were directly related to their various and diverse work. The Respondents shared the same definition and understanding of the term “Idle No More”, they all knew what it referred to. The Respondents were asked to provide their feedback to the following seven questions:

1. Did you see a change in attitude/way of thinking among Indigenous leaders and communities throughout the course of the movement?
2. Did government change the way they negotiated and consulted with Indigenous peoples?
3. Did the Idle No More movement change the behaviour of government toward Indigenous peoples?
4. How did the government’s relationship with Indigenous peoples change after the movement?
5. Did the movement change the government’s understanding of Indigenous policies?
6. Did the movement have a long-term impact on government approaches to Indigenous affairs?
7. How did the experience of the Idle No More movement affect subsequent negotiations and relationships with Indigenous peoples?

The Respondents welcomed the interview questions as relevant to exploring and documenting Indigenous policy expectations. This is a space that has been virtually ignored in the past, not by those learning about policy development but by both federal and provincial governments. These examinations of Indigenous policy expectations are critical to making positive change. Now more than ever the broader scope of policy analysis can make space for unprecedented policy change. The Respondents provided direct insight into the way Canada’s policy environment reacted to the specific actions and the spirit of Idle No More. As the Respondents pointed out,

the movement brought pronounced change in Canada's policy environment, although it fell well short of the promise and potential of what the Idle No More movement could have achieved.

When scholars utilize a multi-lens approach, they shape the policy decisions in positive ways. They are more informed and well-rounded for it. These potential policy changes are vital to Indigenous people to make relevant change for future generations. These are positive changes for Indigenous people to look forward to. Indigenous people have been searching for ways to convince governments to address important policy changes to ensure their well-being and improved livelihoods. The movement was seen by many people as a potential vehicle to make that change.

Defining Mass Movements

The definition of mass democratic movement includes the coming together of large groups of individuals with the same agendas that are based on the rights of those individuals. Social movements are related to the collective action of individuals where they come together to make social change. These individuals came together through their pre-existing and often long-term relationships and in the public interest. This speaks to the exercise of power as well. In his analysis on power, Steven Lukes (2005) states that: "just because it is difficult or even impossible to show that power has been exercised in a given situation, we can conclude that it has not" (41). This concept of power is seen as multi-dimensional. It exists where it is seen to exist.

According to Stone (2002): "long term relationships may also be coercive because they are often between parties with unequal power" (76). According to Stone: "we might think of the public interest as those things desired by the public-spirited side of citizens" (21). Alberto Melucci characterized his work on social movements as follows: social movements challenge the administrative logic of complex systems primarily on symbolic grounds; organizations do not only act to attain political goals but also practice the social changes they seek; these social movements are submerged in the social networks of everyday life and, contemporary social movements are acutely aware of the planetary dimension of life in complex societies (Melucci 1989). Melucci viewed social movements as collective action, where decisions are made. In the

case of Idle No More decision making was not a prominent component of what was happening. In fact, there was no one central source of decision making throughout the movement.

Tranvik and Selle (2007) associated mass movements with government (state) friendliness, in a view of democracy. The idea that “democracy works only when power is decentralized, when citizens are legally protected from being interfered with by the ‘tenacles of the state’ and when everyone is free to carry out his or her life plans as they see fit” (57-8). They discussed new forms of civic participation. They spoke about the ways: “Legitimacy, at least in the long run, has always depended upon the organizations’ ability to exercise influence over state policies through institutional forms of cooperation and conflict resolution” (60). They described the ways in which the: “voluntary sector became segmented” (60). These concepts assume there existed a recognized leadership. But there was no recognized leadership with Idle No More, the grassroots people led the movement.

Some scholars have questioned how the movement differs from other mass democratic movements. Other mass movements such as the Occupy Canada Movement and the Freedom Convoy of 2022 are based on various personal attitudes and ideological principles, they are populist movements speaking for social and economic justice, and the focus of these movements change. The Occupy Canada Movement occurred across 15 cities and was a global action movement that aimed to change the economic thinking of government (Habib 2011). The Freedom Convoy, unfolding as this dissertation was being completed, involved dozens of communities, culminating in a ‘march’ on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and what many politicians ended up describing as the “occupation” of the nation’s capital. Like Idle No More a decade earlier, the Freedom Convoy attracted both global attention and related protests in other countries. In the case of Idle No More, its purpose is described as: “A grassroots movement for indigenous sovereignty, indigenous rights and respect for the treaties. Goals include stopping environmental degradation and economic and social inequality” (Wikipedia, 2022). Idle No More was (and is) a protest movement against the normative democratic institutions in Canada, such as the electoral process and the policy making process (Saul 2014, 96). Trying to make a direct comparison between these different types of movements and Idle No More would overlook the distinctive factors that are present in these movements.

There have been a number of Indigenous protests in Canada over the past several decades, some of these include: Temagami, Ontario in 1989 where the people of Teme-Augama Anishnabai First Nation were opposing the extension of the Red Squirrel logging road to protect the ancient trees; Oka, Quebec in 1990 where the Mohawk people stood up to oppose the town of Oka's plans to build a bigger golf course on sacred lands; Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia in 1993 where the Clayoquot opposed the BC government's logging plan; Ipperwash, Ontario in 1995 where the Chippewa had a land claim on an abandoned military base; Gustafsen Lake, British Columbia in 1995 where youth occupied a private ranch in Gustafsen Lake which they claimed was on unceded sacred ground; Burnt Church, New Brunswick in the early 2000s where lobster fishers in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia asserted their rights to set lobster traps; Rexton, New Brunswick where Elsipogtog First Nation opposed SWN Resources and shale gas development; Wet'suwet'en First Nation in BC in 2020 where Indigenous people were fighting the creation of a natural gas pipeline in their traditional territories (The Canadian Press, February 14, 2020).

In the United States there have been various movements, some of these were long standing movements and are known as being more aggressive such as the American Indian Movement (AIM). This movement began in 1968 and was established to advocate for the rights of Indian people in the United States and to address social issues that Indian people faced, particularly in the urban centres. AIM was known for the Trail of Broken Treaties march, the occupations of Alcatraz and Wounded Knee and the Pine Ridge Shootout. AIM led to the spinoff of other groups such as the Women of All Red Nations. However, AIM began to lose its strength: "By the late 1970's the American Indian Movement began to unravel due to internal conflicts, incarceration of leaders and efforts on the part of government agencies such as the FBI and CIA to infiltrate the group. The national leadership reportedly disbanded in 1978. Local chapters of the group remained active, however" (Nittle 2019). AIM was disbanded due to the aggressive efforts of the American government to stop the organization.

Howlett et al (2009) stated that "the policy universe is filled with distinctive constellations of actors, ideas, and institutions that constitute the space where actual problems are engaged, and responses get crafted" (87). Howlett et al (2009) talked about how: "participatory policy analysis

is desirable not only because it is more democratic but also because it is alleged to lead to better policies and more effective implementation since it brings a greater number of perspectives to bear on a policy problem than is the case with an exclusive, top-down, technocratic orientation” (28). These distinctions are what made the movement so unique.

In this dissertation Chapter 1 categorizes the way scholars present their research using a one-dimensional policy, rights, or relationships lens and presents how each of these lenses is used in studying Indigenous mobilization efforts. Chapter 2 examines the movement to set up the ways in which the Respondents provide the governments’ response. Chapter 3 explores the data from the Respondents on how the government and Indigenous people responded to the movement. Chapter 4 examines the data from the Respondents related to the impacts of the movement to the relationships. Chapter 5 explores the data from the Respondents related to the changes in policy. Chapter 6 discusses the data from the Respondents related to restructured relationships including perspectives on a changed policy environment. In Chapter 7 the examination reframes the research using the multi-dimensional approach of a policy, rights, and relationships lens. All three approaches are relevant and understanding how they came together provides a clearer picture of the movement.

Indigenous Policy Expectations

Many scholars have examined Indigenous policy expectations. The ways in which scholars have examined, studied, and analyzed Indigenous political and public policy expectations over the past several decades coupled with responses from various levels of government to Indigenous demands created unprecedented potential for changes to Indigenous policy by the early 21st century. This leads to discussions around the ways in which scholarly examination affects government action. The attention paid by scholars to the need for policy change has created the potential for significant action. The ways scholars examined Indigenous policy as it related to mass democratic movements led by Indigenous people help make the issues public and even global.

Scholars have spent a lot of time researching how government policy impacts Indigenous peoples’ lives (Wilkes, 2006; Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013; Harden, 2013). They generally do

this using common lense(s) based on their experiences, sometimes in a spatial and temporal manner. These lense(s) seldom look to the colonial history that has impacted the lives of Indigenous people. The lens being used can shape and define the issue along with other factors which shape the policy decisions. Consequently, scholars have challenges addressing factors that require a multi-lens approach such as policy, rights, and relationships. They can often examine policy from a single lens, but seldom look through all three of these lenses (policy, rights, and relationships).

Natural Laws in Action

Natural laws were a major part of the commonalities amongst the communities involved in the movement. The discussions around natural laws were relevant to framing the messages that came through during the movement. Because Indigenous people and government have their own priorities and practices each has experienced the implementation of policy differently and therefore have a different perspective on how to proceed.

A relevant differential factor in this discussion is how natural laws and Indigenous knowledge are the basis for Indigenous movements, and the ways in which the inherent relationship to land typically drives Indigenous protest (McAdam 2015). It is notable how land and resources are most often at the core of the discussions and the conflict (Augustine 2018).

Indigenous people have consistently defended their land rights through protest movements. Elders and knowledge keepers remind Indigenous peoples that they are the seeds that were planted in this earth, on this land, and it is imperative that they maintain those beliefs.

As proprietors and as land protectors Indigenous people defer to their Indigenous knowledge which shapes their natural laws (McAdam 2009). Indigenous knowledge is the understanding of the relationships to land and environment within Indigenous societies. Indigenous knowledge and understandings around land use and management are key components of any analysis involving policy, rights, and relationships. Indigenous people defer to this knowledge in any major decisions that affect future generations (McAdam 2015). The natural laws and ways of

knowing have always defined Indigenous identity and continue to frame who Indigenous peoples are.

Restructuring the Relationship

In 2022, now ten years after Idle No More the federal and provincial governments operate in a framework built around Truth and Reconciliation. Canada has several commitments to restructure their relationships with Indigenous people as part of Truth and Reconciliation. The history of this relationship has not been based on trust and accountability, this is seen in the treaty experiences and has been carried through to the residential school experiences. So, restructuring and building sustainable trust between Indigenous people and government is and always has been challenging. Before the movement, there had been many cases where Indigenous people faced crises and the federal government failed to respond with due care and attention. One of the best examples is the Attawapiskat First Nation's call for help in 2011, just one year prior to the movement taking hold. The Attawapiskat housing crisis was not handled effectively by the federal government. The media picked up the story but framed it from a misinformed place, carrying on their long tradition of misrepresentation.

The awkward shifts in focus on Indigenous issues between Bob Nault (Liberal Minister of Indian Affairs from 1999-2003), Paul Martin (Liberal Prime Minister 2003-2006) and then Andy Scott (Liberal Minister of Indian Affairs from 2004-2006), set the context for the movement. Expectations were raised by former political leaders, particularly through the drastic increase in funding and autonomy through the Kelowna Accord of 2005 that Prime Minister Martin saw as the principal legacy of his term as Prime Minister. The Liberal government had a very different and promising relationship with Indigenous people. Under the Conservative Party of Canada, Indigenous Affairs Ministers Jim Prentice and Chuck Strahl had some targeted initiatives, but Indigenous issues were not made a high priority for the Harper government. The change in priorities minimized Indigenous issues and was a heavy blow to Indigenous people.

The Harper government failed to authentically approach Indigenous affairs, because there were other priorities in place at the time. The work the Conservatives did in Indigenous affairs during his tenure was minimal. They did move with a substantial package of educational initiatives,

however. These educational initiatives were mostly negotiated with Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Shawn Atleo, but the proposal was soundly rejected by the Chiefs for failure to consult with them before concluding the deal. This alerted the Harper government to internal issues with Shawn Atleo's leadership.

The Conservatives were very nervous about the movement when they heard about it, largely because they did not have a strong handle on Indigenous priorities and processes (Barrera, May 7, 2015). When Idle No More started, the Harper government viewed it with intense suspicion, and they monitored the people closely (The Canadian Press August 11, 2013; The Canadian Press, June 1, 2014; McAdam 2015; Barrera March 18, 2015). There was a general overall nervousness within the government about what was to come from the movement.

The Attawapiskat housing crisis was a precursor to the movement. The Attawapiskat First Nation housing challenge received public attention in October 2011 when Chief Theresa Spence declared a state of emergency on behalf of her band members. The Conservative government under Stephen Harper responded by putting her reserve in third party management (Angus 2015, 230). This would never have happened in a non-Indigenous community in Canada where the democratic process was disregarded. Responsibility for the affairs of Chief Theresa Spence's First Nation was put in the hands of an official in Winnipeg, a great distance from her community (Angus 2015, 230). As in so many other instances, the media changed the way the story was framed in the public eye, distorting it in ways that lost the actual message, focusing on First Nations government "failure" rather federal government intransigence and funding shortfalls.

Many media outlets have stereotyped Indigenous resistance as violent. The media took the main points of the movement and other unrest and turned their focus towards political leaders (Wotherspoon & Hansen 2013, 27). This took the attention off the issues coming from the Indigenous people themselves, changing the story and losing the important messages. The media has a history of portraying Indigenous people and their leaders as malcontents, wrought with corruption and wrongdoing, and to frame Indigenous protest in a negative light (Wotherspoon & Hansen 2013). This allows Canadians to disregard the important work being done.

Over the last few decades, the general public has come to believe these misrepresentations and to use that as a reason to stall government action. The case of Kashechewan First Nation is a prime example. When the northern Ontario community was facing a water crisis, the media turned it into an examination of financial records, accusing the leaders of mismanagement and corruption. Portrayed in the media in this way, the Canadian public were angry and upset with the First Nation, who had already been victimized. It is important to note that the Kashechewan First Nation still struggles to have clean drinking water today.

The Attawapiskat community's situation was similar. Attawapiskat angered many people just prior to the movement, and it continued to flare up throughout the Idle No More era. The Chief of Attawapiskat stood against the government's inactions to address the lack of housing on her reserve:

On December 11, 2012, on International Human Rights Day, northern Ontario Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence began a hunger strike, calling on Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Governor General David Johnston to initiate immediate discussions and the development of action plans to address treaty issues with First Nations across Canada. (Caven 2013, 1)

Chief Theresa Spence's peaceful resistance: "emphasizing the importance of dialogue, catapulted the Idle No More movement to a new level of urgency. What began as a resistance against an impending bill in Saskatchewan spilled across the border to the United States, ultimately spreading as far as Ukraine and New Zealand as a movement that was empowering Indigenous communities to stand up for their lands, rights, cultures, and sovereignty" (Caven 2013, 1). The movement brought out more, new, and louder voices, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in support of Indigenous rights.

The scale and intensity of the cross-country protests was new to the government in Canada. There have been lower levels of protest in Canada in comparison to other countries such as the United States, France, and England. In previous decades, Canadians and the global community had not taken much interest in Canadian protests, allowing government to move slowly if at all. In Canada's history, government has had difficulty responding to Indigenous demands and

undertaking policy changes that impact Indigenous people positively. This difficulty for government has created many challenges for the academy in documenting and studying the Indigenous policy processes.

Scholars have tried their best to analyze the Indigenous policy changes as they have occurred, but their focus typically rests on the precise policies and problems with implementation. These authors generally use either policy, rights, or relationships to frame Indigenous policy issues. Some researchers can use more than one lens to do this. Although policy, rights and relationships are integral and relevant they should also reflect Indigenous understandings around natural laws and ways of knowing. Emphasizing these elements would bring a unique perspective because of the relevant concepts and understandings within. This includes the relationship to land and the natural environment, which were core elements of Idle No More. There is a void in this area, and it is an unexplored space. This is especially true when it comes to the lack of gender-specific research and literature because natural laws and ways of knowing are gender-specific. As a result, the voice of Indigenous women has been left out.

Gender balance is something that is critical to understanding traditional Indigenous worldview, yet gender balance is not often addressed in the literature. More authors should attempt to provide a review of Indigenous epistemology in their topics to thoroughly analyze policy influence, governance processes and mobilization efforts. Over the past ten years there has been a revitalization of Indigenous ways of knowing, mostly because of the experience with the movement.

Gender balance occurred as a redress of imbalance and was an integral part of the Idle No More process. When Indigenous women stood up to speak for their rights, they were redressing the gender imbalance that occurred from the point of contact onwards. The movement began with women and the role of women has been in the forefront since its inception. During Idle No More women took the lead role (Saul 2014). The role of women and resurgence is synonymous with the movement, since 2012 Indigenous women have been taking back their roles in relation to the environment, particularly water and water protection. Women are reclaiming their voices as builders of community.

Youth were also active during the movement and stood up to seek answers to questions that impacted their future. They asked their own leaders these questions. The youth challenged their leaders, asking them to address the issues in a sincere way. Indigenous people, particularly the youth, are holding their leaders to account now more than ever, and it is obvious that: “expectations are rising” (Poelzer & Coates 2015, 235). This must take place for change to occur.

Indigenous people want accountability from their leadership, and they have high expectations of their leaders, particularly when it comes to their relationships with the land.

Indigenous youth are speaking their truth and they expect the same from their own leaders.

Chapter 1: Policy, Rights and Relationships Lenses

Studying non-Indigenous policy development through an Indigenous lens, framed in a multi-dimensional approach, changes the typical research relationship between Indigenous peoples and those who research them. An examination of these processes through an Indigenous multi-dimensional lens is vital in decolonizing the policy making process. It is important to understand how Indigenous people have become more active in their own research over the past several years, introducing new and innovative perspectives to research and changing the way the research community examines Indigenous populations and their issues (Starblanket et al, 2019). These multi-dimensional lenses consist of some combination of policy, rights, and relationships as outlined in this chapter.

The Policy Lens

Scholars have typically examined Indigenous policy issues framed in a mainstream perspective because they view Indigenous policy as one piece belonging to mainstream public policy (Ostrom 1999; Murphy 2005). There is no differentiation between Indigenous policy and mainstream public policy in this perspective. They also realize that Indigenous policy flows from the decisions made by policy makers as part of the policy cycle.

Policy change happens for a variety of reasons but is often triggered by societal pressures (Bennett & Howlett 1992, 275). One of the major challenges to Indigenous policy development is how change has taken place through a generally uninformed group of decision makers in Canada who are often not knowledgeable about Indigenous people and who are occasionally misinformed regarding Indigenous issues (Angus 2019). Even though some of the decision makers in Canada may have a background in Indigenous law and its relationship to Canadian legal systems, few have knowledge about the Indigenous worldviews, natural laws, and ways of knowing (Borrows 2002). The same arguments of rationality initiate dialogue on decision making and agenda setting in policy cycles. Experiences should determine how governments make rational choices and prior strategies should be considered when making decisions, especially in dilemma situations (Ostrom 1999, 21). These policy dynamics apply to Indigenous public policy in the same way and are common practice for Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) in

policy planning. ISC is now known as CIRNAC (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada).

Policies of Assimilation

Many of Canada's historical policies were rooted in assimilation of Indigenous people (Boldt & Long 1985; Monture-Angus 1995). Canada's history clearly demonstrates the attempts to remove Indian status and assimilate Indigenous people so they would become "equal" to other Canadian citizens. These historical policies included removing status of First Nations women who married non-status men. Policies of assimilation have been imposed on Indigenous people through the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) and other colonial and federal legislation (Palmer 2015; Murphy 2005). The federal government's history of oppression and assimilation of Indigenous people through the enactment of failed policies and legislation such as the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) has been a critical part of the academic dialogue on Indigenous policy (Abele & Prince 2003; Beatty 2008; Boldt & Long 1985; Cairns 2001; Coates 2014; Poelzer & Coates 2015; Coulthard 2014; Graham & Plumpre 2003).

There are other historical policies or policy related legislation such as the *British North America (BNA) Act* and the changes to the 1982 Constitution that also demonstrate failed policy patterns (Monture-Angus 1995; Kymlicka 2007; Ladner 2003; Borrows 2002; Cairns 2001). For example, Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution did not define Aboriginal rights. This created barriers to moving forward in areas of self-government. Constitutional requirements forced the government to hold three post-constitutional conferences to discuss Indigenous self-government between 1983 to 1985. But no definition of self-government was ever reached. This is one example of how governments (federal and provincial) had major difficulty sorting through the issues facing Indigenous people, and they have maintained the continuous search to find the answers or solutions to the Indigenous "problems".

The way policy impacts Indigenous people has framed the relationship established through the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5), which is the major policy that controls First Nations lives (Asch 2014; Cairns 2001). The *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) has regulated the lives of First Nations

people since its design and implementation in 1876 (Poelzer & Coates 2015). Although numerous revisions have been made to the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) over the past several decades, it remains a particularly oppressive piece of legislation in Canada's history relative to Indigenous people (McNeil 2007). No other country in the world has a piece of legislation that administers Indigenous livelihood the way the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) does (McAdam 2015). Over the years the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) came to usurp the treaty obligations of the Canadian state to the point that the historic treaty obligations are now interpreted through the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) (Cardinal & Hildebrandt 2000).

The treaty process created a relationship that was built on a trust obligation. However, the relationship has turned into decades of oppression and assimilation guided by the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) (Harden 2013; Ladner 2003). The federal government's imposition of policy after the treaty period had a devastating impact on the treaty relationship (Price 1991).

The 1885 Pass System is one of the clearest examples of early government policy creation that affected the relationship by causing mistrust. The Canadian government used the Métis uprising to accuse First Nations of standing up with the Métis against the Crown and committing so called acts of 'treason'. The 1885 Pass System became an integral component of the Canadian government's assimilationist movement. The government's assimilationist movement played itself out in policy implementation.

The objectives of the 1969 "Citizens Plus" came directly from the government's assimilationist policies (Poelzer & Coates 2015, 17; Cairns 2001, 10). The 1966 Hawthorne Report was commissioned by the federal government to examine the situation of Indian people in Canada. The report's findings triggered the *White Paper, 1969* that in turn activated First Nations people to protect their rights and impede the federal government's assimilation movement (Cairns 2001, 9-10). Indigenous people were on guard after 1969 in protecting and speaking up for the implementation of their rights.

The *White Paper, 1969* had a major influence on Canada's assimilation policy. Although it was shelved in 1970, albeit hidden, it remains active within government policy direction. Examples

of this can be seen in the land claims process, and the changes to First Nations land use with agreements around First Nations Land Management. The *First Nations Land Management Act* has been promoted by the Department of Indian Affairs, because it allows them to offload their responsibilities. The *White Paper, 1969* proposed the establishment of an Indian Claims Commission which inevitably led to the land claims process. Since the *White Paper, 1969*, First Nations have had reason to be suspicious and watchful of government's attempts at impingement of their rights (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians 1981).

In using the policy lens, scholars applied mainstream policy processes to Indigenous policy. There has not been a lot of innovative work done in Indigenous policy, in fact: "federal policy on Indigenous affairs operates in a conceptual and ideological vacuum" (Poelzer & Coates 2015, 22). Hoppe & Hisschemoller (1996) use frame reflection to set out how issues in society impact public and democratic policy making. They refer to the way in which frame reflection is used in policy analysis and how it provides an alternative to the typical ways policy is created. They talk about how intractable controversies inevitably become hot button political issues in our society and highlight the importance of realizing that the way in which academics define and respond to problems is subjective. What one person perceives as a problem, others may not. According to the authors, there are four types of problems in the policy process: structured, unstructured and two types of moderately structured problems (Hoppe & Hisschemoller 1996). Structured problems involve certainty and consensus, and moderately structured problems include certain biases in the political arena that involve actors (political elites) strategizing to control the outcomes and to identify where there is disagreement and uncertainty. Unstructured problems arise when intractable controversies typically occur. This is where there is uncertainty about relevant knowledge and disagreement on relevant norms and values.

Generally, we fail at solving intractable controversies. Hoppe & Hisschemoller (1996) point out that intractable controversies can often result when the "wrong" problems are addressed by policymakers. The way to resolve this is not to take an elitist approach and to avoid focusing on issues put forward by "legitimate" participants. Intractable controversies are not beneficial to anyone because they are never really resolved. Instead, they are generally handled through legal means or by maintaining status quo.

Hoppe and Hisschemoller (1996) referred to two major biases in problem solving: the first revolves around structured problems where specialist knowledge and technical expertise is used to demonstrate qualified information (46). Those who are considered non-experts and unqualified are excluded from this process. In the second instance, economic rationality is used to explain environmental problems, including an analysis of the costs and benefits. Controversy can come from those who believe that rights are paramount to economic gain. The authors termed structured problems as an environment where policy goals are clearly defined. Moderately structured problems known as the “ends” are the “negotiation” strategy; those known as the “means” are the “accommodation” strategy (47-48).

The way in which policy analysts define problems can shift from one to another based on various biases. For example, the identification of qualified experts put forward to solve the problems can create a shift in how people view policy development or the varying degree that political communities see relevant issues can also be attributed to creating that shift. Hoppe and Hisschemoller (1996) used the ‘Not In My Backyard (NIMBY)’ response to demonstrate how individuals behave when confronted with structured problems. NIMBY emphasizes how people think something controversial might not be a bad thing but when it becomes part of personal space, opinions change. This is especially true for diverse societies. In this mindset, problems of society are best left on other people’s doorsteps.

In examining policy dynamics, a better understanding of the ethnic society and the policy impacts of a multicultural society on Indigenous people in Canada is necessary (Kymlicka 2007). The scholarly community realizes that the multi-nationalism in Canada and the diversity challenges that arise (Cairns 2001, 198). This is critical because Indigenous people and new Canadians are living in the same neighbourhoods, working in the same jobs, and occupying many of the same spaces. Therefore, when policy decisions are being made there needs to be a clear understanding of the diverse issues facing the people.

Kymlicka presented an argument about immigrant, French and Indigenous forms of Canadian citizenship from the government perspective. He pointed out that these group-differentiated

rights must respect two constraints: they cannot dominate or oppress and there must be equality between and within groups (Kymlicka 1995, 194). He recognized that there are many issues around ethno-cultural diversity in Canada including challenges this diversity brings to policy development. Diversity can create conflict if space is not given to recognize the value of individuals and groups. He pointed out the fact that Canada has a role to play in ensuring citizens are not excluded from policy development. Kymlicka is one of few authors in public policy to deal with the realities of self-government as part of Indigenous peoples' rights as "national minorities" (Kymlicka 2007).

For the past several years, Indigenous people have felt excluded from policy development and legislative changes that affect them, even though formal consultation policies exist. This topic is generally not addressed by academics even though it has been a very controversial one. It is time for the academy to understand how Indigenous people can become active participants in the policy cycle.

An example of policy imposition occurred with the federal government's proposal for Bill C-33. In 2011, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (formerly AANDC, now Indigenous Services Canada - ISC) collaboratively struck a National Panel on First Nations Education (K-12) to engage with First Nations and the federal government to understand First Nations issues, aspirations, and needs. The National Panel met with heavy scrutiny from First Nations leaders in Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec because government was creating federal legislation that would impact First Nations control of First Nations education and the treaty rights to education. The three regions boycotted and publicly rejected the engagement process. The National Panel moved forward anyways and provided a report to the Minister outlining various problem areas identified during their engagement sessions.

In late 2013, the Minister announced that, in response to the recommendations from the National Panel, the federal government would create legislation to regulate education on reserve. In April 2014, after several months of increased First Nations resistance regarding jurisdiction, funding and authority, the Minister introduced Bill C-33 (the *First Nations Control of First Nations*

Education Act) into Parliament. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Shawn Atleo, who publicly welcomed the legislation, was forced to step down from his position after losing the trust of the Chiefs when he was accused of negotiating “back room” deals with the federal government on Bill C-33. There was not a lot of academic attention or scrutiny around this even though it was the catalyst for the precedent-setting resignation of AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo. This was the first time an AFN National Chief had ever resigned from his position. It happened at the height of the movement and as many of the Respondents point out, it was related to the First Nations’ reactions to the introduction of Bill C-33.

First Nations responded to Bill C-33 across the nation by creating local K-12 education legislation. With the looming imposition of federal K-12 education legislation, many First Nations drafted and implemented their own localized education acts, specific to their own communities. In doing this, they consequently enacted their own policies and guidelines framed around their treaty and inherent rights. In creating their own education acts, First Nations people successfully created laws to supersede the pending federal law, Bill C-33.

The National Education Act was shelved, which was not what the Minister of Indian Affairs had planned, as the federal government was committed to passing the generic piece of legislation on K-12 education for First Nations people on reserve. This was a controversial issue for First Nations leaders who viewed education as a treaty right. However, many of them blamed the National Chief for letting the Department of Indian Affairs push the legislation that far. This process set a precedent on Indigenous response to policy development and forced the government to pay closer attention. There has not been an instance since then where Indigenous response on a major federal government policy issue occurred before government could pass legislation.

The Rights Lens

Many authors have examined Indigenous policy issues using a treaty or Aboriginal rights lens. This is the most common way to examine the issues because these rights have formed the main legal framework for Indigenous people in treaty and non-treaty areas (Poelzer & Coates 2015; Abele & Prince 2003; Asch 2014; Beatty 2008; Boldt & Long 1985; Cairns 2001; Coates 2014;

Harden 2013; Kymlicka 2007; Ladner 2003; Monture-Angus 1995). Most Indigenous people defer to their rights in policy design and implementation because that is how governments have framed Indigenous policy. This was increasingly necessary during the land acquisition period.

Aboriginal rights are undefined although they have been set by common law. The courts have defined Aboriginal rights which has allowed relationships and rights to be determined by legal action (Asch 2014). For example, Cairns (2001) provides a description of assimilation, with a categorization between Métis and First Nations people based on rights (89). In his discourse, Cairns refers to the assimilation model as being one-sided (95). Cairns proposes contrasting what Indigenous people believe is reality (97). His analysis of governance structures with his reference to the two-row wampum is a metaphorical presentation of Indigenous understanding of what was agreed to (204). He provides a visual image to his reader of two separate vessels, each travelling down the water without interference from the other, signifying co-existence through self-government and self-determination.

Self-government is viewed by some as a third order of government (136). In the case of the Métis, reports such as the Royal Commission on Indigenous peoples (RCAP) separate them constitutionally from First Nations and recommend a mirrored approach to the federal government's system (137). RCAP suggests there should also be a system in place for the Métis that is modelled after the federal system. It is important to note that Indigenous people seek self-determination in all regards (Million, 2013).

According to Cairns (2001), the answer to whether Indigenous people can become more politically relevant lies in a two-fold process that needs to occur which involves a recognition of Indigenous self-governing powers and inclusion in the Canadian nation state where Indigenous people consider themselves federal and provincial citizens (90). Citizenship as it relates to Aboriginal rights has been a topic for debate and Indigenous people have mixed responses to their positions as citizens in Canada. For example, sovereigntists will reject any notion of participation of any sort in provincial or federal election systems.

Many debates have arisen from the perspectives of Thomas Flanagan (2008) who is known for disputing the legitimacy of Aboriginal rights. Flanagan is instrumental because he makes a radical departure in addressing Indigenous issues. He argues Indigenous sovereignty did not exist based on the concept of “temporal priority”. He challenges the idea that Indigenous people have rights that must be recognized by the colonizers because they were here first. He cautions that: “we do not follow temporal priority blindly and inflexibly” (20). Further to this, the concept should not be applied to Indigenous people in Canada.

Flanagan wrote from a questionable place and his evaluation does not withstand scrutiny. He spoke from a place of inexperience with Indigenous peoples. For example, his reference to Indigenous governments who are “based on closed racial principles” and operating as a third order “irritant” to Canada’s other governments who are “based on open, individual, and territorial principles (194)”, sparked intense debate. Many scholars have openly criticized him for his viewpoints. He believes Indigenous people should not have special status or rights. Flanagan criticized authors such as James Tully for his support of the granting of special rights to Indigenous people under “racial and ethnic politics” (195).

Treaty Perspectives

Other authors have entirely different perspectives. For example, Asch’s work (2014) was based on Indigenous people being here before the colonizers arrived. Naturally he provided a critique of Flanagan’s work whose rationale was based on the premise that Aboriginal rights do not flow from any recognized rights to the land as First Peoples. Asch devoted an entire chapter on presentation of the five basic arguments of Tom Flanagan around Aboriginal rights and temporal priority. Asch presented a clear understanding of the intent of the treaty negotiations and discussions. He began his work by explaining his use of the term First Nations rather than the term Indigenous. He framed his explanation from the Elders’ perspectives using respected, well-known Elders teachings to relay the concept of land ownership (97). Asch provided a perspective of what was happening during the treaty era, the state of Indigenous relations with the newcomers and what condition their economies were in. He used Treaty Four as an example to demonstrate the negotiating power of the First Nations at the time (87). Asch made references to

oral and written interpretations, the validity of oral history and how it was used to carry on the treaty message to future generations.

Asch used the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations' (FSIN – now the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations) position on treaties and the rights that flow from those agreements on behalf of the nations they represent. Much work has been done in this area by the FSIN and Asch is one of few authors to recognize that. Asch worked with First Nations through his career, and he is well versed and comes from an open perspective on the issues. He questioned the extinguishment of title or sharing of the land. He demonstrated an understanding that comes from direct discussions with treaty knowledge holders. He forced the reader to revisit what they think they might know about treaty agreements. Michael Asch demonstrated a unique point of view regarding making a rational and informed argument.

Asch discussed the spirit and intent of the treaty negotiations, something that (by his own admission) can only be defined through the Elders' interpretations. He presented the perspectives of prominent treaty Elders such as Gordon Oakes and Danny Musqua who had authentic treaty knowledge that was handed down to them by their forefathers. In doing so, Asch effectively puts forward a First Nations understanding of the treaty agreements directly from renowned treaty knowledge keepers. Asch sets the stage for the complexities around treaty and Aboriginal rights. In this he effectively presented a clear picture of the differences between the two interpretations of the treaties, and he determined that the Elders' interpretation of the treaties is the most authentic account (82).

Asch recognized the importance of settler opinion on how policy was set and implemented. He emphasized that treaty obligations must be honored to uphold the legitimacy of the treaty (164). He pointed out that Indigenous people and settler society view treaty making very differently, with the latter putting very little significance on it (163). The concept that First Nations did not give up their interest in the land at the time of treaty is generally not discussed or addressed by scholars, although it is the long-held position of First Nations people (Asch 2014). He relied on the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) literature and documents which provided a strong foundation for that position. The FSIN has a long history of treaty advocacy in Canada

and at one time were known as the strongest collective treaty voice in the country. This has changed in recent years where the power of the Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTO's) has shifted to more of a lobby group.

Bonita Beatty (2008) provided a valuable background on First Nations government and structures such as the FSIN and its commissions. She spoke from a voice of experience, having a good working knowledge within these organizations and institutions. She recognized that the FSIN is the only First Nations organization representing all the bands in Saskatchewan and therefore is unique and deserves attention. Beatty examined the lack of capacity within the FSIN as an organization and its institutions (216). Yet as she points out there have been successes. She used the Treaty Land Entitlement and the repatriation of the Constitution as examples of the work the FSIN does in advocating for its member First Nations even though there are capacity challenges (215). Beatty's work reflected first-hand experience working with First Nations organizations and she understood the restrictions and the capacity challenges faced by First Nations governments. She provides a keen insight from her own work in Indigenous governance systems.

Over the past few years more significance has been put on issues around governance, these have been a focus for policy development. Governance and government are not the same although many confuse the two terms (Graham et al. 2003, 1). The five principles of good governance are legitimacy and voice, direction, performance, accountability, and fairness (Graham et al. 2003, 3). Governance rests on human rights and laws (Graham et al. 2003, 6). Governance processes between Indigenous people and government changed in Canada over the past few decades, initiating substantial policy change. The natural laws of Indigenous people were foundational to the relationship. Understanding the natural laws that guided Indigenous decision-making provides a clearer perspective of the way in which the relationship evolved and how it developed long term connections. Natural laws defined all actions:

The principles of First Nations' laws affect and are part of all aspects of First Nations' life including ceremonies and activities. The laws were given to the First Nations people to follow and to abide by. These laws are the protocols and etiquettes in place to guide

and direct people to appropriate access to traditional ethical conduct. These protocols are foundational for the First Nations' people to communicate and live. (McAdam 2009, 6) As McAdam stated, natural laws guide behavior and define existence for Indigenous people. A resurgence of natural laws is happening across Indigenous populations in Canada.

Authors have addressed the problems connected to the Canadian structure such as within the justice system. These institutions that serve Indigenous people must incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing. Legal scholars such as John Borrows (2002) recognized the fact that the justice system is part of the problem and needs major overhaul. It is well known that Indigenous people are largely overrepresented within the justice system and that it is a system that is governed by the way laws are enacted provincially and federally. This distinct scholarly view relies on the understanding that incorporation of natural laws is vital to successful change.

Recently there has been more focus on the role of women as change agents to be recognized as catalysts for change. Some authors have focused on the ways in which the Canadian Constitution activated First Nations women and built relationships, seeing it as an opportunity for women to make meaningful change (Monture-Angus 1995). These authors wrote about renovating the constitution, as we would in a home renovation. Constitutional renovation improves the way the constitution works for Indigenous people (Monture-Angus 1995, 154). The way Canadians approach this 'renovation' should be as: "a reconstruction of the way in which we understand what has happened as First Nations have come in contact with dominant institutions" (Monture-Angus 1995, 195). This includes the ways in which the roles of women have changed with colonization and the impacts of the church and Christianity. The Indigenous women's movement has existed for many decades: "even though NWAC didn't exist until 1974" (Ouellette 2002, 29).

The impacts of contact on the roles of women are being understood by scholars: "Colonialism had substantial impacts upon Native women's leadership" (Tsosie 2010, 33). Suzack et al discuss the ways gender roles have changed because of the impacts of paternalism and oppression from the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) (Suzack et al. 2010). These changes influenced life decisions and social systems: "Historically, First Nations' women had highly respected roles in all aspects

of society. Women were advisors, mentors and leaders involved at all levels of governance” (McAdam 2000, 41). The impacts of contact on the roles of women were compounded from the European mindset that women were subservient to men and were the property of men. This came through in the concept of land ownership from the settler perspective that only men could own land.

The implementation of federal policy, such as the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) has had long term impacts on tribal identity and kinship systems, largely through the loss of status to women who married non-status men as defined under the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) (Monture-Angus, 1995). As a result, the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) and other pieces of government legislation have largely impacted First Nations women and caused unnecessary gender divisions. In 1982 the Canadian Constitution was repatriated, and changes were made to the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) that attempted to address some of those divisions. The repatriation opened the door for major change to the recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada but did not consider existing gender divisions.

The changes to the 1982 Constitution brought new responsibility for governments, making them legally obligated to recognize existing Aboriginal and treaty rights. The changes did not come without problems. However, authors such as Monture-Angus, (1995) have pointed out how gender exclusion during the constitutional discussions and the period leading up to the changes has created further problems. Indigenous people and women have: “been excluded from full participation in the constitution of this country” (Monture-Angus 1995, 154). Indigenous problems were not solved with the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982. According to Monture-Angus, Section 35 of the Constitution is too broadly worded to be effective (Monture-Angus 1995, 157). The barriers lie in Section 35 in relation to Sections 91 and 92, which make it clear that the involvement of the provinces is key to understanding these barriers (Monture-Angus 1995, 161). The jurisdictional issues that were created in the BNA Act with the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments affected the outcomes of Section 35.

Monture-Angus (1995) focuses on the fact that the role of women has not been recognized in the Constitution. The ways in which women have been excluded from constitutional reform has

resulted in a historical non-participation of women in all constitutional business. Yet one of the most positive outcomes of the constitutional reform process was that women began to take their rightful place in the political arena. Many have noted how the constitution engaged women as active participants in political reform. For example, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), as well as the Council of Aboriginal People (CAP) have worked arduously to advance Indigenous women's issues. Although these organizations have come under scrutiny and have had to fight for their share of resources, they do work to represent Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women.

Poelzer and Coates (2015) argued that Canadians generally must take responsibility for the plight of Indigenous people in Canada. They suggested that self-government is necessary for change to happen, it is part of the: "country's administrative and political fabric and that most communities have risen to the challenge" (152). They provided stories of Indigenous success and achievement, demonstrating Indigenous contributions to the Canadian economy. Their approach stimulated dialogue on the treaty relationships that were created and shows how Canada as a society has a responsibility to move those relationships forward. There has been some progress over the past few years where individuals, organizations, and institutions are recognizing their presence on treaty territories.

The Relationships Lens

Many authors have examined Indigenous policy issues using a relationships lens, particularly the European and Indigenous relationships that emerged from the Royal Proclamation and the treaty period that followed. Discussions around peace and friendship agreements or the two-row wampum are integral to understanding the significance of these processes. Scholars are well versed on relationships between early settlers and Indigenous people and tend to describe these relationships as being rooted in issues of sovereignty. One of the reasons so much emphasis is put on early encounters is because contemporary relationships are built on these early relationships and the concepts and practices that emerged from them. Treaty negotiators expected their relationships with the newcomers to be patterned after their own peace and friendship agreements amongst one another prior to contact. Generally, authors examine policy issues post Confederation without recognizing the sovereignty and nationhood of the people that

were in place pre-Confederation and pre contact. These relationships are relevant because the Indigenous people involved in the early relationships expected them to flourish, grow and expand.

In their chapter, Boldt and Long provide a representation of sovereignty with its various perspectives including the concept of the European notion of sovereignty and its relationship to traditional Indigenous ways (Boldt & Long 1985, 333). They point out that the Royal Proclamation continues to be relevant to any discussion on Aboriginal rights. First Nations people continue to assert this authority based on their sovereign status as nations that entered treaties with the British Crown to allow access to their lands for agriculture and settlement. Canada's constitutional history demonstrates how as a way and means of gaining access to the prime territories the colonial government (and later the Canadian government) was forced to recognize the sovereign status of the Indigenous people. In 1763 the King of England through the Royal Proclamation declared that Indian "hunting grounds" should be left undisturbed and that Indian people should not be molested on their lands (Boldt & Long 1985, Appendix A). The Royal Proclamation set out Indian land rights because the King of England declared that Indian people owned the land not already taken up by the existing British colonies. The King made an official statement regarding Aboriginal rights that was formally recognized in Section 25(a) of the 1982 Constitution.

The Royal Proclamation reveals the way in which the relationships were changing at the time. The Royal Proclamation is important for various reasons: it demonstrates that the Crown represented the settlers, and that the Indigenous people had their own leaders to represent them during treaty negotiations (Asch 2014, 9). Many First Nations people consider the Royal Proclamation to be Canada's first constitution because it determined responsibility and asserted Indigenous title and rights. Common law has cited the Royal Proclamation in cases regarding Aboriginal rights. It is as relevant today in discussions related to Indigenous title as the treaty process is.

Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood are the historical basis of rights stemming from the governing structures of Indigenous people. At the time of contact Indigenous societies had pre-existing governing systems based on their natural laws (Borrows 2002; Monture-Angus 1995; Ladner 2003). These natural laws were considered sacred by the people because they were granted by the Creator. Natural laws largely determined how Indigenous societies functioned. Rights flow through the natural laws. First Nations rights come from the Creator and are defined by culture (Monture-Angus 1995, 160; Borrows 2002). These laws pre-empt all other policy and legislation (Monture-Angus 1995). Because the governing and political systems were in place since tribal systems existed. They were adaptive structures that changed over time and place. An example is the ways in which sovereignty and nationhood changed with contact and later again during the land acquisition period. However, First Nations people never ceded their sovereignty and nationhood at treaty or any other time.

The history shows that a significant trust and fiduciary relationship existed between Indian people and the Crown to create a logical arrangement. In 1867 the BNA Act Section 91(24) made Indians and lands reserved for Indians a federal responsibility (Abele and Prince, 2003). This eliminated any future provincial involvement in the treaty process and policy development related to treaty, creating the relationship between Indian people and the federal government that would cause jurisdictional issues in later years. This would continue to frame the policy in relation to the upcoming treaty era.

The “land acquisition” or treaty period required the development of government administrative functions to implement the treaties (Starr-Spaeth 2001). The treaty period brought major change for Indian people. With the signing of the treaties, Indian people did not give up the right to govern themselves or to make their own laws (Starr-Spaeth 2001). The Crown was clear that the treaty would not take away from what they already had. These facts were part of the relevant information shared by the Idle No More organizers and were significant during the movement’s teach-ins.

According to many scholars, Indigenous sovereignty was recognized prior to and during the treaty making processes (Ladner 2003). In fact, the treaty process recognized Indian sovereignty

and nationhood. The distribution of flags, medals, annuities, and suits of clothing to the Chiefs along with the exemptions from war and taxation, symbolized the Crown's clear recognition of sovereignty and nationhood (Starr-Spaeth 2001). Other provisions served economic or social purposes.

Ladner (2003) provided a representation of the treaty relationship that was created between the Crown and Indian people and the nation-to-nation agreements that resulted. Ladner introduces the concept of treaty federalism as a potential foundation for a decolonized Canada (179). There is a paradigm shift needed to begin to consider Indigenous people as co-autonomous nations (181). According to Ladner the answer lies with Canada returning to treaty federalism and renewing their relationship with First Nations that came from the treaty relationship (189). The relationship changed after the treaty period, but not in ways that benefitted the First Nations people. This has caused discontent among Treaty based First Nations and aided in triggering the many protests including the movement.

Legislated Relationships

Once the treaties were in place, the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) changed the governing systems and imposed a foreign election system at the band level that was later adopted at the regional and national levels. The system was based on the British Parliamentary system and is still in use today through the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) and/or band custom. Some First Nations have created their own policy in this area in the form of Election Acts, but they are still regulated by the Department of Indian Affairs. These issues come from influences of colonization or challenges around band governance which continue to plague many communities throughout Canada (Ladner 2003). Elections and governance through the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) have been problematic for many communities who struggle within this foreign system. Monture-Angus showed how the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) has historically controlled the lives of registered Indian people (Monture-Angus 1995, 155). She says the governing and political processes of First Nations people has been imposed upon, permanently marking those systems.

Revisions to the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) throughout the years affected the First Nations political systems including band elections and voting. As wards of the state, Indian people were considered minors under the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) and therefore did not have the right to vote in federal elections until 1960 when the Act was changed. They first exercised that right in the 1962 federal election. Over the years, it has been determined that First Nations power from a political context could be significant if Indigenous people were to take a collaborative approach. But the divided history and the jurisdictional barriers that exist have prevented that from happening.

The Canadian Constitution and the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) both differentiate between Indigenous peoples and consequently divide and segregate them from one another through policy. This has also created a non-reserve Indigenous population that has had difficulty accessing program dollars to meet their needs (Peters 2007, 237; Abele & Prince 2003; Richards 2007). Additionally, the gender divisions created over the past decades continue to prevent a collaborative approach. This happened through the process of colonization, where gender roles were defined and prescribed.

The division that exists amongst Métis and First Nations people has also slowed down the process. That may be changing however since the Federal Court of Appeal recently upheld a decision that recognizes Métis people as Indian people under Section 91(24) of the *British North America Act*. This makes available programs and services to the Métis people that were never accessed by them in the past. Further to this it allows Indigenous people to truly come together in a collaborative effort to take their place in the federal and the provincial systems. The divisive nature of the Department of Indian Affairs (now divided into two units, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Indigenous Services and Northern Development) has created levels of animosity between Indigenous peoples that rarely existed prior to contact. Some authors have concluded how the government's history of causing if not fostering division has been harmful (Abele and Prince 2003, 136).

Government policy has had significant impacts on Indigenous people and these impacts have been the subject of decades of academic debate. Coulthard (2014) challenged the idea that

relationships of recognition can have a positive effect on our status as free and self-determining agents. He argued that liberal forms of state recognition reproduce the relations of domination they are intended to transcend. As an alternative to recognition, he argued for Indigenous people to: “empower themselves through cultural practices of individual and collective self-fashioning that seek to prefigure radical alternatives to the structural and subjective dimensions of colonial power” (18). He said reconciliation locates harm done to Indigenous people as a past phenomenon, while leaving the present structure of colonial rule unchallenged (22). He referred to Indigenous expressions of anger and resentment as negative emotions. This changes the concept of protest as a negative form of expressing rights, rather framing it from a positive perspective. He argued that anger is a sign of moral protest and political outrage and: “can help prompt the very forms of self-affirmative praxis that generate rehabilitated Indigenous subjectivities and decolonized forms of life in ways that the combined politics of recognition and reconciliation has so far proven itself incapable of doing” (109). He argued that settler-colonialism remains alive (128). These reminders can be integral to the search for reconciliation.

Coulthard (2014) proposed a: “resurgent politics of recognition premised on self-actualization, direct action, and the resurgence of cultural practices that are attentive to the subjective and structural composition of settler-colonial power” (24). The: “colonial powers will only recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as this recognition does not throw into question the background legal, political, and economic framework of the colonial relationship itself” (41). He said we must continue to work towards a: “resurgent politics of recognition that seeks to practice decolonial, gender emancipatory, and economically non-exploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority grounded on a critical refashioning of the best of Indigenous legal and political traditions” (179). He said primitive accumulation is not just coercive or explicitly violent, but also relies on the productive character of colonial power. He considered how we move beyond a politics that seeks to inhibit the destructive effects of capital to one that strives to create non-dominating and non-exploitative alternatives to it (170). Enticing Indigenous leaders from the land by bringing them into negotiations “where the terms are always set by and in the interest of settler capital” makes space for governments and corporations to meet their own objectives (170).

There is a need for analysis of dispossession that shapes Indigenous experiences in urban settings. Coulthard (2014) demonstrated a need for Indigenous feminist analysis in Indigenous resurgence, women, essentialism, and identity politics. He discussed the relationships of people using the principles of reciprocity and respectful coexistence. He said “grounded normativity” should be used as ethical frameworks of coexistence with people and environments informed by place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge (60). He used Vine Deloria Jr’s argument: “that one of the most significant differences that exist between Indigenous and Western metaphysics revolve around the central importance of land to Indigenous modes of being, thought, and ethics” (60). Yet to settler society land equates to financial gain, the acquisition of land generally means money and success.

Borrows (2002) argued that Indigenous understandings of values and beliefs about the environment, the land, and interrelationships amongst them must become an integral part of Canadian law. He believed there should be a meeting ground for Indigenous values, practices, and law within the Canadian judicial system (26). Borrows suggested there be an incorporation of Indigenous legal principles derived from Indigenous stories and traditions into western legal institutions. Borrows (2002) argued Indigenous laws should be valued and integrated into western legal systems. They should be part of the constitutional processes. Until the Canadian legal system opens its processes to include Indigenous legal principles, it is not acting democratically or transparently (137). He promoted the idea that a rights-based approach does not necessarily induce reciprocal relationships (142). Borrows argued that he is not advocating for assimilation (146). He agrees that there is change underway.

Borrows (2002) believed that Indigenous law exists as an important legal authority in Canada. He examined common law as an Indigenous (Anishinabek) person entrenched in legal studies. He focused on the ways that Indigenous law and Western legal forms are similar and compatible. He demonstrated how Indigenous legal principles can be derived from Indigenous stories and traditions. He talked about the distinctive culture test as incompatible with the survival of Indigenous peoples. He constructed a vision of citizenship that not only allowed for Indigenous control of Indigenous affairs but also called for Indigenous control of Canadian affairs through meaningful participation of Indigenous people in the Canadian polity (141-144).

Borrows argued for: “a differentiated Indigenous citizenship” (157). Indigenous laws should be recognized not just because they are beneficial, but because of their forgotten constitutionality. The legal system acts undemocratically towards Indigenous people, until this is changed, the basis of Canada’s legal system is flawed, and Canada’s sovereignty is a falsehood (137). Borrows (2002) said co-existence must occur due to proper interpretation of rule of law according to the Royal Proclamation and the two-row wampum. He said: “many Canadians are being unjustly enriched through the failure of the rule of law for Indigenous peoples, and they will not easily give up their accouterments and power” (115). Borrows pointed out that: “many people assume that since their experience of life in Canada is one of fairness and justice, most people must experience life in Canada in this same way” (114). His advice about resurgence was that: “when Indigenous peoples no longer feel that the survival of their languages, cultures, and distinctive practices is threatened, they may become more willing to embrace their relationships with others in this country” (157). He presented treaties as the negotiation of principles to govern relationships with the Crown, but he cautioned that: “in almost every treaty negotiation one can detect dishonesty, trickery, deception, fraud, prevarication and unconscionable behavior on the part of the Crown” (113).

Scholars are demonstrating how mobilization efforts also include the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into the academy and the value that provides to the general populations’ understanding Indigenous ways of knowing. Steinhauer (2002) incorporated Indigenous research methodologies to accommodate the needs of researchers.

Evelyn Peters (2007) wrote about the way urban self-government must be incorporated into the discussions (Peters 2007, 40). This is due to the growing Indigenous populations in the urban centers in Canada. In her analysis Peters made sure not to confuse programming with self-government. She argued that administering Indigenous Affairs programs is not self-government (Peters 2007, 70).

The issues around self-government and interest in the land still need to be part of the discussion. Poelzer & Coates (2015) pointed out that: “scholars argue that existing structures pay too little

heed to Indigenous cultures and values...empowering Indigenous peoples requires an understanding by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike of long-standing Indigenous political structures, as well as official recognition of the moral and political authority of traditional Indigenous values” (Poelzer & Coates 2015, 34). These values are key to any Indigenous discourse related to land and rights.

Kovach (2009) provided detailed information on how Indigenous inquiry is lacking in Western research processes. Scholars agree with incorporating more Indigenous ideology and epistemology into research (79). Kovach provided an important example of how relationships with the land inform scholars’ responsibilities as researchers: “because of the interconnection between all entities, seeking this information ought not to be extractive but reciprocal, to ensure an ecological and cosmological balance” (57). Kovach presented the distinctiveness of Indigenous research methodologies and advocates an Indigenous Knowledge-based approach to academic research.

Kovach said there are distinct methodologies to be used when researching Indigenous topics. She discussed how the process of decolonization involves learning about Indigenous knowledge and incorporating it into the Western academic requirements. The research community must incorporate an Indigenous knowledge-based approach to be effective (Starblanket et al. 2019).

The academy is in the process of decolonizing knowledge and embracing Indigenous ways of understanding. There has been a resistance to Indigenous ways of knowing (Steinhauer 2002). This may be changing as young scholars enter the academy with these teachings.

Kovach (2009) articulated the theoretical and epistemological distinctiveness of Indigenous methodologies and proposed an Indigenous knowledge-based approach to research. She looked at Indigenous conceptual and analytical frames for qualitative scholarship. She said decolonizing involves deepening Indigenous ways of understanding and researching while working within the confines of western thought and structure and she addressed contradictions in doing so.

Decolonizing knowledge involves making space for Indigenous research in the academy (Wilson 2003). Kovach is an example of one author who makes space when she discussed allied approaches to non-Indigenous research, the centering of cultural protocols, storytelling as method, the role of one's subjective interpretation in the creation of knowledge, and how doing research in a good way means not only asking the right questions but truly reflecting on personal priorities through transparent and reflexive writing. Although Kovach makes valid points there are several scholars who would disagree with this because they do not recognize the value of decolonizing knowledge.

Kovach (2009) effectively demonstrated that Indigenous scholars must continue to use a decolonizing lens in conjunction with Indigenous epistemologies. She exposed contradiction in western scholarship, that is, the resistance to Indigenous epistemologies that would lead to the production of new knowledge. She argued that the greatest sites of struggle always take place at the level of epistemology, for it is at this level that our ideologies are formulated into assumptions and our assumptions ultimately inform the questions asked in research activities. She had a deep pursuit of questioning what knowledge bases scholars favor in our approach to research. Kovach came from a Cree knowledge base as her epistemic center. She talked about academic institutions as the gatekeepers responsible for upholding what constitutes knowledge in our society (79).

Kovach (2009) argued that racist policies that have resisted the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge from these sites of power (158-163). Kovach defined the importance of self-location (100). She valued inductive instead of deductive methodologies. She said: "an Indigenous research framework has transferability among distinctive tribal contexts" (46). Indigenous research shows agreement on key ethical considerations: 1) that the methodology be in line with Indigenous values 2) that there is some form of community accountability 3) that the research gives back to and benefits the community in some manner and 4) that the researcher is an ally and will not do harm (48). She reinforced the idea that: "the act of searching be it for knowledge or anything else, is a process in which all cultures have engaged, and it is always informed by that respective culture" (42). She applied research framework language and concepts to Indigenous ways of knowing by demonstrating Indigenous methodologies are relational, they

include tribal epistemology and a decolonizing aim. She saw the similarities with qualitative methodologies, the value of relationality and evidence of process and content (32).

Decision makers must demonstrate leadership by decolonizing the political culture. The ways of knowing are vital to resurgence of Indigenous societies. The resurgence of Indigenous knowledge should be seen as a foundation for reciprocity and peaceful coexistence (Coulthard 2014, 129). Coulthard's conclusions on Indigenous resurgence provided a good analysis of the assertion of authority. He said these ways of knowing are integral to empowerment, leading to the relationships and alliances that are needed in collective action.

Theoretical Perspectives and Significance of the Research

Existing research in the field of public policy has explored government decision-making and policy processes in relation to the impacts of social movements (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Olson 1968; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993; Kingdon 2003). Relatively few scholars have addressed the impacts of the actions of Indigenous people where they are significant actors. The theoretical perspectives on government policy decisions will establish the gaps that exist in examining the impact of social movements of Indigenous people (Downs 1957; Howlett et al. 2009; Bardach 2012; Sabatier 1999; Kingdon 1995; Fischer 2003; Weimer & Vining 2011).

Although some work has been done regarding the relationship between advocacy coalitions comprised of a variety of public issue stakeholders (Özen & Özen 2010; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993), there remains many gaps in the existing literature, specifically regarding the impacts of social movements on public policy (Meyer 2003; Jenkins 1983).

This study examined the movement from a different perspective framed around the impact that it has had on government policy, policy making and government-Indigenous relations. The focus was on the non-Indigenous government side of the relationship rather than on the movement itself. Not enough work has been done to examine why government does what it does and what makes it respond.

Public policy: “is usually thought of as the means by which governments strive to meet the needs of the population” (Bryant 2012, 138). But in the case of Indigenous people, “public policy frequently creates barriers that prevent vulnerable populations from accessing social determinants of health such as income, housing, and food. As a result, these populations experience insecurity which has implications for their health and well-being” (Bryant 2012, 138). Indigenous people are pursuing self-government initiatives with the hopes to make changes to this, particularly in these areas of policy change. An understanding of the history of Indigenous policy is necessary to move forward in the implementation of self-government (Abele & Prince 2003).

Government has had difficulty responding to Indigenous demands and policy change that impacts Indigenous people, creating many challenges for the academy in documenting and studying the processes. Authors generally use policy, rights, and relationships to frame how they present Indigenous policy issues. They may use one or perhaps two of these lenses, but seldom do they use all three.

In examining Indigenous policy, more emphasis must be placed on the relationality of natural laws and ways of knowing into the literature that would bring a unique perspective because of the relevant concepts and understandings within. There is currently a void in this unexplored and unknown space. An example is the lack of gender specific research and literature employing an understanding that natural laws and ways of knowing are gender specific.

The connection to the role of Indigenous women and resurgence, reclaiming their roles in relation to the water is synonymous with the movement, even if policy makers are ignorant to these understandings. This is generally because policy makers have not been informed about the relationships that exist in this area. The relationships between women and water protection is relevant to this work, Indigenous natural laws define women as keepers of the water.

D’Arcy wrote about the events of the movement, including the flash mob round dances as the disruption of space with the normalization of tradition and ceremony. He referred to the impacts of Indigenous people bringing their round dances to places such as shopping malls and the ways

in which those spaces were changed in the moment and as a result there was an upheaval of those power balances (D'Arcy 2014, 91). This transition was an irritant to those who had little sympathy for Indigenous issues.

Wilson (2015) wrote about the ways in which Indigenous women have led the people, outside the realms of the politics of Chief and Council and the away from the oppression of the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) system. She said these women are our unsung heroes who go unnoticed (Wilson 2015, 256). The work of women in community revitalization must be recognized and acknowledged.

Indigenous women are identifying how colonization is related to the social and health issues facing Indigenous people and as Anderson argues: “The subjugation of Aboriginal women is the direct result of colonization...this subjugation stands behind much of the social disorder and ill health we see in our communities today” (Anderson 2011, 4-5). The healing starts with the sharing of that history as women are taking those roles on now more than ever.

Examination of non-Indigenous policy approaches need to be considered when looking at Indigenous policy approaches and the differences. Indigenous research approaches are also relevant. These examinations can look at the way scholars see Indigenous issues through a policy lens, a treaty lens (rights), or a relationships lens. Use of a multi-dimensional lens is an interesting approach to consider. A decolonized approach moves us away from the typical mainstream approach that has not worked in the past. Through decolonization more decision makers could become knowledgeable in the Indigenous understandings and more Indigenous people could become knowledgeable in the policy process.

The policy, rights and relationships lenses are significant to understanding the social problems that existed leading up to and during the movement. Knowing the policies that impacted the lives of Indigenous people helps to understand the challenges they were facing. The rights lens focuses on Aboriginal and treaty rights that Indigenous people hold in Canada. The relationships lens speaks to the natural laws that frame the relationships between people and their environment.

This study sought to identify the impact of Indigenous mass movements on Canadian public policy. At a theoretical level, this research contributes to the understandings of punctuated equilibrium in social theory, a model of policy change where change occurs incrementally because of the bounded rationality of decision makers, as a way and a means to understand social change in complex social systems (Baumgartner & Jones 1993) and to the theory of collective action (Olson 1968).

Chapter 2: The Idle No More Movement

The Idle No More movement (also referred to as the movement) was co-founded by four women in Saskatchewan: Sylvia McAdam, Jessica Gordon, Nina Wilson, and Sheelah McLean (three Indigenous women and one non-Indigenous woman). These four women started the movement in the Fall of 2012, and they did so because they could, because they had the ability to network far and wide (Anderson 2016). They were critical actors who had the ability to bring together their networks and to take action to make change. Their relationships with one another ignited a spark that grew exponentially and globally.

The movement consisted of a series of events such as rallies, flash mob round dances and teach-ins that were held across the globe. The movement's events initially consisted of flash mob round dances held in public places, but in certain regions the events escalated into blockades and barricades with shows of force in some cases (Coates 2014). The co-founders had the capacity to come together with their background knowledge and experience and bring the force of the grassroots people with them: "Saysewahum (Sylvia McAdam) and three other women founded Idle No More, a worldwide movement protecting the planet from corporate destruction and seeking inherent Indigenous sovereignty" (Longman 2017, 14). Their voices spanned far and wide as the founders: "called on all people to join in a revolution which honours and fulfills Indigenous sovereignty which protects the land and water" (Manuel & Derrickson 2015, 213). The work of these four women represented a key example of Indigenous grassroots activism as actions of land defenders, all in response to proposed government policy.

The movement quickly became the largest sustained Indigenous activist movement in Canadian history. It allowed people to become involved. According to Roberts: "Idle No More engendered a new vocabulary for settler-invader citizens to position themselves in relation to this Indigenous movement, with non-Indigenous Canadians self-identifying as "settlers" and "allies" as a means of both orienting themselves with respect to Indigenous resistance to the settler-invader nation-state and signaling an attempted solidarity with Idle No More that would not lapse into appropriation" (Roberts 2017, 64). Because Canadian institutions and culture are very different in Canada, many Indigenous movements in this country have not been as visible as they have

been in the United States. Because of the difference in institutions and culture, the movement may have had different impacts if it had started in the United States.

The movement occurred in direct response to federal legislation that impacted Aboriginal rights (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 22) and was triggered by the proposed changes in two federal omnibus Bills (C-38 and C-45). More specifically, the notable sections were those related to the removal of the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* to be replaced with the *Navigation Protection Act*. This new Act eliminated federal government oversight on 98% of Canada's lakes and rivers (Manuel & Derrickson 2015, 212). These proposed changes brought an immediate Indigenous grassroots reaction which manifested itself in many different responses to the movement.

The proposed changes in the two omnibus bills alerted the co-founders to the legal ramifications of these bills: "Bill C-38 - in which the stripping of protection from fish habitats is mixed up with unemployment insurance eligibility - was 425 pages long with 753 clauses changing 69 unrelated laws...Bill C-45 was 457 pages long and used 516 clauses to amend 64 laws. This ranged from stripping the environmental protection from rivers and lakes to altering public sector pensions" (Saul 2014, 114). Indigenous people: "saw this as a lead-up to an assault on the environment" (Saul 2014, 103). The process played itself out as follows:

Beginning in the fall of 2012, Sylvia McAdam was tagged on Facebook about Omnibus Budget Bill C-45, a 450-page document that buried provisions that would lead to troubling legislative alterations. These included granting Aboriginal Affairs the authority to call a band meeting and implement leasehold changes based on a majority of votes from those in attendance, instead of waiting for a majority vote from all eligible voters; and vast changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, thus potentially negatively impacting those Native communities still reliant on water bodies for both ceremonial and economic reasons. (Belanger 2018, 407)

The removal of protection of the waters alerted the women who then spoke publicly about the grassroots response needed: "The growing feelings of alienation between First Nations people, particularly women and youth towards their leadership and the decisions being made by them resulted in Grassroots people initiating Idle No More on their own" (Manuel & Derrickson 2015,

209). These feelings of alienation are reflected in the data collected while doing the research for this dissertation.

The Windows of Opportunity Open

In past practice, governments have responded to Indigenous policy incrementally due to bounded rationality. According to Jones and Baumgartner (2005) the term punctuated equilibrium “has been used loosely in political science to refer to reactions to large-scale crises in the environment (5)”. The movement initiated a punctuated equilibrium where change happened because windows of opportunity opened. These windows of opportunity happened because for the first time in Canada’s history, the multi-dimensional components of policy, rights and relationships came together to create a “perfect storm” to demonstrate the collective frustrations of Indigenous people, consequently creating the perfect conditions for the movement to truly take hold. The way policy, rights and relationships came together in the movement is that the two omnibus Bills were the policies that triggered action, Indigenous people used their treaty and inherent rights to assert their authority within the movement and previously established relationships and structures guided the movement.

Existing research in the field of public policy has explored government decision-making and policy processes in relation to the impacts of social movements such as the legalization of marijuana. Relatively few scholars have addressed the impacts of the actions of Indigenous people, significant actors who are rights holders rather than stakeholders. Canadians for the most part are stakeholders in Canada, but Indigenous people have additional rights. They have Aboriginal and treaty rights that define their roles and responsibilities as the First Peoples.

Although some work has been done regarding the relationship between advocacy coalitions comprised of a variety of public issue stakeholders (Özen & Özen 2010), there remains many gaps in the existing literature, specifically regarding the impacts of social movements on public policy (Jenkins 1983). To date almost all the work on the movement has focused on the Indigenous people and the movement itself.

There are several authors that have written about the movement. The Kino-nda-niimi Collective (2014) is a compilation of various authors' works and provides interesting perspectives on the events and the movement itself. These authors speak from first-hand experiences with the movement. Coates (2014) provided the most descriptive analysis of why the movement began, how it unfolded and the changes that took place as they occurred including the changes to the way the movement uses social media to connect and mobilize. Harden (2013) provided his perspective of the movement and analyzes why it began. His information is detailed for the most part, but he has slight errors in his data (73). He was on the mark as he said the movement's goal was to: "stimulate activism and reignite a wider sense of indigenous pride" (73). There are many perspectives regarding the movement and Aboriginal rights. These authors speak to how the movement has influenced how government views Indigenous people, particularly the power of the grassroots people. Unfortunately, the academy has not paid a lot of attention to the Aboriginal rights pieces. It should be noted that the current literature does not provide the necessary insight into contemporary grassroots movements (Harden 2013, 18).

Scholars who are examining the movement should acknowledge the fact that First Nations people continue to view themselves as keepers of the land, and that First Nations women are considered the keepers of the water in many Indigenous cultures. Recognizing gender influences within mobilization efforts helps to provide a clearer understanding of the issues. This would help explain why Indigenous women have been reiterating their roles within their communities and are engaging more in political processes to make change.

The connection to the relationship between the women behind the movement and the changes to the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* are relevant to Indigenous ways of knowing yet are still unknown by many writers. The teachings of natural laws and Indigenous women's roles as keepers of the water came to the forefront with the movement (McAdam 2015, 24). This focus from the women was the true impetus for the Idle No More movement (Coates 2014; Harden 2013; The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014). It has been recognized by scholars that: "Indigenous women have emerged again as a formidable political force, both locally, and, increasingly, in electoral politics at the regional and national levels" (Coates 2014, 42). There has been a change

in the way women are viewed in the political and cultural arenas. This applies to mainstream society as well; women are taking the lead in these areas in many spaces.

The resurgence of Indigenous women's roles has been spotlighted in the movement. According to the cultural teachings, women have a special relationship to water because they are givers of life, and water is life (Caven 2013).

When the Elders talk about the treaties being in place for “as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow” some of them say that it was meant to be translated to “as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the waters flow” the latter being representative of Indigenous children being born, because with childbirth flows water. These teachings are integral to understanding the relationship women have with water, a traditional teaching for many who are gifted with such Indigenous knowledge.

Hawken pointed out that most movements are rooted in actors that have commonalities in their principles and values (Hawken 2007, 21). This is the case with Idle No More, the common principles and values are a critical component of the movement's strategy. As pointed out by McGibbon:

In keeping with the structural and policy-based mechanisms of oppression, denying suffrage to Canadian women was enshrined in the Constitution of Canada. White women won the right to vote in elections in 1918, but they were not recognized as persons until 1929. Canadian women of Asian and Indo-Canadian heritage were not enfranchised until 1947. Indigenous women could not vote until 1960. These facts illustrate one of the key features of oppression, namely that it does not operate in isolation (McGibbon 2012, 25).

Decades ago, governments believed that First Nations did not have the capacity to organize, and that they were unable to come together as a collective (Peters 2007). However, their heterogeneity particularly in urban centres has driven both First Nations and Métis people to identify with their home communities, creating the identities that have allowed grassroots movements to take root (Peters 2007, 208). A resurgence of urban Indigenous people

reconnecting with their on-reserve kinship systems has increased the abilities of diverse networks to come together.

There are certain actors in the process who have invested more time and energy to keep the movement active for the people. The value of social capital in First Nations communities is obvious but has been understudied (Mignone & Henley 2009, 129). Collective action requires commitment from the actors in the interest of the public good (Ostrom 1999, 4). As a society people come together to make things happen. Social norms play an integral part of the decision-making process, such as norms of reciprocity (Ostrom 1999, 20).

Reciprocity and Relationality Framed in Natural Laws

Reciprocity and relationality are part of community and are framed within the natural laws of Indigenous people. Reciprocity means giving back and having the responsibility of understanding that we are not entitled to anything. Relationality involves our connection to all things and how we are related as spirit beings. Some of these values are practiced globally by Indigenous peoples. For example, authors have written about how a community is as strong as its drum in relation to land and Nikawinan Aski (Mother Earth as a Life Giver). These authors write about the sound of the drum as being the heartbeat of our mother (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 100). The connections between the drum and the earth are part of teachings of the Elders and the Knowledge Keepers. Many Indigenous cultures around the globe place some form of significance on the drum. It is a collective form of expression for many nations.

There are numerous global organizations that support poverty alleviation, social justice education, human rights and civil liberties, and human rights protection (Hawken 2007, 258-60, 280). These groups have collective action interests that bring them together. Jenkins (1983) describes commonalities specifically amongst those involved in collective action: “groups sharing strong distinctive identities and dense interpersonal networks exclusive to group members are highly organized and hence readily mobilized” (538). This happened with Idle No More, perhaps not intentionally. But the events were organized enough to be mobilized.

According to Sylvia McAdam the Idle No More logo (Appendix B) held distinct meaning for many people: “The symbol of the hand holding an eagle feather became the emblem of peace, resistance, and revolution for Idle No More Grassroots people. Aaron Paquette provided the artwork that became recognizable globally” (McAdam 2015, 93). The logo has been used in numerous images and posters to signify the concept of Indigenous people as land protectors. The Idle No More logo is easily recognized by people across the globe and is a symbol of activation.

There have been various Indigenous movements that have initiated action in Canada. The Idle No More movement is significant because of the intensity of support it has garnered. It resonated with people all over the world (McAdam 2015, 93). Under the proposed legislation of the omnibus bills (C-38 and C-45) many waterways were no longer protected, making resource development easier. Some Canadians spoke out in opposition, but First Nations were especially vocal. Indigenous issues were prioritized for the first time on a national scale. The voices of Indigenous people were getting attention where they had not before. Those who were previously silent became vocal, they found their voices. Youth were given something to believe in, encouraged that change might happen. There was renewed hope and strength that Indigenous issues would come to the forefront (Coates 2014, 19).

The movement was instrumental because it was the first time the Canadian and provincial governments were faced with the challenge of being pressured to hear the collective voices of First Nations people from the grassroots level. The movement became a catalyst for First Nations to collectively assert their inherent and treaty rights to the land and waters. Through the movement, First Nations asserted their authority as keepers of the land and waters and demanded government keep their consultation and accommodation obligations. First Nations grassroots people stood up and voiced their opposition and called for change to improve the lives of future generations. Idle No More activated an awareness of social rights, environmental protection, and democracy (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 356). Today there continues to be a heightened awareness amongst grassroots people that they have responsibilities as the First People and stewards of the land.

There was an obvious disconnect between the movement and Indigenous political leaders and organizations. The movement did not link up to the existing Indigenous political issues (Coates 2014, 18; Harden 2013, 74). One of the most powerful components of the movement was the obvious positive change in the way First Nations youth began to view their own identity. The youth became empowered in unique ways through the movement. As Coates argued, the movement: “was the largest and most sustained affirmation of Indigenous determination and culture in Canadian history” (Coates 2014, 133). As the movement grew, the momentum brought even more allies into the discussion.

The global support for the movement grew rapidly, including support from youth around the world (Coates 2014). The growth of the movement amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous people was immediate, with people coming together to demand change to the way governments consult with First Nations in Canada, particularly regarding lands and resources.

The driving force behind the movement came from the people, not the Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTOs) or the National Organizations that are mandated to protect treaty and Aboriginal rights (Harden 2013, 74). These PTOs operate under the Canadian election system and their funding comes through the federal government. Early in the movement some of these PTOs struggled to gain control of the process, but the original founders were able to maintain the vision of grassroots action and they did not allow them to usurp the control.

The primary strength of the movement lay in its collective organizing structure, with no clear lines of First Nations leadership and decision-making. This was problematic as non-Indigenous governments responded to the movement at the provincial, national, and global levels without being equipped to deal with grassroots movements. Provincial and federal governments are accustomed to being able to speak to identified First Nations leaders, many of whom have spent their whole careers within non-Indigenous political systems. Unfortunately, the lack of “point people” also caused disorganization, which resulted in suboptimal outputs from the movement. The fact that there is no one central person or organization leading the movement’s charge may have been detrimental to the movement in the long run as it resulted in a lack of organization and planning at the regional level. This may have served to benefit government in the short term.

Idle No More demonstrations took place at the local levels for the most part, although a small number of regional, national, and global events occurred. These events were fewer in number after 2014. Yet the spirit of Idle No More has not diminished in many circles. Environmental crises have caused the movement to reinvigorate itself. This happened with the Husky Oil spill in the North Saskatchewan River and the Dakota Access Pipeline in Standing Rock, North Dakota. Given the proximity of Canada to the United States, a large number of Indigenous people went to Standing Rock in a show of support. Another example is seen in the 2013 protests from the Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick where the Indigenous people protested a proposed shale-gas project using seismic exploration with sound wave technology. This is known as hydraulic fracking and is a highly controversial activity (some Respondents provided more detail on Elsipogtog First Nation).

New Voices

In many cases, the media helped to popularize the events of the movement (Coates, 2014). Media has always been powerful in activating people to take collective action, even before social media existed. Jenkins (1983) addressed media influence stressing: “mass media coverage is decisive in informing elites and mass publics about movement actions as well as in forming the morale and self-image of movement activists, the mass media are important actors in political conflicts” (546). Public perception is shaped based on what mass media covers and how it is reported. There are numerous instances where media controlled public response to issues, especially those involving Indigenous people.

In the case of the movement, social media was the most useful, inexpensive, and fast means of spreading the word. There was a consistent growth in on-line support for Idle No More once it was created. For example, the “Idle No More Official” Facebook page had 52,917 members on August 26, 2016. The Idle No More websites promote a treaty-based position, referring to the treaties as: “nation to nation agreements between First Nations and the British Crown who are sovereign nations” (<http://www.idlenomore.ca>). A treaty-based position allows for the involvement of grassroots people because treaty knowledge is community driven and collective. The manifesto for Idle No More states: “we believe in healthy, just, equitable and sustainable

communities and have a vision and plan of how to build them” (<http://www.idlenomore.ca/manifesto>). Although a manifesto was put forward, not a lot of work was done to activate the document.

The movement as a collective has brought forward many of the issues faced by the grassroots people. One of these has been around governance and the role of the Chiefs. In many cases and in many communities across Canada, over the decades the role of the Chief has been minimized through the administration of the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5). The term “Indian Act Chiefs” has been used by grassroots people in a “speaking the truth” way to describe Chiefs who are recognized as Chiefs under the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5), who are regulated by the Department of Indian Affairs, and consequently do not work to address the real needs of the people (Betamosake Simpson 2018, 231). With Idle No More many of these “Indian Act Chiefs” ceased to be recognized by many of the people as having the authority to speak on behalf of the people in many policy areas.

Changes occurred in the political arena that further weakened the voice of the Chiefs in their communities (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 336). There are various reasons for this: “In reality, the political legitimacy of the elected Indian Act chiefs has been in serious trouble for a long time within the First Nations community, weakened by divisive battles on membership, voting, financial and governance issues” (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 336). Many grassroots people have become tired of waiting for their leaders to make meaningful change. For some communities there is a true sense of hopelessness and helplessness. The social repercussions of that are reflected in the wide gaps between Indigenous and mainstream demographics in this country. In the numbered treaties, particularly Treaty Number Eight, the government referred to these Chiefs as Government Chiefs. Interestingly, the Idle No More founders referred to the current system of government and its leaders as Indian Act Chiefs. This is a prime example of the way many Indigenous grassroots people increasingly feel disconnected from their leaders.

Governments can consider using what happened with the movement as an opportunity to learn how to do things better moving forward. In the policy cycle, some policy learning can come from

coalitions or networks in advocating policy change (Bennett & Howlett 1992, 280). This should be applied in relation to Indigenous policy change as well. Without substantive government action, the social and political grievances underlying the movement will only increase in intensity and size, particularly with the well-documented demographic growth of Indigenous peoples.

It is widely recognized that Indigenous youth were heavily involved in the movement, both during and after. The movement activated youth in ways that had not been seen before, giving them a sense of identity, and belonging, along with a sense of pride to have the courage to take back their voices and be heard by government and their own leadership.

With the movement several policy actors including environmentalists and Indigenous grassroots people shared concerns that already advocated government action. The ideas posed by authors such as Kymlicka (1995) regarding group differentiated rights creates the potential for groups to come together in an Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) to push their group rights agendas through collective action, thereby initiating policy change. The movement has seen a type of ACF happening in Indigenous communities. This group rights agenda came from Indigenous peoples' discontent and frustration with government policy and practice.

Anecdotal evidence prior to this study suggested that there has been the transformation of public policy and practice because of the movement. Further to this it seemed that the movement impacted government policy and practice in Canada and, consequently the governments' relationships with Indigenous people including elected Indigenous leadership. This study examines that assertion.

The increased number of Indigenous protest activities after 2012 is evident, both in size and external support than what it was before 2012. This could be because the timing for this debate was overdue. The data gathered for this dissertation demonstrates the ways in which policy (Omnibus Bills), rights (Treaty and Aboriginal), and relationships (existing First Nations and government as well as relationships to natural laws and the land) came together in a way that created opportunities for Canada and Canadians to begin the discussions needed to make change.

By December 2012: “Idle No More’s actions had spread across Canada and into the United States, with Indigenous people demanding that Indigenous treaty and constitutional rights, including the right of consultation, be respected” (Barker 2017, 4). The Respondents pointed out how the federal government under Stephen Harper was concerned about the National Day of Action, scheduled for December 10, 2012, and the potential of what could come from that. They wanted the Chiefs to try to interfere with it and to put a stop to it. But the Chiefs were not able to do that. The federal government knows that another National Day of Action could be pending. They are very aware that the movement still exists and the potential for a re-creation of the National Day of Action is imminent. As mentioned previously the government was so alarmed that they were conducting surveillance on those involved: “In early 2012, several news outlets reported the RCMP had formed the Aboriginal Joint Intelligence Group in 2007 and mobilized teams nationally to monitor 18 First Nation ‘communities of concern’ that had escalated to civil disobedience and unrest in the form of protest actions. This extended to monitoring closely Idle No More, which in a 2013 internal report was compared to a spreading bacteria” (Belanger 2018, 273). Barker (2017) provides a snapshot of the situation in 2012:

When the Canadian Prime Minister and Parliament continued to refuse meeting with Indigenous leaders outside the Assembly of First Nations process, a national day of action was called for December 10. In solidarity with Idle No More’s objectives, Chief Theresa Spence of the Attawapiskat First Nation initiated a liquids-only fast. With international support, Spence agreed to attend a meeting that had been scheduled between Harper and representatives of the Assembly of First Nations on January 11, 2013, on the provision that Governor-General David Johnston, representing the Crown, agreed to attend. When neither Harper nor Johnston could agree on the terms of the meeting, Spence and several other Indigenous leaders boycotted. In support, representatives of the Treaty Chiefs, the Assembly of First Nations, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, the New Democratic Party, and the Liberal Party of Canada signed a thirteen-point declaration of commitment pledging to renew their efforts to oppose Bill C-45 and the bills that had not yet passed. They also outlined their demands of Harper and Parliament, including the need for transparency and consultation; a commitment to address treaty issues; an affirmation of Indigenous rights provided for by Canadian law and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; a commitment to resource

revenue sharing and environmental sustainability; and the appointment of a National Public Commission of Inquiry on Violence against Indigenous Women. (4-5)

The public education that was part of the movement served to inform and empower. As Manuel observed: “Ongoing public education is essential. It is not an accident that what launched the Idle No More movement was that first public education meeting in Saskatoon held by the activist women. Before you can have community participation you must have community education. This is especially the case in the struggle for recognition of Aboriginal title, which, after all, resides collectively with the community” (Manuel 2015, 219).

The responses from the 11 Respondents are presented thematically. The following 4 chapters (Chapters 3-6) provide the Respondents’ responses on specific subjects to depict the ways in which the movement brought together policy, rights, and relationships to create a ‘perfect storm’ for Idle No More to be born. In order to demonstrate this, Chapter 3 presents the government and Indigenous responses to Idle No More and focuses on rights and relationships and presents the Respondents’ responses to interview questions 1 and 2. Chapter 4 focuses on relationships and the impacts to relationships and presents the Respondents’ responses to interview questions 3 and 4. Chapter 5 focuses on changes to policy making approaches and presents the Respondents’ responses to interview questions 5 and 6. Chapter 6 presents the Respondents’ responses to interview question 7 and focuses on emerging and changed relationships. To bring it together, Chapter 7 looks at Canada’s policy environment in the aftermath of Idle No More.

The Respondents were asked about their experiences leading up to, during and after the movement in 2012. The Respondents responded based on the work they were doing at the time of the movement and some of what they learned from the movement. The research was designed to explore the approach of the federal and the provincial governments of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick and their actions around the movement and to examine the outcomes in terms of how they moved forward in negotiations and in their dealings with Indigenous people. With that in mind, all Respondents had responses relevant to the other regions. For example, individuals in Saskatchewan were able to discuss what was happening in New Brunswick as were federal officials. All Respondents provided valuable feedback regarding the federal and certain specific

provincial environments. The Respondents' responses are provided in Chapters 3-6 in italics, are unidentifiable and are presented as random, blind responses.

The movement's co-founders were able to activate people through their personal and professional networks and their common goals of awareness. They each held similar beliefs that the Government of Canada was hiding the truth in the two proposed Omnibus bills and that the people in Canada needed to know. The rallies, flash mob round dances and teach-ins that were held throughout the world were statements from Indigenous people and their allies that caught government attention wherever they were happening. The policy, rights and relationships coming together, opened the window of opportunity for the movement to take hold. The omnibus bills created the policy problem, and Indigenous people used this as a way and a means to express their rights through the pre-existing relationships between themselves, Canadians, and the environment.

Chapter 3: Government and Indigenous Responses to Idle No More

In the previous chapter it was demonstrated that Idle No More happened when a historic and precedent setting window of opportunity opened up for relevant actors, in this case the Idle No More co-founders and their allies, to collectively seize the opportunity to use the proposed policies such as the two Omnibus Bills C-38 and C-45, Indigenous rights such as treaty and Aboriginal rights and existing relationships between and amongst Indigenous peoples, their allies, government and Canadians and their relationships to natural laws and the land to activate and sustain the Idle No More movement. The introduction of the two Omnibus Bills C-38 and C-45 set in motion a series of actions based on Indigenous peoples' rights which were used to assert authority and express Indigenous voice, and which drew from the existing relationship structures to drive and guide the movement.

These pre-existing relationships between and amongst Indigenous peoples, their allies, federal and provincial governments, and Canadians were utilized and impacted as the movement progressed. Although provincial governments across Canada had their own responses to the movement, this dissertation focuses on the responses of two provinces in particular, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. The provincial governments in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick responded in unique ways because of the factors that were in place at the time of the movement.

Saskatchewan is significant with respect to the early beginnings coming from that province, the Idle No More movement started in Saskatchewan and its roots are in and the co-founders are from Saskatchewan. Throughout the past number of decades, First Nations people in Saskatchewan have been strong treaty advocates. One of the reasons for this is due to the formation of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (now the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations) almost 70 years ago. Many important and influential leaders are from Saskatchewan with strong treaty rights-based positions and peoples, so the responses related to the government in Saskatchewan were extremely relevant.

New Brunswick is significant because the Indigenous people in that province were facing unique challenges. In the fall 2013 the Elsipogtog and Mi'kmaq First Nations in New Brunswick took a

stand against SWN Resources to stop them from fracking in their territory. Fracking is a method used for shale gas exploration that is highly controversial and opposed by Indigenous peoples because of the lasting effects it leaves.

In New Brunswick the rights of the Mi'kmaq were ignored: "As the conflict progressed, the security state branded the Mi'kmaq Warrior Society, who were asserting sovereignty over the territory in question, as a source of criminality that threatened what Governor General David Johnston called the 'national inheritance' of settler colonial wealth and prosperity" (Crosby & Monaghan 2018, 154). The stand taken by the First Nations included blocking a highway and being dispersed by the RCMP (Dhillon 2017, 47). The response of both the federal and provincial governments in these provinces demonstrates the strained relationships that existed in 2012 and beyond.

These strained relationships were obvious in the two provinces of New Brunswick and Saskatchewan. A well distributed picture of Amanda Polchies kneeling in front of the police holding an eagle feather described the peaceful position of the Elsipogtog people opposing the fracking (Appendix A). This image was widely shared on social media and globally and it resonated with thousands of people.

In the case of New Brunswick there exists a real difference before and after the provincial election in 2014. A very different situation occurred because of the provincial and then the federal scene changing in that province.

It must be noted that the Respondents who were interviewed for this dissertation were informed on the federal environment as well as the provincial environments of both Saskatchewan and New Brunswick in relation to the movement.

The questions posed to the Respondents were related to policy, rights, and relationships. The first part of this chapter focuses on rights and relationships. The remainder of this chapter provides the Respondents' verbatim responses in italics.

Idle No More was a citizens' movement, driven by people and communities and often highly critical of Indigenous political leadership. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit leaders were struggling as well, to figure out how to respond to this unprecedented upswelling on Indigenous protests and demands. The leaders of public governments, only recently comfortable with regular negotiations with Indigenous political representatives, now had to figure out how to react to a mass movement that lacked standard political structures, organization, or policies.

The Idle No More Protests brought forward many different issues from global concerns about climate change to highly localized questions about environmental management and band management. The size, scale, nature, and complexity of the protests complicated a difficult and trying time for federal, provincial, and territorial leaders as they sought to forge new and sustainable relationships with Indigenous peoples.

The Respondents interviewed for this project, all extensively involved with their respective public governments, had considerable pre-Idle No More experience with Indigenous peoples and were in office when the wave of protests swept across the country. Some of the Respondents continued to work within government for several years after the movement, most are no longer working within Indigenous, federal, or provincial governments today.

They all spoke about how Indigenous advocacy changed dramatically in 2012-2013 and thereafter. The Respondents provided in-depth interviews which can be attributed to their diverse and informed backgrounds and their informed places in the system. Their contributions to the data provided the valuable insight needed to assess the views of government during and after the movement.

Changes in Attitude Amongst Indigenous Leaders and Communities

One Respondent connected the rising frustration to the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the inability of local Chiefs to affect real change at the community level. This Respondent observed: *I was seeing a major change happening in the lead up to Idle No More, I saw it in a growing frustration with the Harper government. I remember talking with RCMP who monitor, you know, First Nation activism, on Parliament Hill, because I always spoke with*

liaison people with the RCMP because I was always involved in a lot of the demonstrations on the Hill. And I remember one of them saying to me how concerned he was because the Chiefs were getting nowhere with the government...he said the RCMP were really worried about the growing militancy because the Chiefs couldn't deliver, because you had a government that was not willing to listen and talk and that certainly leads up to the Attawapiskat housing crisis where the Harper government decided to take an extremely poor, impoverished community and make an example out of them, for their white base, to blame, taxpayer's money ripped off, and demonize the Chief and Council, to depose the Chief and Council during a massive crisis where people's lives were at risk, was a real escalation on the part of the Harper government.

This led, not surprisingly, to a strong response from community members: *I began to see major, major pushback from all matters of, not just the young First Nations people but like leadership realizing that things were coming to a head.* This Respondent noted that the change in attitude predated Idle No More. A December 2011 Assembly of First Nations (AFN) meeting in Ottawa demonstrated deep anger against Harper. The Chiefs tried to force a meeting with the Prime Minister, without success, something that was quite new for the AFN. As this Respondent stated: *They were expressing the growing, the frustration on the ground and so, this was just in the lead-up to Idle No More so, you could feel this thing coming for a long time.*

It is vital to note that the protests focused significantly on the existing Indigenous leadership. From the very beginning, Idle No More events surfaced significant concerns about the Chiefs. As one Respondent noted: *I think that the change in attitude and cautiousness was escalated, I guess, in result of, the questions surrounding "what are you doing as leaders" out there from the grassroots movement.* The frustrations were real and pointed and the tensions substantial.

As one Respondent noted, the Chiefs were concerned with: *how Idle No More sticks with them and thinking of interaction between the regional British Columbia Chief of that time and Idle No More people that we invited as the witness to one of our meetings and the Idle No More person was really antagonistic towards the British Columbia regional Chief, so it was definite tension there.*

The national media paid little attention to the growing difficulties between the non-traditional leadership of the First Nations and the active and highly visible protests by the Idle No More activists. One of the Respondents noted that there: *seemed to be a bit of indictment of the established kind of leadership structures, at least among First Nations, the political structures, so there was dissatisfaction with the AFN.* The grassroots people claimed that the national organization: *was not connected to what people's concerns were on the ground.* The situation was beyond awkward.

According to one Respondent, the Grand Chief from Manitoba refused to meet with Prime Minister Harper, even though the national chief of the AFN was in attendance. The growing tensions raised questions about the vitality and authority of Indigenous political structures, the nature of political representation of the First Nations, and a clear sign that there was: *dissatisfaction on the ground.* It was not that the leadership was not trying as the Chiefs reached out to community members. The reality was that: *Idle No More was entirely meant to be a grassroots movement that operates sort of outside of, kind of political processes.* One individual with considerable experience with national Indigenous affairs noticed that there was not even a parallel to the protest against the Pierre Trudeau government's White Paper on Indian Affairs. *Idle No More: started to sort of galvanize people who weren't necessarily found that they had a voice or some way into, you know, the discourse around Indigenous issues.* The Respondent saw that as: *a really positive thing and it just started to spread like wildfire, that was pretty good, anything that you could get people engaged on is a pretty powerful thing.*

Since Idle No More was not a tightly managed, highly structured organization, it is inevitable there were substantial differences in Indigenous responses across the country and over time. The movement picked up momentum, in part, in the words of one Respondent, because of the: *challenges of representation, more so in the urban population and the off-reserve population. In the on-reserve population, the movement was there but it wasn't as strong as it was off-reserve.*

Idle No More, to more than one Respondent, gave off-reserve Indigenous people a chance to voice their concerns about government, Indigenous leadership, programs, and services. In the minds of government officials, the long-standing practice of dealing directly with Indigenous

leaders had stopped them from meeting with community members in open forums. For many, Idle No More liberated Indigenous people to speak out and be heard. This was particularly true for off-reserve Indigenous people, who felt largely ignored by both Indigenous and public government representatives. People expected to be heard and listened to, presenting a dramatic change to operations in Indian Affairs. There was no quick or obvious solution, according to Respondents, and Indian Affairs wrestled with the new and assertive advocacy of so many disparate and “unofficial” voices. Indian Affairs officials faced protests and sit-ins outside their offices in prairie cities, and they struggled to deal with the flow of regular business. But if Idle No More had a core message about leadership and communities’ activism, it was this: *And that’s not always necessarily the leaders in the community too and (government) had to be open to listening to voices of all.* But these were not conceptual or theoretical questions.

The changes in government and the questions about Indigenous leadership generated serious and deep concerns. As one Respondent noted: *When the whole Idle No More movement started and it started to go through social media and started to see people gather, I think it caused a lot of fear, I think that people, the leaders, didn’t know where or what to do or where their place is, and I think some were even opposed to it.*

A movement that seemed, superficially, to be a critique of the national government was so much more. The anger was directed, substantially if not equally, at Indigenous leadership, which complicated government attempts to respond to a movement that, from their perspective, seemed leaderless and rudimentary. The movement was harder for public administrators to respond to because they could not connect with representatives or identify concrete actions to take, yet it was one that politicians could engage through public statements.

Governments, like most Canadians, did not really understand the meaning and nature of Idle No More. As one Respondent noted: *they just didn’t know what this was all about. It seemed that the Idle No More collective group were organized well, it seemed like they had more than just the women who had started and trying to form this (Movement), Idle No More were saying “enough” and holding leadership to account and holding their feet to the fire saying, “do*

something". Idle No More, the Respondents uniformly agreed, challenged, and changed the concept of Indigenous leadership.

The elected First Nations Chiefs were nervous and uncertain. Government wondered about how the movement would affect government-Indigenous relations, expectations around consultation, and Indigenous decision-making. The power and effectiveness of the movement and the degree to which Idle No More dominated and reshaped Indigenous politics challenged many aspects of Indigenous government and politics in Canada. As one Respondent noted: *I think everybody, not just in the province but federally, that just wanted this to stop and go away because of the strength and the voice of Idle No More.*

The national media and most political analysis focused on the growing turmoil within the Assembly of First Nations and failed to note the transformation that occurred at the community level. Young women especially gained more profile, motivated by the presence and effectiveness of the Idle No More leadership. The four women who founded Idle No More got most of the attention but in hundreds of communities across the country, new leaders were emerging, organizing, and hosting public events such as teach-ins, and articulating concerns to local, provincial, and national leadership. This represented a major challenge to the traditional Indigenous leaders and even more to public governments, who no longer had a simple and clear line of consultation and decision-making.

One of the leaders of the Idle No More movement made it clear that this bottom-up reconfiguration of Canadian and Indigenous politics was no accident. They used personal and local connections, and not elected First Nations leaders, to spread the protest: *that all 4 of us brought to the table is our connections to people. Sheila has strong connections to allies, to the white people and to the different organizations. And my connection was with the land and with cultural people, I think anyway. And then Jessica and Nina brought their strengths as well. And so, when we started it and those first couple of teachings, it was those connections and I think our integrity and our credibility in these communities that got Idle No More going. And so, my uncle who was a band councillor from Saddle Lake got on board right away and he was very supportive. And then also Colby Tootosis organized the third teaching in Saskatchewan, in*

North Battleford and it was because of my friendship with him. And then same with Prince Albert. Prince Albert was the nearest city to my community, and it was just our connections into the community. And then I reached out to Janice out in Alberta she was living in Edmonton and Tanya Cappo and I started organizing Louis Bull, we reached out to Enoch and I think Ron Morin was the Chief at the time. They refused for us to have an Idle No More teach in there because they feared repercussions of agreements that they were working on. And that was my understanding at the time. And so, we were, to be honest that really bothered us and we didn't feel welcome. And then we were in the middle of this and then all of a sudden, Hobbema reached out to us and one of the Chiefs, I think it was Sampson, reached out to us and said: "you're welcome to come have a teach in over here". And so, we were like: "oh good, oh good" you know, it just felt like...we're wanted somewhere.

The way in which Idle No More spread across the country steadily increased its impact. The organizers invited Ryerson University academic and outspoken Indigenous advocate Pam Palmater to address supporters in Alberta. She brought her extensive knowledge of Facebook and Twitter to the group, providing social media platforms for local activists and outlets for Indigenous stories across the country.

The movement brought new people, previously apart from the Canadian political processes, out to events. Sylvia McAdam described several of these encounters: *these two older ladies, they came up to me (in Alberta) and I thought they were going to shake my hand so they had their hand out so I approached them and they had their hand out and they, both of them came and hugged me and then they said, and they handed me something in my hand and there was change and money and I looked at it and I was like: "what is this?" Both of them said that they had a bake sale to fundraise my gas money and there they were, they gave it over to me. And if you look at the history of resistance, if you hear the stories of the Indigenous, our people who were involved in resistances, it's reminiscent of those stories where the Grassroots people did everything like everything that they could to support the movement, to support the resistance, to support the revolution, right. And so, and then after I was done speaking with them. This gentleman, he was a younger man, I would say about 35, 30, he comes up to me and he shakes my hand and he goes: "I'm glad I came" he said: "I hitchhiked here" I'm like: "wow, I'm so*

glad you're here" and he goes: "yeah this has been really important information so I'm glad I came" and he just left like that. And he said: "now I'm going to hitchhike home". The movement had clearly reached new people, in new ways.

The whole Movement was done on a shoestring without a budget, grants, or direct support. As one of the organizers noted: *I went to the teach in to go and speak, I did it on my own money, my own time; we still don't get money except for some of the donations that do come in from the Idle No More website but most of the time I pay for my own gas and different stuff.* This both puzzled and worried government officials. Groups that were not reliant on government for funding and support were not constrained by government rules and were more impervious to political or civil servant control of influence.

But the response to Idle No More was far from uniform. Indeed, the movement sparked significant pushback, particularly from men and from the elected Indigenous leadership. As one Respondent observed: *when it first started, we had a mix of this huge support and then pockets of rejection. The Indigenous men started attacking us that first year on Twitter and Facebook. It was this attack, and it was relentless, I had to block them...because they were so cruel, uninformed, and violent and abusive in how they spoke to us. There was this whole group of people who were joining in, attacking us, and I didn't know them.* Throughout the movement, activists and leaders found support from the Elders. The Respondent described one such supportive meeting, which came with a dramatic personal charge and accountability:

There was a large group of them. I came with protocol, and I had gifts and tobacco and I gave it over to the Elders. We started talking and I said: "You know, what should we do, we need your guidance". And then they knew that I was a lawyer. they said: "Well, one thing for sure" they said: "you can't use their laws, you cannot use their laws" and they said to me: "If you're going to do this, you have to defend for the children, you must invoke our most sacred laws." My mom had already spoken to me about this, so I wasn't unfamiliar with it. But to sit there with a group of Elders and to have it affirmed, was sacred, it was sacred. And so, they said to me: "If you're going to do, if you will do this, you are going to have to invoke our most sacred law. That law is invoked in times of crisis and threat". And I said: "ok, alright" they said: "that law is called

nâtamâwasowin.” I was sad that because I understood what that’s going to entail. It’s a lifelong commitment till my last breath. I sat there looking and I was thinking and I said: “ok, ok”, and I said: “Nâtamâwasowin means you are going to protect and defend for the children not only your children but all children of the world” and they said but not only the human children, but also the children of the animals, the children of the water, the children of the trees and the plants, all of creation”. So, I said: “ok, ok nâtamâwasowin it is” so that’s the law that guides pretty much everything I do because I think, and we can all agree that we are now in a time of crisis.

Not everyone saw major changes in Indigenous attitude and approach to government.

Another Respondent noted: *I don’t think I saw a change of attitude in First Nations leaders because I met with the Métis Nation, I met with the Tribal Council, and I met with the FSIN on giving me some suggestions on how I may want to deal with Idle No More.* Feedback was minimal: *none of them really wanted to touch it with a ten-foot pole. I would say the leadership of the Indigenous people, I think they distanced themselves from Idle No More.*

The Respondent looked for meaning in this distancing from the movement: *I don’t know if they felt they weren’t part of it or if they were worried that Idle No More would take away some of their power in dealing with the government or not. Because it was more of a grassroots organization right, it wasn’t [the] usual hierarchy for Indigenous relations with the government.*

If the attitudes of the leadership did not change, shifts clearly occurred at the local level: *I would say the communities changed a lot though, I think the communities bought into it I think [they] might’ve felt, I hate to use this word, disenfranchised but far from their leadership. I think they felt that a lot of their causes weren’t being heard and Idle No More brought them more to the forefront, you know, the real grassroots issues that Indigenous people were facing, right across Canada.*

At the time, politicians and civil servants wrestled with the changes that many saw happening in Indigenous public affairs. These were to be difficult and different times, with government officials caught in the middle. In the words of one Respondent: *It was a very important time to*

let people show their concerns and opportunities for Canada to take part in this great movement. So, they were successful. It really had created major concern by the government. They were very afraid. I sat in meetings the day before the National Day of Action. I was asked by the Minister at that time to go back and talk to [former] National Chief Phil Fontaine to try and stop this. This Respondent continued: What I'm afraid of is if it gets out of control you'll have absolutely no power to stop...I thought well it's too late anyways to stop it, organized people are in town, it's like...you get about 1000 people or more marching with us, (everyone) was all ready to go, getting ready, were getting ready to go, there's no way to stop it.

Political aides in Ottawa were not impressed: *One of the representatives from Harper's office, said "By the way, this whole idea of this National Day of Action, it's stupid anyway".* The Respondent was trapped between what was going on in the movement and the push back developing in Ottawa: *I said to myself that I'm not going to run this message. I'm not going to insult the National Chief, not going to insult the Chiefs, the (AFN) executive. Indigenous politics were also in turmoil at this time, with substantial criticism of National Chief Shawn Atleo: Things got mixed up in different agendas, got thrown into this stew and the march was on. The movement was injected into a volatile environment, one that seemed to be changing in the moment: The way I see that march, it started out powerful, sincere and an agenda was clear as to what Idle No More represented. I thought that was fantastic. As it got closer to the House of Commons and the Hill...it all changed. Of course, there was certain anger directed at the national chief at that time, and to [the national Indigenous leadership. They] were targeted but for different reasons, and they were strong, strong voices from different parts of the province that are ready to attack with the national chief.*

The volatility exploded when Chief Theresa Spence from Attawapiskat First Nation started her hunger strike. The growing focus on the priorities and issues of Idle No More shifted overnight. While the National Chief supported Chief Spence, the broader political leadership wrestled with questions of direction and emphasis.

One Respondent commented: *Someone applied a different strategy and used the whole movement against our office, at the Assembly of First Nations and Shawn Atleo, a powerful,*

spiritual assassination was taking place, and the intent of that assassination was to crucify everything that Shawn Atleo stood for, and everything that the Assembly of First Nations office stood for, the attack was on him, even though on the side you could see and you could hear what Chief Theresa Spence was trying to do.

Idle No More, already a diverse and loosely guided movement, became more fragmented, posing challenges for Indigenous leaders and government officials alike: *you had four factions of different agendas coming together and counting down the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada saw these different factions. They sat back and just watched us. And sure enough one night, the division was soon forming within our own camp and divisions forming on the street. Theresa Spence's initiative was starting to get to the point where she might stop her hunger strike and go home. So, things got out of hand in my opinion.* The implications for Idle No More were significant, for the movement had reached a peak during the march on Ottawa. An Indigenous Respondent thought that the convergence of events undermined the potential of the movement and allowed the Government and Indigenous leaders to put it aside: *I think if Idle No More had been left alone, if it would have been allowed and supported, from a distance from a radical thinking anti-National Chiefs office, it would've worked. Idle No More...is still alive, the intent of it was powerful. It's just that [the movement] got torpedoed by different things.*

This Respondent was not alone in identifying the manner which the collision of Idle No More, Chief Spence's protest and the Assembly of First Nations politics disrupted Indigenous politics and took pressure off the Government of Canada: *When you see the damage it does to a political leader who is being attacked by his own people and by the government, it is an assassination. It's a spiritual assassination.* The Respondent continued: *It is going to take another 50 years to make a difference if we run our game, and our politics as what the government expects us to do. There are no gifts, there is no treasure, there are no miracles. We are still Indians in their eyes, and we still have to fight for everything that we have in our communities, our communities have crossroads in terms of the side of what they have...nice houses, nice yards, that's good. But the spirit of our people is still waiting.*

Idle No More was imbedded within a complex political environment, often focused on Ottawa and the Assembly of First Nations, with many different people, factions, organizations, and leaders seeking the attention of the national government. Regional variations, including growing tensions over fracking in New Brunswick and long-standing treaty issues in Saskatchewan, complicated the political and governmental response and changed the nature of Idle No More. But by 2013, Indigenous activism and outrage had become the dominant reality within Canadian politics, more than the national and international reach of Idle No More. Clearly, however, Idle No More had moved Indigenous issues to the head of federal and provincial political agendas, even as the diffuse nature of the movement and the emergence of related but separate Indigenous political protests and intervention confused the political and policy response.

Idle No More organizers and participants hoped that the movement would force the Government of Canada and other governments to change their approach to working with Indigenous people. The long-standing relationship between the Government of Canada and Indigenous peoples focuses on extensive – even endless – negotiations over treaties, claims, Indigenous government funding, infrastructure, education, and health care, among other topics. The discussions have long been one-sided, with the Government holding the resources and dominating the negotiations. Supporters of Idle No More hoped to be heard, both about the short-term complaints that precipitated the movement and more generally about Indigenous and environmental affairs. The movement certainly got the attention of governments across the country and worried officials about the potential for larger and greater protests.

Clearly, governments struggled to make sense of what was a loosely coordinated movement with a clear agenda or fixed leadership. In response to the question of whether there was change in government attitude, one Respondent commented: *Yeah, so I think it's a mixed bag answer again there too. I think that at an official's level...within and broadly across the system, there was a great deal of 'watch and wait'. There was a lot of monitoring of 'what's going on here' but the Government of Canada was resolute: I'm trying to understand what the goals and objectives were. I don't think that [the movement] specifically would've changed anything in terms of how officials approached their work.*

Governments were put off, as well by the complicated nature of the demands and by the appearance of loosely connected events, particularly the hunger strike initiated by Chief Theresa Spence of the Attawapiskat First Nation in northern Ontario. The high-profile activity which attracted national and international attention made it difficult for the government to act: *At a political level, I think that the federal government at the time, did want to find a way to engage but wasn't really able to until there was a political actor to engage with. So, it wasn't really until Theresa Spence, you know became...one of the focal points of the movement. [T]hat allowed for leadership on the First Nations side to...come together and to support her.*

The escalating demands of Indigenous people, including the suggestion that the Governor General join the conversations, made collaboration more difficult: *[T]here was all kinds of discussion back then with the Governor General. I think the government had a very difficult time trying to navigate how to respond to a mass movement protest where they recognized the dissatisfaction. In the end, this Respondent did not believe that major change had occurred: I don't think it actually changed course for the elected government of the day. They had been doing obviously a lot of things that were controversial that had really sparked the movement. So, whether it was the ominous bills that changed all kinds of, had impacts on treaty rights, etc. But they were also doing...some investments, promised at least, in education, and housing. So, they were kind of moving forward on some things. But in general, I think it was basically business as usual.*

Importantly, provincial governments, particularly those seeking to move forward with resource developments, were more responsive. One Respondent said: *One place where I did notice a difference was at the provincial level in Ontario. I think there was a tremendous amount of willingness to understand...but the provincial government of Ontario seemed to be far more sympathetic, and you could start to see changes in their discourse and policy directions. For the longest time, Ontario was not terribly engaged on First Nations and Métis issues, whether that has to do with...resource development...they become more interested...But I think there was a general willingness in Ontario to try to understand it better and to start to be more responsive in terms of how they engaged and where they were prepared to actually put more investments and*

programming in place. For the province of Ontario, according to this Respondent, the transition was dramatic:

For the very longest time, the history has been that most provinces really have a literal reading of section 91/92 division of jurisdiction....[T]hey say... “it says very clearly, you know, Indians and lands reserved for Indians, that’s your responsibility and, you know, we’re not prepared to kind of go the extra mile”. But I think increasingly, provincial governments understand that is a very narrow way of seeing these things. You know, federal transfers are based on per capita and so if you have large portions of the Indigenous populations that do not live on reserve but are accessing provincial services, they need to be more attentive to what their needs are.

Ontario was not the only province set on a new track. One Respondent noted some major changes. The Progressive Conservative government led by David Alward was more receptive to new directions than the subsequent Liberal administration led by Premier Bryan Gallant. As this Respondent noted: *The Progressive Conservatives were more aware and more compassionate and they may have been all thumbs on how to do it but they got to it...everything I worked on [for the Alward government] became non-relevant for the current government and four years into that relationship with the new government things are honestly in a very, very sad state of affairs.* The Liberal government, largely ignoring the lessons from Idle No More, was politically pragmatic. As the Respondent observed and heard it said: *Why would we respond to the First Nations...in New Brunswick when they only represent 3% of the voting population.* This Respondent further noted: *I can only conclude by that attitude and by their actions is that (they have) taken some significant steps backwards in the Province of New Brunswick.*

More generally and perhaps most importantly, the Respondent connected the shift in government policy directly to the Indigenous protests of 2012-2013. Clearly, the number, scale, and effectiveness of the Idle No More rallies had an impact.

As one Respondent said: *Well, I think the government was really shocked by the appearance of Idle No More and how fast it moved, they were really surprised at how quickly, you know, main city centers could be shut down and how many people joined it because it was so grassroots. It*

certainly put the Harper government back on their heels and made government realize for the first time that there was a grassroots movement that was outside the threat of the Department of Indian Affairs.

It is not that Indigenous people were positively disposed to the Government in general. Indeed, the greater problem with the spontaneous, amorphous, and unpredictable nature of Idle No More is that it could not be easily controlled. What worried officials most was this aspect: *Normally, when there's a community crisis, the Department could just cut off funds, they could depose the Chief and Council. Now suddenly there was grassroots everywhere...so, government was definitely taken aback by it, and began to pay real attention to Idle No More.*

The impact on government-Indigenous relations was complicated by the manner which Idle No More focused its critiques on both the public governments in Canada, especially the Government of Canada, and existing Indigenous administrations. There was a strong sentiment in the movement that the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) governments worked in close cooperation with industry and government and did not reflect the wishes of the people.

As one Respondent commented: *Prior to Idle No More, specifically in New Brunswick, there was a negotiation under way regarding a bilateral agreement which would ultimately set tables for bilateral discussions ie: forestry, transportation, [or] whatever else it could be that First Nations in the province wanted to get together on...then Idle No More came on and were challenging some of the leadership in regards to what it is they were, what they saw in their eyes...So, from a pressure point of view, from a Chief's point of view, they [the Government of New Brunswick] were moving very cautiously.*

Many Indigenous leaders laid the blame at the feet of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The Harper administration was viewed as: *a very close-minded government.* The elected people of the government led by Justin Trudeau took a dramatically different approach.

Some Respondents thought that Idle No More would revive to pressure the new government: *I was kind of thinking that the Idle No More right now should be more active because of the, they*

became active regarding Bill C-45 I think it was called. There was a lot of opposition by companies and so I would have thought maybe Idle No More would start to get active again to keep reminding people of why these changes are necessary...in this case help promote the government agenda rather than oppose it. In general, Respondents concluded that the movement had not really transformed government approaches to Indigenous peoples.

The changes were not inconsiderable. Government officials working on specific files, such as changes to membership and registration processes, appreciated the need for new approaches which included both consultation with Indigenous peoples and a broadening of the engagement beyond the formal leadership; as one Respondent commented: *Ottawa created a consultative process with First Nations before they got to the collaborative process. So, they didn't just implement the legislation and they included individual voices as well as leadership. In fact, when I went to the session in Winnipeg, they had a two-day session, there was more community representation there than there was leadership, I think there was only two Chiefs in the room. So, I think government is changing and recognizing that when you're engaging. This particular piece of legislation had the potential to add close to half a million people to the status roles, most of them living off-reserve, re-enforcing trends to off-reserve domination for band politics. And if S3 goes through, it's going to increase potentially upwards of half a million people that are going to become status Indians and the majority of those are going to be off reserve.*

This necessitated a dramatic shift in process of government and Indigenous consultation processes; governments had to: *look at that urban population and they require services too and they require voices being heard and so I think government needs to recognize. It was vital that those individual voices off-reserve are being heard.*

The tactics and communication processes popularized by Idle No More made a major difference in political engagement. The reliance on social media, particularly Facebook, played a vital role in the process. One Respondent commented that: *social media, I think, is a huge thing that changed because of Idle No More...I think government recognized the power that social media has to influence and direct the way public opinion and what's happening within even our own communities [through] their use of social media. As a result,*

leadership has recognized that they also have to be cognisant that...the old ways of doing business just won't cut it anymore, that this new generation...use social media as tools to communicate. They don't necessarily communicate the way we used to through moccasin telegraph...they're very much savvy in knowing that they have rights and knowing that they can connect with others and then that they can actually create movements and create power and I don't think it's just in First Nations communities, I think we're seeing that globally, that people are starting to utilize those avenues to get their voices heard and to change, to make change.

Idle No More, time has proven, represented the leading edge of technology-enhanced protest and political organization. The effectiveness of the Indigenous protest convinced governments that political mobilization had changed, necessitating new forms and processes of engagement and consultation.

Not everyone agreed that Idle No More had a lasting effect. One Respondent was less convinced that the country's political culture had changed: *[W]hat I do think happened was there were little pieces of tokens to keep us a little bit quiet, I don't think it really changed government much other than through groups or certain people got little gifts to...for the government to be able to say see this is what we're doing - in education with this community and here's the progress with certain little trinkets.*

Others agreed and argued that subsequent developments undercut the claim that major shifts in political relations had occurred: *No, the rules are the same. But the people now that are, that have been instructed to work with us. For example, Jody Wilson, Minister Wilson [had] an important task, to convince the Chiefs that certain things have to be changed, they have to be legislated in order for it to be effective, and now the reality of it that some of the Chiefs are realizing that it's one thing to make the announcement and then second to implement...legislation that means that First Nations Chiefs have to support totally everything.*

The Respondent described a meeting with the Mi'kmaq that reflected new approaches to consultations: *Chiefs are talking to each other just want to take that, but not to be forced into anything...Jody Wilson is probably the best Minister that Canada has ever seen...So that's...the*

rules are the same, it's just the person and people that are implementing them that are different. Such a cautionary perspective was a minority view among the informants in this study.

Changes to Negotiations and Consultations with Indigenous Peoples

Government officials at all levels identified significant and perceptible changes in consultation and engagement. The presence of young Indigenous women in Idle No More stood out as a major element in the transition. A Respondent commented: *there was a greater awareness of, empathy for and attention to gender issues, issues of gender and maybe barriers that women within Indigenous communities were working to overcome.* Another Respondent noted: *I think Idle No More has changed the political and social landscape of Canada. It has. Canada cannot do business the way it has previously.* But this Respondent noted, as did the Idle No More leaders, that the transformations were both between governments and within Indigenous political processes:

But in saying that, we also need to look at the Indian Act Chiefs and Councils because when Canada, when the British monarch, the British monarchy created Confederation and created the provinces, they had to create those systems in order to control and regulate the lands and the waters...So, they created the provinces and when they created the provinces, they created the municipalities and when they created the municipalities, they needed something to control the Indians, so they created the Indian Act, which is...the lowest form of governance under the apparatus of the federal state under the British monarchy...Canada was designated as a settler colony, that's why non-Indigenous people are called settlers. So, they went all over the world and designated certain lands as extractions, extractive colonies, other lands for settlement...Africa was definitely an extractive colony; it was identified for resource extraction, to this day it's still that, that's why it's being pillaged and plundered. So, when Canada started, when the British Empire began to realize that Turtle Island is full of resources, the idea of settlement began to change. We see that with the Natural Resource Transfer Act (legislation passed in 1930 that gave the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan control over land and resources) and all these different fictional, legal apparatuses that were created.

As the Idle More activists said repeatedly, the problem rested with the fact that: *through the Indian Act, they can control the Indian Act Chief and Councils.*

For many Respondents, the fundamental effect of Idle No More was more basic; it changed the ways Canadians saw Indigenous peoples. A Respondent noted: *I'm not too sure at the end of the day what really got negotiated with the government out of Idle No More. It certainly brought awareness and that got the government's attention, there's no doubt about that. The government's attention, I think the community's attention as well too, some positive and some negative naturally, when you're dealing with round dancers and disrupting traffic. But I think it certainly put it in the forefront of government's mind...It did gain a lot of momentum.*

Idle No More was but one of the processes at work in changing the nature of negotiations in Canada. Legal victories, particularly on resource development, strengthened the hands of Indigenous governments and negotiators. The Liberal government elected in 2015 promised to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, raising the profile of Indigenous issues substantially. But in a variety of ways, from the critique of *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) band governments to the use of social media to organize protests, Idle No More altered the calculus of Indigenous political action in Canada and in the process, recast the manner which federal and provincial governments negotiated with and approached Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Chapter Findings

This chapter brought forward the following findings:

- Idle No More events surfaced significant concerns about the Chiefs.
- The national media paid little attention to the growing difficulties between the non-traditional leadership of the First Nations and the active and highly visible protests by the Idle No More activists.
- The growing tensions raised questions about the vitality and authority of Indigenous political structures, the nature of political representation of Indigenous peoples, and a clear sign that there was dissatisfaction on the ground.
- The movement gave off-reserve Indigenous people a chance to voice their concerns about government, First Nations leadership, programs, and services.

- In the minds of government officials, the long-standing practice of dealing directly with Indigenous leaders had stopped them from meeting with community members in open forums.
- For many, Idle No More liberated Indigenous people to speak out and be heard. This was particularly true for off-reserve Indigenous peoples, who felt largely ignored by both Indigenous and public government representatives.
- Indian Affairs wrestled with the new and assertive advocacy of so many disparate and “unofficial” voices.
- The movement seemed, superficially, to be a critique of the national government but it was so much more. The anger was directed, substantially if not equally, at Indigenous leadership, which complicated government attempts to respond to a movement that, from their perspective, seemed leaderless and rudimentary.
- The movement was harder for public administrators to respond to because they could not connect with representatives or identify concrete actions to take, yet it was one that politicians could engage through public statements.
- Governments, like most Canadians, did not really understand the meaning and nature of Idle No More.
- The national media and most political analysis focused on the growing turmoil within the Assembly of First Nations and failed to note the transformation that occurred at the community level.
- Young women gained more profile, motivated by the presence and effectiveness of the Idle No More leadership.
- The four women who founded Idle No More got most of the attention but in hundreds of communities across the country, new leaders were emerging, organizing, and hosting public events such as teach-ins, and articulating concerns to local, provincial, and national leadership. This represented a major challenge to the traditional Indigenous leaders and even more to public governments, who no longer had a simple and clear line of consultation and decision-making.
- The response to Idle No More was far from uniform. Indeed, the movement sparked significant pushback, particularly from men and from the elected Indigenous leadership.
- If the attitudes of the leadership did not change, shifts clearly occurred at the local level.

- Idle No More, already a diverse and loosely guided movement, became more fragmented, posing challenges for Indigenous leaders and government officials alike.
- Idle No More was imbedded within a complex political environment, often focused on Ottawa and the Assembly of First Nations, with many different people, factions, organizations, and leaders seeking the attention of the national government.
- Regional variations, including growing tensions over fracking in New Brunswick and long-standing treaty issues in Saskatchewan, complicated the political and governmental response and changed the nature of Idle No More.
- By 2013, Indigenous activism and outrage had become the dominant reality within Canadian politics, more than the national and international reach of Idle No More.
- Idle No More had moved Indigenous issues to the head of federal and provincial political agendas, even as the diffuse nature of the movement and the emergence of related but separate Indigenous political protests and intervention confused the political and policy response.
- The movement certainly got the attention of governments across the country and worried officials about the potential for larger and greater protests.
- Governments struggled to make sense of what was a loosely coordinated movement with a clear agenda or fixed leadership.
- The impact on government-Indigenous relations was complicated by the manner which Idle No More focused its critiques on both the public governments in Canada, especially the Government of Canada, and existing Indigenous administrations.
- There was a strong sentiment in the movement that the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) governments worked in close cooperation with industry and government and did not reflect the wishes of the people.
- The tactics and communication processes popularized by Idle No More made a major difference in political engagement. The reliance on social media, particularly Facebook, played a vital role in the process.
- The fundamental effect of Idle No More was more basic; it changed the ways Canadians saw Indigenous peoples.

Chapter 4: Impacts on Indigenous Political Relationships

Scholars have questioned if and how the movement reshaped relationships between government, Indigenous people, and their leaders. This chapter documents how political behavior and consequently how government relationships changed. The Respondents' verbatim responses are shown in italics. In this chapter we see how the interviews demonstrate that Idle No More had sweeping effects on Indigenous peoples and governments, in ways that need further exploration at the community and regional levels and reshaped the ways the relationships moved forward.

Changes to the Behaviour of Government Toward Indigenous Peoples

To most Respondents Idle No More was too diffuse and complicated to produce a simple and definitive conclusion. One Respondent suggested that the short-term impacts were limited: *I think Idle No More was a wake-up call. I don't believe Idle No More delivered a political agenda at moving it forward in a coherent manner because it was so grassroots, and it hadn't really been worked out as to, in terms of the political agenda of Idle No More. It seemed to come to a head and then it kind of broke apart. So, it saved the government, I think, from having to seriously confront issues of particularly land rights, Indigenous environmental rights.*

The same Respondent argued that Idle No More had lasting effects on how politicians and administrators viewed Indigenous engagement: *But it shook government up and it made people aware that they weren't quite sure where the next wave of political activism would come from or whether that political activism would move from very, very sort of grassroots activism to a concerted political movement. We haven't seen that yet, but I think the government noticed that. That they're going to have to pay attention to the grassroots, in a way that they didn't before.*

New Brunswick, which changed governments shortly after the Idle No More movement started, saw two different approaches to the political turmoil. As one Respondent observed: *The 2012 action was initiated halfway through the mandate of our Conservative government and then moving into the 2014 Graham [Liberal] government. Those two premiers had both different styles in which they were managing the Indigenous issue.* The Alward [Conservative] administration undertook significant steps to improve relations with First Nations, although they were incomplete when the election was called. There were intense issues with First Nations:

Right around the same period of time, we had the huge flair up of the shale gas protest. So, it was some action-packed years. We were very active in regards to bilateral discussions with First Nations leaders and so forth. And what we also experienced from a governmental point of view, was they (First Nations) started to play a bit more active interactive role with the media...[T]hat was very new to the government so, the government was scratching their head trying to figure out who the Grand Council was, who they represented, where their membership was and everything else. The Liberal government that replaced the Alward administration did not pick up where they left off. Instead, they pulled back in their relations with the First Nations in the province, losing the benefit of Alward's initiatives.

At the national level, the movement helped the Harper administration establish its political ground. They were, in the words of one Respondent: *not all that prepared to negotiate differently*. The government preferred to work through the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and did not reach out to Chief Theresa Spence during her hunger strike. Civil servants found themselves caught between the desire to engage and the need to respect the Prime Minister's approach:

It's fair to say that there were certainly a lot of public servants who paid close attention since most are very attuned to what the challenges and needs and issues are and are trying to work to make that better. They are not the kind of folks that are trying to sit there and be oppressive, or obstructionists, they work within a system that has those effects but people inside the system are really trying to be responsive and make change and be public servants. So, from a behavior point of view, what Idle No More did do was sort of break, expanded thinking a little bit beyond just programs and services staying on-reserve. It allowed them to understand better that this extends far beyond on-reserve, that this is a broader relationship issue and there's a whole lot of voices that are going unheard.

Idle No More has, both created and exposed gaps in belief and behaviour between elected and administrative officials. The Harper government did not wish to be moved by the wide-ranging public protests, while many leading civil servants recognized the deep frustrations revealed by the movement.

In some instances, Idle No More brought the political struggles to the bureaucrats' doorstep, making it impossible to ignore. In one instance, protestors set up outside Indian and Northern Affairs Canada offices. The local representatives met regularly with the Indigenous advocates and their supporters. This represented a dramatic shift from the long-standing practice of meeting with Chiefs and Councillors, with occasional interventions with First Nations administrative personnel to meeting with grassroots people.

This changed, as one Respondent noted: *but when it came time to meeting with the folks from the Idle No More movement it was very organic. People were equal, sitting in the room. And you didn't know what they were going to ask you or where they were coming from because they all came from their personal perspective...It was challenging for us as bureaucrats...How do we respond to some of these...individual[s] and their concerns [which] were, like more broad ranging. The protestors lacked experience and understanding of the administrative systems: A lot of the individuals saw Indian Affairs as "the government". But Chief and Council most of the time understand that Indian Affairs deals with certain fields. If First Nations wanted to deal with these other areas, you got to go and see these other departments. Whereas these individuals saw (Indian Affairs) as the government who were expected to respond...You're the government, you know.*

New insights and administrative learning came through direct experience with Idle No More representatives. One Respondent described an interaction that occurred over the demand for an inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and that involved a meeting with the Honorable Kelly Leach, Minister of Women's Affairs. The Respondent brought one of the founders of the movement with her. The Respondent described the awkwardness of the meeting, including: *the coldness that Minister Leach had, sternly had, towards the whole meeting. She gave the impression that "I am the dictator here and I will let you know how this meeting's going to go but you have 20 minutes to half hour of my time".* Then the Minister's demeanour changed quickly: *[T]he Minister was like, okay sorry, you're right have a seat and I'll listen to you...From that moment...she started to engage a little bit more, Minister Valcourt started to engage a bit more...and it opened up some type of dialogue.* The reaction was not out of enthusiasm for the movement: *[I]t seemed that they didn't want Idle No More, and they wanted*

to keep us quiet it seemed, but nonetheless I took that opportunity and was starting to really educate the Minister about Indigenous women, that being her portfolio, and also engaging more with Minister Valcourt (Minister Valcourt was Minister of Indian Affairs in 2012).

The lessons of inclusion and making space for Indigenous voices percolated throughout the civil service. The Government of Canada was under pressure to launch an inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. At a major round table, the federal government allocated 10 seats to Saskatchewan but provided no guidance as to membership and Indigenous representation. Indigenous women and family members were left to lobby for representation on a board set up to consider their concerns, and interests, setting off struggles for a place at the table. As a Respondent noted: *Minister Valcourt and the Prime Minister at that time offered (a family member of a missing Indigenous woman) because she didn't have a seat at this round table.* Minister Valcourt and Minister Leach, who were representing Canada, said that this individual would be attending, even if it meant that they had to give up a seat. Idle No More has managed to effect practical and real change in government processes and interaction with Indigenous representatives. In this way, the Respondent noted: *it did affect I believe, the government.* Indigenous voices were increasingly provided seats at the negotiating tables – one of the primary objectives of the Idle No More movement.

In New Brunswick, the Graham government that replaced the Alward administration did not respond positively. A Respondent noted that it attracted attention: *I think it raised the awareness as I mentioned, but...I don't believe in New Brunswick it has changed with the government.* Indeed, the government seemed to take a large step backward: *As a matter of fact you know the 94 Calls to Action (from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) are sitting idle in New Brunswick, government doesn't want to hear about [the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples].* The response was not passive or inactive. Indeed, the Respondent noted: *They've reduced the size of the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, they moved it from a stand-alone agency into the Executive Council office, basically without a profile, sharing a profile...with things like Intergovernmental Relations, the Women's Directorate, Aboriginal Affairs. So, its profile and its budget have been reduced by this current government.*

Chiefs and Councillors focused their interventions on specific policies and initiatives, following a prescribed list of issues and procedures. Idle No More changed that dynamic: *[W]hen we met with Idle No More it was very much about really basic access to services and rights and civil rights. It was like, “no, my rights are being violated. I don’t have access to basic services, and I need help with these things”*. Chiefs and Councils did not focus on these issues, and they were not engaged in off-reserve matters to the degree that the Idle No More protestors preferred.

One Respondent noted: *the movement’s protestors made it clear that we want to have influence and we need to have a voice*. For government officials, this meant that: *because of the Canadian human rights, because of all of those obligations that we had, we knew that we had to start adjusting the way we were doing our engagements. You couldn’t just deal with Chief and Council anymore. You really did have to find broader ways to give voices to other members. And we have to, and even now, be more inclusive in finding more proactive ways of engaging the off-reserve population*. The Idle No More movement did not come with an instruction manual, but unleashed unexpected forces for change in relations between Indigenous peoples and public governments.

Indigenous issues gained renewed prominence in Ottawa and among the civil servants. The growing attention spread far beyond the specific legislation and issues that launched the movement. One Respondent noted increased attention – and a greater focus on responding to Indigenous concerns – in an area far removed from the environmental and political questions that animated the movement: *I would say it reinforced the significance of many of the issues we were working through...Indigenous Education and Skills Training, was and remains a very, very, significant agenda item in Saskatchewan and for Canada. So, the movement reinforced the significance of the education, skills training, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities*. It is these areas, far removed from the front lines of Indigenous-government political relations, that the rippling and persistent effects of Idle No More could be seen.

Idle No More altered the other side of the relationship equation, specifically, the way Indigenous people approach government. One Respondent saw the transition as problematic: *I think [First Nations] have changed. They’ve become more militarized. They’re utilizing paramilitary*

weaponry...I think Idle No More has shown and has brought out to the forefront that Canada views Indigenous peoples and their actions of resistance and their actions to defend and protect their lands as terrorists...See, the different apparatuses of the government are the media, their policies, [and] the racism that they rely on to entrench the idea of terrorism. The racism, the white privilege, white supremacy, settler-colonialism, they're all from the Doctrine of Discovery. But this individual saw opportunity as well: Our main weapon, if you will, is to educate the public...Canada is using the fictional legal system to enforce the Doctrine of Discovery even though the title to their lands, to these lands, to Turtle Island is a myth and it's a lie.

Most officials understood that changing the direction of government and official policy was a formidable challenge: *You know you're looking at a powerful organization*, one Respondent commented:

The Government of Canada, they're used to dealing with wars. Every day they're dealing with massive strategies in dealing with people. I don't see any more respect from the side of the government, sometimes, unfortunately...You know the respect is a big part of what you need to do right. If it had made a difference, then we wouldn't have people living on the streets and living in motels, and so forth. It would be a better strategy in dealing with flooding and the fires and all that stuff in our country...They'd act faster. But is it better?

Despite the gains of Idle No More, this Respondent felt despair:

As I'm going through the twilight of my political career, I'm not afraid to say what I need to say. There are people out there now who created wars, that work for the government maybe the Department of Fisheries and those people. All the wars that we're experiencing are mostly on the water, trying to take advantage of Aboriginal and treaty rights. That war is still going on in the back rooms of our political ministers, of political leadership for First Nations Chiefs, and technicians. The Assembly of First Nations has become something like United Nations, has become just like the peace tower type initiatives that take place. The AFN is trying to be a peacekeeper.

Idle No More was a youthful movement, using thoroughly modern techniques and technologies. As one Respondent observed: *Our young people are restless, Minister Bennett calls it the restless. I don't know how long we'll hold it back. Maybe the fact that they're there somehow*

creates some fear, and the voices will be heard. He understood that the waves of protest and confidence emanating from Idle No More were not limited to this country: It's not just about Canada. It's about Indigenous people all over the world. We're not alone. The next war is going to be massive. We'll have support from all over the world from Indigenous people [and] we'll be better organized. But meanwhile we'll sit and talk.

The lesson learned from the movement was, in this person's estimation, an only one. He commented that: *when I first started, I heard one elder say that you have to be respectful, be respectful of your job, honor your job. When you come into the room with negotiators and protesters and stuff always carry in spirit the peace pipe. That's the impression you have to give.* He concluded with a powerful statement: *you have a tomahawk in your back pocket, just in case.* This, too, was clearly the message from Idle No More: *talk to us, or else.*

Changes to the Government's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples

Idle No More, was, at its root, a challenge to the authority of the Government of Canada and, collectively, all governments in Canada, including First Nations' Chiefs and Councillors. To one Respondent, the protests unleashed a strong reaction within the Conservative government:

The Harper government made fighting with Indigenous people one of the hallmarks of their agenda. They didn't start out that way, they didn't. They started out with two of their strongest ministers were in the portfolio: Jim Prentice at first and then Chuck Strahl. Well, I had a huge battle with Chuck Strahl, because he was one of their strongest ministers. Then they put John Duncan in, who couldn't handle the file, and then they put in Bernard Valcourt. And it was that that Harper was playing to his white base, but I think he miscalculated.

This individual tracked the challenge to the Government's response to Chief Theresa Spence, whose hunger strike was not a central part of Idle No More: *The letters that the Prime Minister received during the Attawapiskat housing crisis and his attempt to demonize the community and blame them was certainly playing to the white base.* This astute Respondent believed that the government has miscalculated: *But I think a lot of people felt he'd gone too far. There were actually a lot of Conservatives saying: "you can't treat people like this".* He believed that public sentiment was changing, partly due to Idle No More, and that sympathy for Indigenous demands

had increased: *Harper thought they would have really clear messages, you know, black and white, us versus them, attitude in taking on Indigenous dissent. And I think that was a mistake.*

Many government officials did not see immediate changes in the Government's approaches to Indigenous affairs. As one Respondent commented: *But when momentum starts to fall off of any kind of protest movement, whether Idle No More, my observation at the time is that, no, it didn't significantly change the government. In fact, I think it, it didn't make it better. It would've been nice if it had, but I don't think it made it better.* This Respondent felt that the major challenges fell on Indigenous political systems: *You know, it had an impact obviously on First Nations politics...It started to open up divisions there that were not obvious.* Indigenous leaders paid more of an immediate price: *But within the broader, national conversation, it would cost National Chief (Alteo) his job at the time. He kind of lost his support because there was a high degree of mistrust. There wasn't a good relationship with that government of the day. And I think the Idle No More movement magnified that. But it wasn't able to move the government [in] any way. So that left the relationship in, I think, in a bad place.*

The election of the government led by Justin Trudeau, with memories of Idle No More fresh in the country's mind and with the Liberal election platform of 2015 filled with one-ended promises to Indigenous peoples, altered political affairs. As one Respondent noted: *Justin Trudeau came in and made all kinds of promises with a new relationship and everything. It was Indigenous, Indigenous, Indigenous all the time, in everything he said.* But the promises, the rhetoric did not change political realities: *But what you see now is the entrenched system of government which is control and limiting of Indigenous rights continues and that growing frustration that was in Idle No More is now confronting the Trudeau government.* The Liberal government did not know how to deal with it: *They're very surprised. They don't seem to know what to do with it. So, I think government thought if they toned down the rhetoric...gave a few, few beads and blankets, everything would go back to business as usual.* The political world after the movement was not the same, in the Respondent's estimation: *The movement in this younger generation has moved beyond that. And the government is not really still getting their head around their obligation to consult, their obligation to deal with the substantive issues that are affecting communities. So,*

let's say the government is expecting another wake-up call very soon. Clearly, the spirit of Idle No More remains alive.

Other officials were more optimistic. As one Respondent observed: Well, I believe there was change. I hope every day there's change, I hope that it's better for First Nations people every day. So, going forward in those circumstances and situations...the government, they want to do the best they can. They just don't know how to get there. Nor do they want to adequately, you know, address some of the social imbalances within First Nations because of the whole jurisdictional ping pong between the federal government and provinces. And it's working its way out but there's still a lot of work to do right now.

Other government officials saw significant changes. One Respondent pointed to a conflict that unfolded in Manitoba; in this case, First Nations shut down the regional offices of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. This Respondent recounted the situation: They were working out of their offices, and they've never opened up frontline services again. So, if you want to get a treaty card in Manitoba, you've got to go make an appointment...people went to Winnipeg for medical reasons like from the communities and the remote communities. Often times their only piece of ID is that treaty card. And if they can't get their treaty cards and they can't get access to them. Young women who are having babies can't even register their babies...Before they used to just go to (INAC) offices. Well now they don't have anywhere to go. It shouldn't be that way like people shouldn't be afraid to have frontline services. Protests, like the one in Manitoba, became commonplace as many First Nations people were frustrated. As the Respondent noted: they worked things out with leadership as best they could.

The Government of Canada was not the only administration to feel the disruptive effects of Idle No More. As one Respondent noted: Idle No More was really against AFN because they were so disconnected from the grassroots...I think they did not prefer for the National leaders. And the National leaders and the National organizations are funded by government right? So, that puts them in a really tricky situation. How can they be critical...when they're relying on them for funding? Just criticizing your boss, right? The Assembly of First Nations was in turmoil throughout the movement, with one leader forced to resign and the organization struggling to

respond to a series of protests that were, at least in part, directed at their Chiefs. One Respondent described the challenges facing the AFN and the Chiefs:

Yeah, he (Shawn Atleo) overstepped his bounds as national leader, where the Chiefs said to him that he didn't get direction from them to sign onto the Education Act...So, I think that little education thing came from a number of sectors...But Idle No More, I think, was more focused on the environmental things and the representation of Grassroots, where the Grassroots people really been listening to when it came time for the AFN and so on. Were they listening or were they not listening to what Chief and Council were saying? And Chief and Council were not always listening to their own members.

The situation was complicated in New Brunswick by the change of government, from the more engaged Alward government to the more distant Graham administration. As one Respondent commented:

The approach was more genuine under the David Alward. I think leadership is personality based, Premier Alward had an appreciation. He had worked with First Nations communities. He was a federal government civil servant who worked in Training and was very well-known to the Aboriginal communities and [knew] their issues. So, when he became Premier, it became very much a priority for him. I look back in terms of what happened at Elsipogtog, there was a very strong business orientation within the cabinet. I think on the fracking file it was taken over by the Minister of Natural Resources and the Finance Minister. The leadership model that Premier Alward used was somewhat similar to that that was used in the Indigenous communities. It was by consensus, and he wasn't able to gain consensus around his cabinet table...Under his regime, they did reach out to advisors. We were able to have our first meeting of key deputy ministers of both the Chiefs and the key leaders from the communities. We met face to face, we had regular conference calls. So, the relationship building was on the right track and from that the engagement activities began to increase. At that time the Lieutenant Governor in New Brunswick was a Maliseet. Greg Nicholas was the first Aboriginal provincial court judge. I was able to bring the Lieutenant Governor in to help facilitate the meetings between the Province of New Brunswick and the communities using David Alward. So, I would have to say that, because of the movement, there was a greater awareness. Unfortunately for Aboriginal relations in the province, the government changed in 2014.

With that change became that attitude that the Indigenous and Aboriginal population represents only, less than 3% of the voting population, and therefore the file really struggled to maintain its profile with the Premier's office.

Another Respondent believed that Idle No More did bring real change: *I think it did. I think in many ways, we're re-living the Oka crisis it's called. And we're seeing, the increase of militarization and, also the monitoring of the different land defenders. The government: has been utilizing the media to erase and minimize the actions of land defenders and protectors by calling them protestors, you know, instead of calling them the title holders. So, the language of domination and dehumanization needs to be called out.*

This Respondent's frustrations were real and strong: *So, here the government is grooming the Indian Act leadership who are the willing partners. See that language of domination --- "willing partners", we have to be aware of that language and be familiar with it. Who are the willing partners? The language of diversity? You know, diversity means you're a minority. No, we are not minorities. Including us in the economic system, resource sharing, [these are} all the language of domination.*

The frustration came through in the observation that the fundamental views of colonization had not changed:

If you look at Treaty 6, we never ceded or surrendered our resources. We did not cede or surrender anything, nothing. So, why are we in the dialogue to share? Share what? Right? Share in the extractive practices of a colonial state? Are we going to share in the destruction of our lands, our animals, our resources, everything? Are we going to be included in that? Is that what that means? So, I think it's so important for people to recognize the language of domination and dehumanization.

Amidst the frustrations, this official saw signs of hope: *What about the people who are unwilling to be a part of that, who want to go down the path of alternative energy, protecting the lands. But we see that with, Muskochees is going to have solar energy for every one of their homes by 2019. Why are we not hearing those kinds of stories? Right? Why are these colonial structures really*

promoting fossil fuels in an era of climate crisis and climate change, whatever you want to call it. This is a time that our Elders have prophesized, this was prophesized, I grew up hearing the prophecies.

Idle No More was a comprehensive and complex movement, focusing on both public and Indigenous governments. It unleashed deep Indigenous frustrations and values and exposed many of the fault lines in government and general colonial reasoning. Resetting the political balance in the country was clearly going to be a formidable challenge.

Government officials, having worked through the years of Idle No More, were alert to the continuing and unresolved issues at the community level. Government did not appear to be moved by these realities:

There is still extreme poverty in our communities, we need to address those when you're talking about the need for reconciliation and Calls to Action . [It is] great the government has put together is a very intelligent plan, but like any intelligent plan it takes time, I don't see any massive change. It's going to take fifty years to wipe away the 50 years of pain and 50 years of disappointment. 50 years ago, there was a leader in 1968 [who said] that we should all be one and we should all be white. [A]nd now there is another leader with the same name [who says that] the Aboriginal people deserve respect, that Aboriginal people now need to work with us and deal with the non-development in our communities. and deal with the personal crisis with our communities... We've taken a look at the Residential Schools, the damage it caused by it. This still exists in our communities, there is no way to avoid [it]. How do you deal with that? I'm sure there will be someone that will sound more positive you know, but some folks are on the outside looking in, so I see every day and hear it at night, what our community needs and what... [A] lot of good Chiefs are being re-elected or new ones elected too, to help deal with it... in order for us to achieve a stronger First Nation we have to respect and honour the history of our people. I promised myself that I will speak exactly the way I spoke to you today and this is no time to be quiet, if there's no respect there's no fear, there's no fear there's no respect.

Another Respondent was not sanguine about the changes and had difficulty seeing major changes in government behaviour: *Yeah, I believe that many of them were cautious of their steps and wanted to give gifts to the friendly First Nations, those who were being cooperative and good little boys and girls, like in the Residential Schools. With a sarcastic tone, continued: I think that they wanted to be able to show society, look this is how good we are to these brown little boys and girls now. So, there were, I think, an increased amount of selfies being taken and the increased amount of tokens being presented and scattered across Canada with no real fix to this systemic racism and no meaningful change within the system.*

Another Respondent felt similarly: *I think there was just a greater level of engagement as a result. We were doing our best to understand the motivation...we really wanted to work to understand, what are the forces at work here?*

The movement forced officials to look more deeply at the challenges facing Indigenous peoples: *But we were very interested in what force is underneath...and that for me was a really, really important question. The Respondent separated the political action from what they saw at the community level: When people said it was another pop-up event, I was interested. I would read about it or watch it on the news. But as this is all playing itself out, I'm coming back from places like Cumberland House (northern Manitoba) or Nekaneet, way down south (in the Cypress Hills). I'm coming back from sessions with the FSIN, or leaders of the Métis Nation and I'm trying to put all this together. What the Respondent experienced had a profound impact on their understanding of both the movement and Indigenous affairs in Canada:*

I'm trying to understand how these pieces were fitting together...Not every day did I have a crystal-clear vision of what we were actually talking about, but I was able to assemble...some sense of the underlying forces and elements of momentum. And some of this is really, really powerful: the power of hopes and dreams that young people possessed. I guess things are very bleak, and I would say yes sometimes. But what was, what's frustrating is I'm meeting young people, young Canadians with dreams. And the frustration is they have is, they're trying to figure out how to realize their dreams and that was powerful for me to keep in mind. I've never forgotten actually.

These, perhaps, were the real lessons from Idle No More, that Indigenous people got the country's attention and awoke a desire for change among young Indigenous peoples, but that realities on the ground did not shift very much.

Chapter Findings

This chapter brought forward the following findings:

- The short-term impacts were limited regarding the behaviour of government toward Indigenous peoples, it was too diffuse and complicated to produce a simple and definitive conclusion – it was grassroots.
- The movement had lasting effects on how politicians and administrators viewed Indigenous engagement. It shook up governments, not knowing where the next wave of political activism would come from.
- There was a dramatic shift from federal officials meeting with elected Indigenous leaders to meeting with grassroots people.
- Indigenous issues gained renewed prominence in Ottawa and among the civil servants.
- Idle No More altered the other side of the relationship equation, specifically, the manner in which Indigenous people approach government.
- Idle No More was a youthful movement, using thoroughly modern techniques and technologies.
- Many government officials did not see immediate changes in the Government's approaches to Indigenous affairs.
- Major challenges fell on Indigenous political systems.
- The election of the government led by Justin Trudeau, with memories of Idle No More fresh in the country's mind and with the Liberal election platform of 2015 filled with one-ended promises to Indigenous peoples, altered political affairs.
- Idle No More was a comprehensive and complex movement, focusing on both public and Indigenous governments.
- Government officials, having worked through the years of Idle No More, were alert to the continuing and unresolved issues at the community level.
- The movement forced officials to look more deeply at the challenges facing Indigenous peoples.

Chapter 5: Impacts on Policy Understandings

If Idle No More forced changes, many of them unpredictable, on Indigenous-government relations, the primary goal of the movement was to change government policy. While the founders had specific objectives related to the Government of Canada's omnibus bill, the deliberately rudderless and complex rallies took on lives and priorities of their own. By the end of 2013 it was not easy to identify policy objectives, but it was impossible to ignore the fact that Indigenous people across the country wanted to change government priorities, funding, and policy in many different domains. While the movement rattled politicians and government officials, and forced significant changes in approach and relationships, the direct effect on government policy was not immediately evident. This chapter provides the Respondents' responses to some of this, whose verbatim responses are shown in italics.

Changes to the Government's Understanding of Indigenous Policies

The prevailing sense among officials, reflecting the glacial pace at which Indigenous policy changed, was that the Canadian policy environment did not shift dramatically or quickly. One Respondent commented: *It's hard for government to change and it's slow but I think that what this Idle No More movement did was definitely open up the eyes of a lot of people in regards to the issues surrounding Aboriginal rights and treaty.* The Government led by Stephen Harper did not change between 2013 and the 2015 election. Already fixed in their ways, they became more entrenched. As one Respondent stated: *I don't think it did change because nothing anybody did would change what they wanted to do. They were very closed minded.* But Idle No More changed the dialogue in government and in the country. The Trudeau led party, which came to office in Fall 2015, entered the election without a clear Indigenous policy. As the same official noted:

It's difficult to say whether or not that understanding could have affected the thinking of the incoming government because they were not elected. But it certainly would have affected the thinking of other parties...It would have certainly affected the way the Greens and the Liberals and the NDP are thinking. But it didn't affect Conservative thinking. In fact, anytime you oppose Conservative thinking, it seems like there's a group of them that get more and more polarized. There's just no talking to them. They get more extreme...there's a definite extreme right-wing group. So, it may have affected more...both the NDP and the Liberal and Green Members of Parliament.

It was the nature of government to avoid dramatic change, and doubly so with Indigenous policy: *Governments tend to be risk adverse, certainly inside the system. A lot of the Indigenous policy framework is very much driven from an Indigenous jurisprudence lens and, you know, covering the government's butt.* From the civil servants' perspective, the juxtaposition of policy-making and legal challenges complicated already difficult situations, as one administrator argued: *[T]he lawyers have to sign off on kind of everything, review everything to look at whereas what will be the impact of this change down the road.*

The basic realities of policy making in Canada reduced the impact of even something as dramatic as Idle No More. As one Respondent noted: *The unfortunate thing is all governments have mandates, whether it's First Nations governments or federal governments or provincial governments. You get a certain period of time to get things done and the thing with that often times things get rushed. You don't take the proper time to build a relationship before you build enough trust, start having meaningful negotiations about what do we all want at the end of the day...you can't rush when it comes to Indigenous issues because we're all different, I think there was some good intentions, but I also feel like there was also some real angst about trying to make sure we get deliverables so that we can make sure things get done within this short timeframe.*

Much of the problem rested with the fundamentals of Indigenous policies: *People get frustrated cuz they feel like they're being rushed. We all know that with Indigenous community, you have to take the time, you have to talk things out. You have to give people the time to voice their concerns and you have to listen. You can't just pretend to listen.* The push was on to transform the way that government operated. So, community members pushed for changes to INAC audits. They demanded that Chief and Council salaries and audited financial statements were published. The pressure for these changes: *didn't come from leadership. That came from ground level...Individual members who were frustrated with not having access to information.* This Respondent attributed this effort to three women at the Peguis First Nation in Manitoba who decided: *enough is enough. We want to know what's going on and we want to see the books. You know leadership has fought that one tooth and nail but how do we balance that with the*

individual members' interest, you know. The official continued: Idle No More changed people's minds, not just in the public but among government officials and politicians.

As one Respondent noted: *You know I think that there were some people that worked within the government bureaucrats and also Ministers that may have been educated. I know I had discussions with [Minister Kelly Leach] about what exactly what it's like to live on reserve, exactly what it's like in the fear of being a mother with three, or four children and being in the city...She had no idea how entrenched that fear was and the water and the situations that we deal with on reserve. [But she also did not know] the richness of who we are and the richness of family and the richness of how we're all connected to each other, how we are with each other and how we all believe or follow our family members and our ways of being and our values. The Respondent concluded that: I believe that Idle No More opened up individuals and it did reflect in policy. The challenge, of course, was that wholesale policy change required: a whole blanket full of bureaucrats in each department to understand and believe. This Respondent felt: I think you have some really good people in there that really...get it. Collectively, however, Canada still had: a whole system that don't. So, I don't think it has changed, in a meaningful way. It was here, in the openness to have that dialogue and to understand, that Idle No More had its greatest impact.*

Another Respondent agreed with this sentiment. This Respondent recalled how discussions at the cabinet tables had changed to be more inclusive of Indigenous issues and to assess how we can: *integrate those dollars to really demonstrate how we as a government were attempting to help address some of the public policy challenges. This Respondent did not give the movement full credit for the transition: So again, would I attribute it directly to Idle No More? I would say Idle No More reflected some of the movements towards that anyway and probably exceed some of that.*

Other Respondents saw a pronounced change in tone and basic approaches. To one, the Government of Canada was changed dramatically: *The federal government saw another world now of not just Indigenous people living on a First Nation [reserve]. They saw what was happening in the urban centers where Indigenous people needed help and they weren't getting it.*

The government gave money to on-reserve [governments] but once you're off then there was very little for urban support. This point had been made, emphatically, through the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in the 1990s and was repeated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner. Idle No More brought home the point politically. The nature of the movement was broader, localized, amorphous and, most importantly, without overt conflict: [It] was very, very peaceful. And you know I think it really actually got bigger than they thought, didn't it? It really grew. And as it grew, the movement's power and effectiveness in getting the attention of government expanded.

Policy change did come. As one Respondent noted: *I think the government's understanding of policies is still very much entrenched in Ottawa control. But what...you saw with the new [Liberal] government, is they started to use the language of decolonization. They started to use the language of Indigenous empowerment. On the subjects that matter the most, the old order held, but with a vital transition:*

But when it came to land rights, it was still very much focused on...the old way of doing things. It just had a lot more positive spin and talk. But I think...Idle No More has achieved one thing. It has forced government to recognize that the old days of just simply having the Chiefs on side doesn't cut it anymore. That social license comes from the ground. It comes from the grassroots. And when the grassroots is angry and frustrated, the Chiefs are going to move more radically. Government is going to be forced to respond. And that's something that they never had to deal with before. That's the lasting impact of Idle No More...[T]he social license from the grassroots is, is now part of, very much the reality of how things are going to be done in Canada in the future.

The complexity of policy making and the drafting of legislation in Canada meant that direct policy change came slowly. As one Respondent observed:

When you change one piece of legislation it therefore leads to changes in other pieces of legislation...[T]here wasn't a "whole of government" or "across government" understanding of the treaty relationship and section 35 and the duty to consult etcetera...[N]obody thought that we needed to engage and consult before making changes to all of these different statutes and [we] certainly didn't sort of see that coming.

As Respondents noted in the earlier chapter, the primary change was one of approach and consultation and not specific policies.

As one Respondent said: *So, in the sense that it changed government's understanding of these policies, you've seen a rapid, a fairly, significant increase on the engagement side. Whether it's been mandated at the political level to do that or not, the bureaucracy are doing so much more engagement now as we start to move forward on any kind of initiative.* This represented a fundamental restructuring of the Government of Canada's approach to policy making. As the Respondent observed, the focus changed dramatically:

And once you got Chief and Council on board, or AFN, or FSIN or you dealt with those duly elected organizations. If you did that then you've done your job...Well now, now we have to do much broader as [to] how we're doing consultation and engagement...[P]olicies that may have been there in the past of dealing with the leadership...you also need to look at the broader range. [I]t was a policy I guess, to get a BCR (Band Council Resolution) [and] you've done your job. [T]hat's not the way that things work anymore.

This Respondent highlighted the way that Idle No More changed the political role of Indigenous women: *I do want you to highlight this, I think that the movement really brought forward how there is a lack of tables and safe places for...Indigenous women to have voices. And I think that the Indigenous women that Idle No More gave voices to has been changing our understanding of Indigenous policies.* Indigenous women and Indigenous women's issues came to the fore as they had never done under the traditional approach to government policy. According to this Respondent, women: *had been sidelined and effectively silenced, with their rights marginalized.* Not only did they stop being heard, they were institutionalized in legislation, to take their voices away, to take their rights away: *in many other ways, whether it's forced sterilization, whether it's the overrepresentation of (Indigenous) women...in institutions, whether it's child and family services or in the federal correctional facilities.*

The point was made repeatedly, in hundreds of Idle No More rallies, that women had been sidelined. The major development was that: *there is a strong link between the Idle No More movement and young women who felt strong enough to say, and gave us strength to start saying*

“yeah, enough of this.” Women had been shouldering the burdens of Indigenous social crises for years: *we take on raising our children, we take on being the heads of our family, we take on making sure that our young men are raised...I’ve felt like our women, that we’ve just not been treated right, and we’ve not had the voice.* For this Respondent, the changes related to Idle No More were palpable but incomplete: *If you’re sitting at the table doesn’t mean you’re free to speak your mind. I do see changes happening, I do see effort being made, but I see resistance too.* Subsequent developments under Prime Minister Trudeau, specifically the handling of Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould, showed that the changes had not improved fundamental relationships: *I think people are feeling discouraged about reconciliation. How can you have reconciliation if you feel there isn’t trust there of people being truthful?*

For one of the Respondents, the pace and nature of change was disappointing. Government officials would make comments such as: *“Yes, there was fraud committed”, but they never do anything to remedy it. Not the way that Indigenous people see with the remedies...At the end of the day, it’s all about the land. If you look at the TRC Calls to Action [that says] “rescind and abolish the doctrine of discovery”. You don’t even hear them talking about that. Not a whisper...So, this colonial state picks and chooses what they want to talk about...They control, and they drive the dialogue and the agenda...They do it from the barrel of a gun. And they use tactics that, these tactics have been used for over a hundred years, sign or starve. And they’re still using it today.* In this Respondent’s view, government hesitation, political obscurity and bureaucratic obstruction predated and survived Idle No More.

As one Respondent said emphatically: *I don’t see any massive change, it’s going to take fifty years to wipe away the 50 years of pain and 50 years of disappointment.* At the provincial level, at least in New Brunswick, the message of Idle No More got through. As one Respondent commented: *among the Alward government there was a genuine interest for many of them, despite the Minister responsible for Natural Resources and Minister of Finance. But for the Premier and for the Premier’s office and many of his cabinet ministers, there was in fact a genuine interest in and at least a recognition that things had to change. The attitude had to change, not only because of the Idle No More but they were becoming increasingly aware of the decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada over the last 40 years.*

The need for a new relationship: *was gaining traction with the Alward government. Alward himself was the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs; the [Liberal] Premier made it the responsibility of a nice guy but not a heavy weight around the table at all...They cut the budget of the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, and mov[ed] it into executive council.* Overall, the provincial government moved away from the lessons of Idle No More and: *retreated into their own devices, their own knowledge base.*

Long-term Impacts on Government Approaches to Indigenous Affairs

The Respondents who were interviewed in 2018 and 2019, six or seven years after Idle No More peaked, were asked about the long-term lessons learned from the movement. There was uniform agreement that the rallies and protests had grabbed the attention of government and forced a rethinking of administrative approaches. The interviews documented a range of opinions about the degree and speed of changes, but not about the effectiveness of the movement in changing the country's approach to Indigenous affairs.

For one Respondent, the election of the Liberals in 2015 saw a significant change: *with the new government coming in and making all kinds of promises.* The real shift reflected: *the cleavage between the 2015 election, what was before and what was after. Because you had an extremely reactionary government that precipitated the Idle No More movement. And then you have government that seem to embrace Indigeneity and Indigenous rights and Indigenous identity in a very, very strong way.*

Substantial barriers remained. As the same official commented: *I think that the long-term objective must be the dismantling of the Department of Indian Affairs. Until we start to deal with the substantive deconstruction of colonization, you know, we're just arranging the deck chairs, and who gets to sit at the table.* The movement contributed to the next administration under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau shifting responsibilities to be more aware of Indigenous issues and to create a bureaucracy with two departments, now known as Indigenous Services Canada.

The movement changed the conversation but not the core policies and structures: *I think Idle No More shook the government up, but the government hasn't been shaken up enough. And they still are carrying on with "Ottawa knows best."* Furthermore, *beneath the surface the same patterns of control and resource development went on without any change.* The Liberal government remained: *very much within the long-standing traditions of how Canada controls Indigenous rights. So, that's why there's not a straight line between what happened in 2012 and today. There's been a bit of a shifting, but the underlying pieces are still in place.* It was clear to many that the changes would not be immediate:

There's still the old guard in government that says, "Well, you know, First Nations people don't vote," but those days are quickly coming to an end. We have the next generation coming up behind us that are really, really active, and clearly understand their Aboriginal rights. So, the awareness has definitely been there. From the First Nations point of view, they're hungry. They want to be able to participate in the economy just as well as their neighbour across the tracks can.

Another Respondent believed that the transformations would take many years. The challenge rested with the Indigenous activists to keep up the pressure: *You have to keep in there and keep pushing and keep poking people and reminding people. You can have a great idea, but people have to be constantly reminded because there are so many things going on to take the attention away. A lot of the really important Indigenous issues are being forgotten about cause their just so focused on that...Idle No More would have to become more visible and remind people what their goals are.*

One Respondent compared Idle No More to a gardening exercise, beginning a conversation that led to greater political attention. Importantly, and with credit given to the movement for expanding the national debate, this individual observed that it had a significant impact on Liberal policy-making and general attitudes: *Idle No More did start to set the stage for the policy platform, started to kind of develop afterward...[W]e see a longer-term trend in Canadians' understanding and awareness of Indigenous issues and more and more support for it.* This Respondent was not sure that the strong support will hold over time.

Another Respondent, asked to reflect on the impact, identified a problem more than a solution: *[I]t created that awareness that there's got to be something that we're missing and how there ought to be changes...within the federal and provincial [governments]*. He too, was not convinced that the momentum would survive the inevitable political battles: *There's a scramble from government to government. We're worried about getting back in, like the liberals are worried, the conservatives are worried, the NDP people. We're all worried about getting back into power. So, is there going to be that true change in understanding or is it all going to be political rhetoric at this point?* Scepticism about the long-range impact of Idle No More remained. It must be noted that very few Indigenous protest movements created long lasting impact.

Other officials saw a logical line between Idle No More and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other policy and political issues. As one Respondent saw a series of waves of change:

I see the Idle No More phenomena, the movement being connected in with, with consciousness rising and an awareness rising that took place during that era. So, are we different today? Yes, we are. Are governments different today? Certainly, the federal government is different today. The provincial government is different today. Provincial institutions, like University of Saskatchewan, are different today. Idle No More had a role in helping in that shift but I would say there were other elements that also, it's not in isolation. The Truth and Reconciliation work was in and around the same time, but Idle No More is certainly a part of that. Yeah, so there are changes. The challenge for social science is ascribing value. How much is Idle No More responsible, or how much is Truth and Reconciliation process responsible or any number of other variables? But it was one of the variables that did have an effect.

A Respondent saw insufficient action and limited policy change. This Respondent commented that if the government: *drive the agenda and the dialogue and, as long as they're the drivers to the, to the interaction with Indigenous peoples; as long as they're going to the Indian Act Chiefs, there's not going to be any change.* The Respondent agreed with Arthur Manuel: *We cannot have incremental changes. We need fundamental changes. And if we don't do that now, then we are*

going to be going through the same things over and over again. This Respondent saw a fundamental need to start with the re-education of Indigenous peoples: *Because when you look at what is taught to our children, it begins in the colonizer's education system, where our children are taught to perform whiteness. They're taught to perform as settlers. They become subservient, obedient, servants of the crown. They no longer speak the language. They're not taught the culture. They no longer have connections to the land.* The Respondent concluded: *We're very lucky if we get young people out of that system to have a good analysis and a critique of what the systems do to all people.*

Moving forward politically and in terms of policy would not be easy. As one Respondent noted: *The liberal government has spent a lot more in the past few years than they had done in the past...I think there's been some really positive things. So, obviously they made a real impact.* The situation in New Brunswick was different, largely because, in the words of one Respondent: *any trust, and momentum, and recognition that we built has dissipated.* The Liberal premier stopped the meetings with Indigenous leaders. Progress did not stop entirely: *I think the relationship going forward in New Brunswick is going to improve despite of government. If it's going to advance, they will want to jump on the band wagon.*

In the end, Idle No More, if it did have revolutionary interest, stopped part way. But the movement was more measured and realistic. It sought to give Indigenous voices a platform and to make the country sit up and take notice. In those regards, in the opinions of senior government officials, it had both effects. Policy changes came slowly, but politicians paid attention. The Liberal Party's national platform in 2015 reflected Idle No More ideals and subsequent government promises, although the subsequent policy stumbles of the Liberal government made it clear that radical change was difficult, but not impossible. But both New Brunswick, which stepped back from movement inspired engagements, and Saskatchewan, which did not change its limited engagement with Indigenous affairs, show that the changes were not unidirectional or assured.

But Idle No More forced politicians and government officials to rethink their relationships with Indigenous communities, to balance the views of the Chiefs and Councilors with those of the

grassroots members. That change, which slowly worked its way into policy, administrative systems, and government programs, was perhaps the most enduring and significant impact of the movement. Fittingly, giving voice to Indigenous peoples and seeking to offset the authority of both *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) governments and the public governments of Canada, was the founding aspiration of Idle No More.

Chapter Findings

This chapter brought forward the following findings:

- The Canadian policy environment did not shift dramatically or quickly.
- Idle No More changed the dialogue in government and in the country.
- Much of the problem rested with the fundamentals of Indigenous policies.
- The push was on to transform the way that government operated.
- There was a pronounced change in tone and basic approaches.
- The nature of the movement was broader, localized, amorphous and, most importantly, without overt conflict.
- As it grew, the movement's power and effectiveness in getting the attention of government expanded.
- The complexity of policy making and the drafting of legislation in Canada meant that direct policy change came slowly.
- The primary change was one of approach and consultation and not specific policies.
- The movement represented a fundamental restructuring of the Government of Canada's approach to policy making.
- Idle No More changed the political role of Indigenous women.
- Indigenous women and Indigenous women's issues came to the fore as they had never done under the traditional approach to government policy.
- There was uniform agreement that the rallies and protests had grabbed the attention of government and forced a rethinking of administrative approaches. The interviews documented a range of opinions about the degree and speed of changes, but not about the effectiveness of the movement in changing the country's approach to Indigenous affairs.
- It sought to give Indigenous voices a platform and to make the country sit up and take notice. In those regards, it had both effects.

- Idle No More forced politicians and government officials to rethink their relationships with Indigenous communities, to balance the views of the Chiefs and Councilors with those of the grassroots members.
- That change, which slowly worked its way into policy, administrative systems, and government programs, was perhaps the most enduring and significant impact of the movement.

Chapter 6: Restructured Relationships

The relationships lens was instrumental in examining the policy processes considered within this dissertation. Many Respondents spoke about the ways in which relationships were restructured after the movement, but it remains to be seen if the technical processes of Indigenous/government interactions and negotiations shifted because of Idle No More. Respondents were asked specifically about the way the movement did, or did not, alter negotiations in Indigenous affairs, a more practical and applied question than the general and conceptual issues raised earlier. This chapter provides the Respondents' verbatim responses in italics.

Idle No More was “in your face” with its assertiveness and public profile. It involved more young people, non-traditional leaders and many more women than the long-standing authorities among the Chiefs and Councillors and the national Indigenous organizations. The government actors were generally the same, consisting largely of “experienced” old males with formal education and considerable backgrounds as politicians or civil servants. But they too, had been affected profoundly by Idle No More, particularly in the degree to which the movement rattled the status quo and necessitated a reconsideration of existing relationships.

Subsequent Negotiations and Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

For many, Idle No More changed the rhetoric much more than the practice of Indigenous affairs. As one Respondent noted: *I think what we've seen in the new [Liberal] government is all manner of talk about nation-to-nation relationship, all manner of talk about respect, But the department still calls the shots.* The problem lay with the connections between politics and bureaucracy. As this individual observed: *A Chief can meet with the Minister and make an agreement, but it gets implemented by the bureaucracy. And the bureaucracy's job is to limit the spending, limit the rights, limit the obligations of the government.* This was, in Ottawa, quite evident in Indigenous affairs: *[T]his new government thought if they just embraced some of the language of Idle No More...they would get away with carrying on with the old practices.* Major change was obviously required: *I think they're now beginning to see that people aren't fooled. So the next step is...to have in place a system of negotiation that gets the social license from Indigenous communities for development.*

One Respondent saw dramatic and immediate change, but not in the direction of more effective or timely resolutions: *It really, really slowed things down.* This Respondent observed how before Idle No More, the region was moving toward a negotiated self-government agreement. They had secured a mandate from their communities and negotiations proceeded. The Province of New Brunswick was asked to leave the discussion as the Chiefs preferred “nation to nation” discussions. During Idle No More: *Those discussions on the comprehensive claim process in the Atlantic became a firestone, when it came to...the hunger of the members to obtain more information on these negotiations. It really slowed those discussions down to pretty near a crawling halt. There's a lot more caution.*

Most officials saw a marked transition from the Conservative government to that of the Liberals. Liberal leader Justin Trudeau met with Chief Theresa Spence and endorsed many of the ideas expressed through Idle No More. In 2015, with the Liberal platform attracting broad Indigenous support and substantial engagement in the election, the Liberals found themselves in office. Attributing power to Idle No More was difficult: *It's hard to know whether that's the change in the style of the government or whether it's an impact of the previous event that went on.* But real change was difficult: *it goes back to government, composed of the elected people, the bureaucracy.* The Respondent saw no substantial shift of the work of senior officials: *Certainly, what I see in terms of the way Deputy Ministers, when they appear in committees. They pretty much behave the same as they did during the Harper government a lot of them. They're very much set on their goal, [which] seems to be to restrict and control and never give anything up until they're pressured.* The civil service remained intransigent: *I think for some reason some of the people in the bureaucracy, they just keep going the same old way. They're really the main machinery of government. Until they start thinking a different way, they're still going to turn out the same kind of bills and same kind of policies until they learn a new way to think.* Despite its general effectiveness, the movement could not: *penetrate that deeply into government machinery, but they certainly could affect the elected officials but not the actual government machinery.* The longstanding paternalism and central control was not about to change: *We all know colonization has created this government and it's all the colonial thinking which it has affected all of us, including myself.*

But few officials doubted that Idle No More had reshaped the nation's political agenda for both Indigenous and public government officials. As one Respondent noted: *it really forced First Nations leaders and senior officials, and some of the elected officials as well, to actually start to put the issues that Idle No More brought up into the mix and onto the table for discussion.* The focus remained on self-government and land claims settlements, and engagement with the Assembly of First Nations remained paramount, even though: *they're an advocacy organization at the end of the day, that's a big part of their job.* But the movement changed the agenda to include items of greatest concern to the grassroots, for the simple reason that their "long-term legitimacy" and the credibility of the government rested on responding to a broader set of issues.

Idle No More called, in the speeches of thousands of activists, for more inclusion decision-making and negotiation processes. Some of these existed already, particularly in the negotiation of northern Canadian land claims and self-government agreements. As a result of the movement, one Respondent observed: *We have to be much more inclusive when we're negotiating those broader policy changes or program changes or Indian Act changes. We can't just negotiate directly with leadership. We have to be more collaborative and more inclusive in the process.* This Respondent noted, drawing attention to the lessons learned about social media and community engagement: *Idle No More showed that if there isn't support amongst that base group, that it can turn everything around. Furthermore: the social media aspect that Idle No More brought out is that everything's accessible, [it is] easy to get information out to people, or misinformation, in fact, too.* Government had to change its most basic approach: *[W]hen we're doing negotiations to try to be as much as possible, open and aware with making, creating awareness out there, putting things out there, posting things on the website.* Officials learned important lessons, for it did: *impact on negotiations for sure, I think there's much more awareness that you have to be collaborative, you have to take the time to do a broader engagement. Now I see us doing online surveys and...we get out there and put stuff on Facebook, on social media and on Twitter so that people can see.* Those are the tools that communicate now. The old order is good and gone: *It's not any more a formal letter coming from a Minister or RDG (Regional Director General) to the Chief and Council and saying "there, we've done our job".*

The processes, though, were far from simple and complete. Leadership became more cautious and public consultative but did not necessarily change their values and assumptions: *I think it opened the door for more discussion and dialogue...I think the grassroots, well, some of them feel betrayed.* This Respondent did not believe that government had really changed; their view was that they were largely going through the motions. Even if the resulting negotiations were less sincere than they appeared on the surface: *nonetheless Idle No More is to be credited for that, the women are to be credited for the substantial change to government approaches.*

For another Respondent, the change was one of personal and priorities as much as process and outcomes:

I think it likely ushered in, new voices or if not by itself ushered in to begin. This is where I want to be careful. [The movement] at least contributed to new voices entering the public policy discussion. I can remember sitting down with some of the young women, women that were involved in kind of the early movement in Saskatchewan. They were profoundly and philosophical insightful.

In discussions with the movement's founders, this Respondent had some:

probing questions, like what are you doing, what's driving this, and where does this lead you and what does this look like. They had answers, very sophisticated answers. It was obvious they were going to go on to play key leadership roles, not simply in Idle No More but in their communities, in their business, or in their post-secondary institutions, etc. They had given a lot of these challenges, human and public policy challenges an enormous amount of thought, they were trying to find ways to be constructive and at the same time demonstrate a commitment to action.

What this Respondent described as: *the emergence of young, bright, articulate, energetic, really sophisticated leaders* did not immediately change government behaviors: *but it certainly changed the strategic environment in which we were all operating.* What this Respondent learned from the movement had a direct impact on the work this Respondent was doing:

I'd be out in Indigenous communities and I had reached an informal but very, very similar conclusion and I would report back to my colleagues and say we have to spend more time and put attention on the young women, they have some barriers most of them

are young moms, most of them are doing their best to hold their communities and their families [together] and [keep] things in some semblance of order, some of them have their own companies.

This Respondent was convinced that the unleashing of female political engagement would be a legacy of Idle No More; it was clear that they faced formidable problems: *They're not succeeding. They've got too many barriers. They wake up every day. They're working as hard as they can. They've got great dreams, great vision, great discipline. But they're also raising families and they're also taking care of their parents.* This Respondent did not underestimate the impact of young Indigenous men but saw real: *female leadership at a family level, community level, local level, regional level.*

In this environment, the movement provided great release: *Then here's Idle No More...They've got this, they've got this thing and they know why they're doing it...they're doing it for their kids and their families. So, for me I wasn't surprised, it reflected and reinforced what I saw on the ground in numerous communities, not just remote communities but very urban communities. But I saw what was going on and it was obviously women were playing a far greater role than many other people had considered.* Asked to summarize the impact of Idle No More, this Respondent replied: *Was it efficacious? Did it change or at least alter, shift, accelerate elements of what governments were doing? The answer is, in very subtle but very important ways, yes.*

One of the Respondents saw intense resistance to meaningful change in Indigenous negotiations and practice. This Respondent felt the government officials were: *co-opting the terminology of the original peoples. They're co-opting our idea of [what] self-determination is, what our idea of decolonization is, what our idea of Indigenization is, and what freedom means to us.* But real barriers remained: *They're saying that we can only go to the courts to have our rights defined, that's the only way. And that only Section 35 can be filled. They call Section 35 a box...But when you take a look at, when you take a look at that, you can see the blatant racism in that.* This Respondent offered a stark commentary on the nature of the challenges still facing Indigenous peoples:

Take for instance, when a Canadian child or a new immigrant comes to Canada, they have a box that they're born into. That box is called the Charter. They're automatically

born into a whole slew of rights. They have a right to mobility, they have a right to free speech, you know, yada, yada, yada. They're born into that. But when an Indigenous child is born, they're born into Section 35 which is an empty box according to the colonial state. That box needs to be filled by their courts, you see? And their courts are, again, an apparatus of their system. Who else in Canada needs to have their rights defined for them, automatically, without question? No one else. No one else. Except for the Indigenous peoples. That is not an empty box, in fact, we should not even look to Section 35. That is not the place. We belong as the title holders, the sovereign peoples. We are the title holders of these lands. Canada refuses to even entertain that idea because what is that going to mean? What is that going to mean? Canada has a noose and they're tightening it. They're tightening it through their policies and laws on the land...Canada is squeezing these laws by tightening up the legislation and their policies and the lands and the waters.

As a founder of the movement that had sweeping effects across the country and through the political and governance systems, one Respondent's frustrations and disappointment is palpable and, even in the views of non-Indigenous officials, understandable and appropriate.

It was uniformly clear to government officials that Idle No More was a vital continuation and acceleration of a movement and an incomplete turning point for the nation's governments. As one Respondent commented: *They've had lots to do with Indigenous relations. But we need a lot more education on what's going on in the Indigenous world with our staff in our own corners.* This Respondent said this was addressed, in part, by a staff member specifically to gain a better appreciation of what was going on inside Indigenous communities and to thereby get a greater sense of the effectiveness or lack thereof of government policy.

Another Respondent saw the Idle No More period as being of fundamental importance. This Respondent's interest lay not in long-term transitions, but short-term negotiations or problem solving. As this Respondent noted: *Yeah, pre-2014 had a positive impact in terms of the negotiations. It is based in a relationship. This is not about going to buy a second-hand car from somebody...[What New Brunswick realized was the province's] need for the development of a relationship first. Then you can start trying to solve the problem and address issues.*

Before Idle No More, the focus was on basic relations, negotiations and problem solving. This Respondent saw a significant change at the federal level, with the ideas and commitments of the movement shifting into government policy that percolated through to the provinces. When: *the newly elected Prime Minister Trudeau, sent out his mandate letters to all his ministers. [T]he Premier's office and the Deputy Chief of staff had them laid out on his desk, underlined, and heavily read, obviously read, and underlined...I think he was trying to get his head around it on behalf of the Premier's office. But I think it was just too complex for them and basically said they were just going to preserve the status quo or less.* Clearly there was, even a few years after the peak of Idle No More, a great deal of work to be done.

A Changed Policy Environment

A multi-faceted lens was used to initiate and sustain the movement which incorporated a typical mainstream policy lens, along with an Indigenous based rights lens, and an Indigenous based relationships lens. The key actors (the founders of the movement and those who followed them) utilized these ideas to gain momentum and garner support, thereby creating a changed policy environment for future mass movements.

The Respondents in this study provided valuable insight into how the movement influenced government attitudes, decision making, negotiation approaches and Indigenous policy. They spoke to their own experiences as officials, leaders, and allies. Their responses pointed to the fact that the governments at the federal and the provincial levels went through major changes to the ways they were dealing with Indigenous peoples, particularly with regards to how they connected with people at the grassroots level. The Respondents all emphasized the fact that Canada is now in a changed policy environment.

At the height of the movement, even though the federal government might have wanted to engage, they could not do so until there was a political actor to engage with. This made monitoring and responding to the movement more challenging. As a result of the absence of a political actor, the federal government had problems engaging with the movement. There was a change in discourse and policy direction in some regions. For example, with Kathleen Wynne at

the provincial level in Ontario (she was Liberal Premier from 2013-18). there was much more provincial interest in resource development. This changed engagement strategies on the part of the provincial government of the day. Wynne had served as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs from October 2011 to November 2012, through the height of Idle No More. She carried that experience through her term as premier.

As was pointed out during this study, Canada remains a settler colony. The colonial state continues to go through substantial changes to maintain the status quo. The Government of Canada insists on working through imposed systems of leadership. The elected Chiefs and Councillors work under the authority of the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5). Government is now more militarized when it comes to Indigenous people, even though Idle No More was notable for its peacefulness and lack of violence. For example, the act of arming Conservation Officers to enforce the natural resource laws in Western Canada is a form of militarization by First Nations people. This is because Canada appears to view Indigenous people as terrorists.

Government relies on media, policies, and racism to entrench this label and apply it to Indigenous people who have been active in the movement. Some of these entrenched views come from the Doctrine of Discovery. The main weapon to fight this is educating the public, understanding that the system utilized to educate has failed. There continues to be a growth in the movement's allies who recognize the issues around the Doctrine of Discovery as being a key tool of early oppression. Canada uses the legal system that they have created to enforce the concepts coming through this Doctrine. During the interviews, one of the Respondents in this study asked, as do many others associated with the movement: *When will Canada be asked to prove title, to produce a legal deed for the transfer of title?* As this Respondent pointed out, Canada claims ownership, but that is not legal in Indigenous eyes.

A decade after the height of Idle No More, the efforts at reconciliation through government policy and negotiations have not addressed these basic issues. The transformative vision of Idle No More remains unfulfilled, with politicians concerned about the marketability of Indigenous policies and with civil servants demonstrating, at both the federal and provincial levels, a distinct reluctance to transform their approaches to negotiations, relationships, and the formation of

government policy. If the policy environment has been changed, and perhaps even transformed, the effectiveness and responsiveness of Canadian public governments remains a work very much in progress.

Chapter Findings

This chapter brought forward the following findings:

- Idle No More was “in your face” with its assertiveness and public profile.
- It involved more young people, non-traditional leaders and many more women than the long-standing authorities among the Chiefs and Councillors and the national Indigenous organizations.
- The government actors were generally the same, consisting largely of “experienced” old males with formal education and considerable backgrounds as politicians or civil servants. But they too, had been affected profoundly by Idle No More, particularly in the degree to which the movement rattled the status quo and necessitated a reconsideration of existing relationships.
- Most officials saw a marked transition from the Conservative government to that of the Liberals.
- Idle No More had reshaped the nation’s political agenda for both Indigenous and public government officials.
- Leadership became more cautious and public consultative but did not necessarily change their values and assumptions.
- The unleashing of female political engagement would be a legacy of Idle No More.
- Idle No More was a vital continuation and acceleration of a movement and an incomplete turning point for the nation’s governments.
- Before Idle No More, the focus was on basic relations, negotiations and problem solving. There was a significant change at the federal level, with the ideas and commitments of the movement shifting into government policy that percolated through to the provinces.

Chapter 7: Canada's Policy Environment in the Wake of Idle No More

The flow on impacts of Idle No More are many and varied. The ways in which Indigenous issues are being taught within the education systems is changing. The pedagogy of Indigenous knowledge is returning to traditional ways of teaching, such as land-based learning. Some of this can be attributed to Indigenous mobilization efforts like Idle No More. The Elders are making progress in convincing people that this is the most effective way to learn, in collaboration with the environment. Its effects continue to mobilize populations and are especially seen in actions against the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Kinder Morgan Pipeline which have followed many of the principles of Idle No More, more muted because many Indigenous communities and people support the projects.

The fact remains that Canadians are generally ignorant of their own ignorance. This stems from government inertia and the odd combination of virtue signaling, contrition, and bureaucratic hesitation. Some authors question whether Canada is so ingrained in its own racism that it cannot see its own deficiencies when it comes to Indigenous people (Saul 2014). The question of Canadians "ignorance" to their own racism is relevant when looking at a changed policy environment. Some authors point to the distractions between industry and government relations as the root of the problem (Saul 2014). Across Canada there are numerous examples of Indigenous land defenders at work. In British Columbia, the Unist'ot'en Clan of the Wet'suwet'en Nation slowed the Coastal Gas Link work from proceeding in their territories, even while a majority of the Wet'suwet'en people supported the project. The land defenders, who were strongly supported by non-Indigenous environmentalists, were quickly deemed a "national security threat" and their activities and movements were monitored by government (Crosby & Monaghan 2018, 89).

The Idle No More founders, including those in British Columbia, assert they were closely monitored in 2012 and for several years afterwards. At the official level, government monitored what was going on in the years following the movement. In 2016, many allies were in Standing Rock, North Dakota, supporting NoDAPL (No Dakota Access Pipeline). This made the federal government nervous once more.

Extracts from Hansard demonstrates how the government of Canada was monitoring the activities of the movement, its founders, and their supporters, including their involvement in other activities as late as 2017. NDP Member of Parliament, Charlie Angus, posed detailed accusations:

Q-618-Mr. Angus (Timmins – James Bay) - With regard to policing and surveillance activities related to journalists and Indigenous activists since October 31, 2015: (a) which security agencies or other government bodies have been involved in tracking Indigenous protest activities relating to (i) Idle No More, (ii) the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls or other Indigenous public order events, (iii) the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, (iv) the Northern Gateway Pipeline, (v) the Energy East and Eastern Mainline Projects, (vi) the Site C dam, (vii) the Lower Churchill Hydroelectric Generation Project, (viii) Line 9B Reversal and Line 9 Capacity Expansion Project, (ix) other industrial or resource development projects; (b) how many Indigenous individuals have been identified by security agencies as potential threats to public safety or security, broken down by agency and province; (c) which indigenous organizations, and activist groups have been the subject of monitoring by Canadian security services, broken down by agency and province; (d) how many events involving Indigenous activists were noted in Government Operations Centre situation reports, broken down by province and month; (e) have any Canadian government agencies, including the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) been involved in tracking Canadians travelling to Standing Rock Indian Reservation (North and South Dakota, United States of America); (f) has there been any request by the Canadian government or any of its agencies to the United States government or any of its agencies to share information on the tracking of Canadian citizens engaging in demonstrations at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation; (g) what are the titles and dates of any inter-departmental or inter-agency reports related to indigenous protest activities; (h) how many times have government agencies shared information on indigenous protest activities with private sector companies, and for each instance, which companies received such information, and on what dates; (i) how many meetings have taken place between representatives of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Expansion Project and (i) RCMP personnel, (ii) CSIS

personnel; and (j) what are the answers for (a) through (i) for journalists, instead of for Indigenous individuals or organizations. (September 18, 2017)

Many experts recognize the relationship between the increasing Indigenous voice and the Indigenous ways of knowing and natural laws. Indigenous resurgence is thus about more than resistance; it is about the reinvention of diverse, specifically Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing. These ways of being, knowing and doing have their roots in natural laws. In other words, if resistance signifies challenges to colonial practices and ideas, resurgence decenters colonialism by reimagining and re-creating diverse Indigenous worldviews and practices (Coburn 2015, 32). These worldviews and practices became more relevant to Indigenous people substantially because of the movement, where many more people are informed.

In 2006 Rima Wilkes conducted a comparison of social movements in Canada and the United States titled “The Protest Actions of Indigenous Peoples: A Canadian-U.S. Comparison of Social Movement Emergence”. In her work, Wilkes determined that Indigenous people in Canada did not have the key factors necessary for a national social movement (Wilkes 2006, 510). After 2012, this obviously no longer held true. The movement was precedent setting in that it created an opportunity for Indigenous people and their allies to come together to stand up and speak out in defense of the environment and to protest the destruction of traditional territories (Wotherspoon & Hansen 2013, 23). Indigenous people insist on putting their rights first and foremost in any policy environment.

Policy, Rights and Relationships as a Multi-Dimensional Lens

The way policy, rights and relationships came together and created a perfect storm to create an opportunity for Idle No More to happen is significant in the move toward embracing Indigenous self-determination and self-government. The movement empowered men, women, and youth to identify with their personal and community responsibilities as rights holders in Canada. Many changes occurred that allowed the policy actors to embrace the opportunities as they happened.

Following are examples of the policy, rights, and relationships that opened this window of opportunity and allowed the actors to jump through it. The two omnibus bills, Bill C-38 and Bill

C-45 sparked major opposition. The bills removed environmental protection standards for numerous lakes and waterways in Canada to allow industry easier access. This outraged many environmental groups, but Indigenous people took an important stand based on their role as land protectors (McAdam 2015; Palmater 2020). These changes were made without consultation with Indigenous people. The public was alarmed at how the federal government could make these radical changes affecting the future of the lakes in Canada. When the federal government put these things into omnibus legislation it changed the way the public viewed the Conservative administration. The proposed changes to the *Navigable Waters Act* through the bills substantially reduced environmental protection for Canada's lakes and waterways.

The most relevant policy example is the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5). The *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5), with its many revisions, remains a colonial structure that has dictated Indigenous policy and shaped Indigenous lives for almost 150 years. Through unilateral action, the Government of Canada: “codified its relationship with Indigenous people in the Indian Act of 1876, one of the most fundamental documents in Canadian legal and political history.” (Poelzer & Coates 2015, 8) The *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) in Canada is unique because it is the most prominent example of historical legislated ongoing policy that controls Indigenous peoples' lives in any nation. No other nation has an Indian/Indigenous Act that regulates and administers the lives of Indigenous People within its borders. The *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) has been used by government to subjugate First Nations people, particularly First Nations women through gender and race (Suzack 2010, 129). But First Nations women have nonetheless taken their rightful place in their communities and continue to speak their truth. The woman-led movement gave First Nations women a platform to address issues around land use and treaty rights (Morris 2014, 249).

Indigenous women have been change-makers since the beginning of time. But over the past ten years, and because of Idle No More, they have garnered the attention they deserve. As Morris said:

Indigenous women lead their communities with visionary leadership skills; deep cultural knowledge; and a central focus on spiritual faith, honesty, and integrity. The women leading Idle No More are twenty-first-century debt collectors who have created an attention-

grabbing model for decolonial Indigenous feminism that builds upon a rich history of Indigenous resistance to colonial control over land, culture, and lives: a movement that empowers Indigenous women on the path to achieving social justice for Indigenous nations. As other contemporary movements respond and react to injustice and the trampling of rights through street protests and occupation of public spaces, the Idle No More movement is trying to shift the contemporary discourses of rights, sovereignty, and nationhood by arguing that it is Indigenous women who ought to ultimately hold the political power of Indigenous nations, or at the very least have an equal seat at the debate table (Morris 2014, 245-6).

The Respondents in this study emphasized the way Indigenous women took the leadership roles needed to keep the momentum of the movement going. Authors have pointed out that the work of these women changed Indigenous politics (Anderson 2016, 203). Indigenous women have always held strong, influential roles within their communities revolving around agenda-setting, power, and leadership (Miller & Chuchryk 1996).

The most obvious rights examples come from the treaty agreements, which includes the spiritual significance of the agreements. Indigenous people agreed to share the land in the treaties, for farming and agriculture purposes (Krasowski 2019, 277). It was a matter of entering into new relationships: “the treaty relationship described governance as an equal partnership of Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadians (Krasowski 2019, 277)”. These relationships became twisted over the decades to the point of being harmful to Indigenous people. Section 91 and 92 outlines jurisdictional powers and the federal government and the provinces are all aware of this. Federal transfers are based on per capita allocations and Indigenous people are aware of this. The movement shifted the thoughts around the fundamental building blocks of Confederation and brought to light the gaps in the relationships.

An example of relationships is the existing relationships between Indigenous People and government and the ways they are approached. As Poelzer and Coates (2015) state, reconciliation is: “rooted, equally, in respect for Indigenous cultures, world views, and political aspirations and in the conviction that Indigenous people’s aspirations and cultural commitments

can be reconciled with the values, priorities, and laws of the country as a whole.” (p. 280) Breaking down “cultural and ethnic boundaries” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities is paramount to moving forward (Poelzer & Coates 2015, 237). This is necessary now more than ever.

As emerged through the interviews, the relationships between many changed, including that between the grassroots people and their leaders. This applies inside Indigenous political cultures as well; they too had to rethink fundamental relationships. Indigenous leaders, for example, approach the way they view the influence of their off-reserve members now more than ever.

The ways in which these relationships changed in 2012 was obvious in the response of the Government of Canada to Indigenous issues. For example, during the march to Parliament Hill in December 2012, the federal government warned legislative staffers that the march could get aggressive. This is not something other non-Indigenous protestors had been accused of in the past (until the Freedom Convoy in February 2022), but it reflected the government’s perceived threat of the potential for violence. But the movement also demonstrated the gaps that had emerged between Indigenous peoples and the Indigenous leaders. The government could not be pacified by the Chiefs during the height of the movement simply because the movement was disconnected from the National Chief, so government had to reinvent its fundamental approaches to working with Indigenous communities.

The co-founders of Idle No More spoke out about their issues with the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) system of governance imposed by federal authorities. The movement allowed many grassroots people to question their own Chiefs’ ability to openly criticize and take on the federal government, based primarily on the fact that the federal government provides the funding to First Nation communities. One of the contentious issues during this time was the proposed National Education Act. It was high on the agenda for the federal government, and they pushed the AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo to convince the Chiefs to adopt it. At the same time many educators were pushing for changes to Indigenous education. Concerns were being raised that the Department of Indian Affairs was taking away the sovereignty of the First Nations with a generic Education Act. Another concern was the funding that was not tied directly to the work that had to

be done. The AFN was accused of not listening to First Nations in general, even though it was clear that grassroots people had a lot to contribute. This was not in their historical template of their relationship, and the federal position was re-enforced by the Indigenous leadership. It is important to understand that the government relationship with First Nations organizations such as the AFN has not shifted over the years. It is ingrained in the paternalism of government control over policy making budget allocations and financial accountability. The last AFN leader to challenge the federal government was Matthew Coon Comb; and when he did, at that time the AFN budget was cut over 40% in funding because of the public pronouncements of the National Chief.

The Power of the People

Many were surprised at how the Indigenous grassroots across the globe responded to the movement. Indigenous people in many countries assumed ownership of and membership in Idle No More. They knew it was for and about them. Kinship ties and human connections were integral to the ebb and flow of the movement. The connections to community that all four women (the Idle No More co-founders) already had prior to the fall of 2012 exemplified this ebb and flow. The integrity and credibility that the four women brought into the movement was integral. They ignited the whole thing and kept it going. Other prominent people who were known land defenders brought their networks as well, strengthening those ties.

Social media was used as a tool to facilitate these newfound relationships. Facebook and Twitter kept people informed and involved. These social media platforms, together with new ones like Tik Tok and Instagram, continue to be used for this purpose. Stories emerged through social media describing the passion of the people who wanted to be heard and supported. The grassroots stories held special significance for the movement's co-founders. Many people, including the co-founders, the event organizers, the Elders and Knowledge Keepers, used their money to get to the events, although at some points monies raised through fundraisers provided some help to get them around. The fact that people were hitchhiking to get to the events drove the co-founders to keep going.

The resilience of the co-founders brought many types of responses. The movement's co-founders were attacked on social media, often by men. As the main founder, Sylvia McAdam talked about invoking the most sacred laws, and making a lifelong commitment to do so, regardless of outside pressures. McAdam reminded people that the actions of the movement are to protect and defend the children, including the children of the water, the trees, and plants and all of creation. Indigenous people have these responsibilities and are expected to also use their voice to protect their families.

The government was forced to recognize these responsibilities and to accept that the Chiefs were not the only or even the most important voice of the people. The governments were shocked by the appearance of the movement both because they were not expecting it and because the Chiefs were not able to warn them. It was a grassroots community-level movement outside the First Nations Chief and Council structures and control. It engaged the youth in precedent-setting ways. The movement grew within the younger generations including among their non-Indigenous and non-Canadian allies. This is one of the reasons the federal government had a major concern about their fear of the growing militancy during the movement.

The government's refusal to meet with Chief Theresa Spence during her hunger strike fuelled a lot of frustration, hurt and anger. With the Attawapiskat housing crisis, the Canadian public was becoming more aware of Indigenous issues and seeing firsthand how the federal government responded to them. The federal government's policies remained entrenched in control.

The movement demonstrated Indigenous peoples' ability to unify for change. The primary strength of the movement still lies in its collective organizing and mobilizing structures, with no clear lines of Indigenous leadership and decision-making. Non-Indigenous governments faced challenges responding to the movement at the provincial, national, and global levels because they are not familiar with dealing with large scale, spontaneous grassroots movements but instead were only accustomed to engaging with identified First Nations leaders, many of whom have been co-opted by non-Indigenous political systems.

Decades ago, it was believed that Indigenous people did not have the capacity to organize, and that their heterogeneity was a barrier to them unifying as a collective (Courchene & Powell, 1992, 47). However, this heterogeneity factored into connections to community and between communities and underpinned the creation and mobilization of identities, sustainability of grassroots movements (Peters 2007, 208). One of the most striking things the Respondents shared was the idea that the spirit of peace and friendship was created through conflict and mass mobilization that, uniquely, inspired local people to organized and rise as part of a national assertion of Indigenous identity and collective determination.

To mitigate these omnibus bills, in late 2019 the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau introduced *Bill C-69, An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act*, to amend the *Navigation Protection Act* and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. This repealed the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. This was sponsored by the Liberals to address the damage associated with Bill C-48. Another relevant bill is Bill S-3 which is *An Act to Amend the Indian Act*, which came into effect on December 22, 2017. The bill sought to eliminate sex-based inequities in registration and was in response to the Superior Court of Quebec decision in *Descheneaux*. (Government of Canada 2021). Bill S-3 will allow all sorts of new people onto the membership list and holds the potential to increase the Indigenous population exponentially. The initiative reflected both the spirit and the demands of Idle No More. The movement also affected the thinking of the other federal parties. The NDP and the Green Party opposed Conservative thinking and policy during the movement. The Conservative Party of Canada, however, has not changed significantly.

In the long term, Indigenous peoples need to keep pushing, to keep reminding people about their motivates and their goals. To continue to accept Canadian policy, more teepees should be erected on the lawn in Ottawa. As pointed out by one Respondent, when the Idle No More co-founders presented committee evidence it affected policy and influenced policy because those committees make decisions based on that evidence. The movement's co-founders appeared in front of the Senate Committee Proceedings on March 5, 2013, and again on May 8, 2018, and both times they appeared in front of the committee, it truly affected policy (Hansard Papers).

The Assembly of First Nations was not connected to the peoples' concerns. This was evident in the fact that they did not recognize there was such deep dissatisfaction from the people. The Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), Derek Nepinak, and the AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo opened two very different kinds of debates. Chief Nepinak was openly supportive of the movement and Chief Atleo was more reserved, concerned with the federal government's response. This demonstrated divisions within Indigenous communities that were prominent throughout the country. When the attention shifted to Chief Theresa Spence and her hunger strike, it caused even further divisions. The proposed National Education Act created even more internal divisions. This caused a lot of strife internally and within the AFN Executive. It caused divisions amongst the Chiefs. For example, some of the Chiefs marched with the movement and others did not. This was seen in December 2012 when some of the Chiefs joined the movement's rally on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. There existed issues of trust at many levels:

A trust deficit in their communities due to the legacy of the Indian Act, residential schools, and other forms of oppression. This has resulted in community members' lack of trust towards government in general, including their own Chief and Council systems and, too often, a lack of trust in each other. Participants spoke about the gaps in relationships between youth and Elders, and about community factions – sometimes family or clan-based and sometimes political – that make it difficult to have positive conversations that build collective action. (Tribal Café 2017, 1)

The movement grew dramatically when the numerous allies from across the world joined in. At first, the federal government wanted to address the activities from a status quo position and was not prepared to negotiate with anyone other than the AFN National Chief. The National Chief wanted to speak on behalf of the movement, but the co-founders and thousands of participants were not prepared to allow that. As a result, public servants started to pay real attention to the movement. Idle No More expanded their thinking beyond on-reserve citizens, it was very well received in urban centres and with off-reserve people. The government heard from urban and off-reserve Indigenous people more during the movement than they had in the past. Officials were forced to listen to new and diverse voices. It opened divisions between people, and it cost the AFN National Chief his job as he lost support.

The movement expanded peoples' awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Political parties became more responsive to such issues. The Liberal party came into power in 2015 and their actions were quite opposite to the Conservatives. The movement changed the way government communicated. The federal and provincial governments took Indigenous issues more seriously after the movement. They had to think deeper, focusing not just on reserves but urban centres as well. The Liberal government spent a lot more time on these issues than previous governments. The Liberal government appeared to take Indigenous affairs very seriously, at least in pronouncements and promises.

Idle No More resulted in a longer-term trend on the Canadian understanding of Indigenous issues. The government responded with a long-term positive impact. In Saskatoon the Neal Stonechild inquiry some years earlier had paved the way for government to pay attention now. Saskatoon gained national attention for the Neal Stonechild inquiry. The Star Light Tours as they came to be known as, drew attention to the mistrust between Indigenous people and the Saskatoon City Police who were accused of taking Indigenous men outside the city of Saskatoon and leaving them there to walk back in freezing temperatures. These issues and others brought Indigenous concerns to the forefront and made government take Indigenous issues more seriously. It gave great authority to the peaceful but forceful voices of Indigenous peoples. These transitions were more evident in Saskatchewan than in New Brunswick, due to the history and the demographics of the two provinces. As mentioned previously, Saskatchewan had a large number per capita of Indigenous populations, where New Brunswick did not.

Initially many of the existing Indigenous leaders did not want anything to do with the movement. But the communities bought into it; they embraced it because of the way the policy, rights and relationships lenses came together. The movement demonstrated quite clearly how disenfranchised the leaders were from community membership. Idle No More forced Indigenous leaders and senior officials to start to put the issues into the mix and onto the discussion tables. There were challenges around representation as well. Chiefs could no longer claim, in the face of a great deal of evidence to the contrary during the protests, to represent the voices of their people, particularly the voices coming through the movement. The urban population was not being dealt with by the Chiefs or by governments; their issues were not front and center until the

movement happened, even though the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had both highlighted the problems and challenges.

All forms of leadership have recognized that the old way of doing business could not work anymore. There was a change in the way government increased engagement activities. The governments are now forced to change their ways of communicating. One of the best examples of this is how the federal government now communicates through social media. The use of social media changed both outcomes and processes, in large part because the new systems had extraordinary power to influence public opinion. Facebook and Twitter have been used routinely to transfer information from the government and others in ways that could not have happened in the past. The youth in particular use these social media platforms as a main way to inform one another.

As Idle No More's founders and spokespeople repeated, all people in the room were equal. The Chiefs no longer held power positions during these meetings. This caused further discontent on the part of the Chiefs who had to surrender some of their power. In Saskatchewan, supporters camped outside the INAC offices in Regina. This brought to light the problems around government dealing with what the protestors called "Indian Act leaders" (known as Chiefs and Councillors). In 2012 when the Saskatchewan INAC office had a "sit in", all regional offices closed their frontline services to the public in response for fear of further occupations. Some of these offices have not re-opened, even though there are no more threats of "sit-ins". To the frustration of many Indigenous peoples, the Government of Canadian used this manufactured and unreleased fear as a justification to restrict frontline services.

Prior to the movement, there was an obvious lack of places for Indigenous women to have their voices heard. Status and connection to community are relevant and Indigenous women have been negatively impacted in both areas. It is integral to ensure women have a voice at the table. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) offers extensive urban programming to their members and to citizens of other First Nations and ensures women are part of the decision-making processes. They make sure their urban and off-reserve members are still connected to their communities, something that is done through social media. Some tribal councils have close

relationships with their members and are now able to engage women more regularly. Yet the movement raised the questions of whether the duly elected representatives in Indigenous organizations really represented the people. If leadership does not engage with and respond to the people, then they do not have the ability to influence the decisions on their behalf. For example, many women questioned whether the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) represented Indigenous women and argued for different approaches and more comprehensive engagement that did not limit female input to women's issues only. Others questioned whether the Assembly of First Nations had the capacity and even the inclination to represent the specific interests of Indigenous women. Others questioned whether regional organizations such as the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) represented them as they purported to do.

The movement brought these issues forward, bringing the whole engagement process into question. It is important to understand engagement systems. The rules of engagement between the federal government and Indigenous people have changed. This was pointed out by the Respondents. Officials consistently argued that governments had to be more collaborative and inclusive in the rules of engagement. They also had to be able to deal with a much wider circle of people in their engagement sessions and bring in more voices from members, without slowing decision-making processes. Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is doing some of this through social media. ISC now advertises public meetings and the outcomes, and decisions of meetings, shares meeting agendas and government mandates on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. More on-line surveys are being done by ISC than in the past. It is much easier to share information and to reach wider audiences through social media. Posting things online has proven effective for the ISC; the presence of more and diverse voices also affected the pace and outcomes of negotiations.

The movement obviously reflected the specific conditions that existed in the early 2010s. The movement forced a cross government, or a whole of government approach, using a more integrated perspective from government on Indigenous issues. A good example is what government is doing for Indigenous students. There is a lot of communication with college and university students and youth in general. The movement accelerated that cross-government

approach because it asked complex questions that required multiple department engagement and federal-provincial-territorial collaboration. Indigenous people, keeping the spirit of Idle No More alive, recognize that a substantive deconstruction of colonization and colonial mindsets is still required.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) put forward 94 recommendations in 2015, all with long term consequences. These specific action-oriented recommendations have been widely endorsed by Indigenous political and community leaders. The TRC recommendations can help shape policy direction if government uses them for that purpose. The problem is government has not taken the TRC recommendations seriously, even where they are seen as innovative and positive. The TRC's work led to the residential school apology. Before that the Indian Residential Schools story was poorly understood, but that has changed. The Respondents talked about the relevance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on government action. Specifically, the TRC Calls to Action #45, which has attracted little to no momentum, reads:

We call upon the Government of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, to jointly develop with Aboriginal peoples a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation to be issued by the Crown. The proclamation would build on the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara of 1764, and reaffirm the nation-to-nation relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown. The proclamation would include, but not be limited to, the following commitments: Repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2012)

One of the biggest challenges to identifying changes associated with the movement is determining how it initiated change. Some of the biggest barriers the government saw from within the movement is that it lacked an agenda; as a social movement, it is dispersed and disparate, deliberately with no control or authority. The movement re-emerges in contemporary times when it is summoned. This has caused an incredible amount of frustration and confusion for Governments, which find it much easier to work with established and stable (and often government funded) organizations. As was pointed out by the Respondents, this process was distinctly different than the ways Indigenous people had been organized under the *Indian Act*

(R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5). The *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) clearly defined the way Indigenous government would be established, maintained, and approved, operating under the auspices of the Minister of Indian Affairs, its representatives, and the Chiefs. Idle No More challenged all of that. It sent the strong message that Chiefs are not necessarily representative of the people.

Major problems remain. The education system - a clear provincial and territorial responsibility - has failed Canadians in this regard, keeping them under-informed in relation to Indigenous history, rights and contemporary issues. There is no denying that the education curriculum understates the negative and disruptive effects of the arrival of newcomers. Thousands of students graduated from Schools of Business and Public Policy without ever having really learned about Indigenous issues. Many of these students have become part of the Canadian bureaucracy. Public servants have obligations to inform themselves on the issues in order to approach Indigenous affairs fairly.

The Respondents agreed the political environment after Idle No More changed both significantly and subtly because of the movement. The government now deals more directly with citizens; engagement is no longer limited to the Chiefs and Councilors at the band level, or the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) or the provincial-territorial organizations, such as the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN). Governments had to engage new policy actors, and accept the fact that status quo in engagement no longer works. This was new for government officials, public servants and policy makers and adaptation to new realities proved difficult.

The movement introduced new voices and new relationships into the policy discussions. As pointed out by the Respondents, the movement was a distinctly grassroots initiative that operated outside the existing colonial political processes in both public and Indigenous governments. This galvanized people who insisted they have a voice on Indigenous issues. Those voices were profoundly and philosophically insightful. Idle No More introduced new actors who proved to be bright, energetic and sophisticated leaders. These new actors publicly challenged all the leaders on what they were doing to make change and made them disclose their motives. In some communities, Chiefs feared repercussions to existing agreements they were working on with

government. The movement exposed some of these processes but the new actors who emerged from within the movement continued to push for creative changes.

Over the past several decades Indigenous people have worked tirelessly to inform Canadians and government to be more aware of their rights. The ability to rebuild Indigenous nations lies in the efforts of Indigenous people only, regardless of what outsiders do. The process of nation building comes from the self-determination of the people (Jorgenson 2007, 57).

In the 1960s and 1970s, influential Indigenous leaders stood up and gave voice to their people. They were informed on their rights because, for the most part, they were only one or two generations removed from those who had entered treaty. Treaty education was “supper time talk.” Young people learned about their treaties through their older generations and within their homes. They were trained in the natural laws and gifted the Indigenous knowledges of their parents and grandparents. Their grandparents knew about the Doctrine of Discovery, the Royal Proclamation, and the BNA Act even though it had never been taught to them in any formal education system.

That knowledge base has changed over the past several decades. Government policy dictated a new discourse to be centralized around the elected local officials, or what is now referred to as Indian Act leadership. Fewer First Nations people truly connect to the meaning of their treaties and many have neglected the treaty terms, remaining uninformed or misinformed. The older generation feared this would be how the treaties would be broken, by First Nations people themselves. But the movement took First Nations full circle, back to the place where Indigenous people had treaty knowledge and could use their voices to inform others.

Idle No More speaks to Indigenous people’s ongoing dissatisfaction with government policy, such as the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5), and the continuing neglect of state responsibilities towards Indigenous communities as outlined in various agreements, including the Numbered Treaties (Palmater 2020). The treaties are ideally representative of the intended relationship the Indigenous people believed they were entering into at the time they were negotiated. The treaties demonstrate the ways in which Indigenous people asserted their territorial rights. Oral history

from the treaty period demonstrates First Nations did not give up their rights to their lands or any other rights (Starr-Spaeth 2001). The Crown has taken the concept of opening up the land for settlement and agriculture in the treaty agreements to mean that all lands had been ceded or sold.

The Elders and Knowledge Keepers remind First Nations that they did not give up the land to the newcomers at the time of treaty. The land protectors are consistently asserting that Indigenous authority has never been ceded. As Kent McNeil argued:

Over thousands of years, the aboriginal people of what is now Canada organized themselves as sovereign nations, with what was essentially governmental jurisdiction over their lands, including property rights. Those rights of governance and property were trampled in the stampede of European settlement, colonization and commercial interests. But they were never lost or extinguished. (McNeil 2007, 4)

There has been incredible change to the relationship between government and Indigenous people in Canada since the movement in 2012. In the words of the organization, it: “changed the social and political landscape of Canada” (www.idlenomore.ca). Some of this has been positive but certain setbacks have occurred. Several court cases, including the unsuccessful attempts to convict the murders of Colten Boushie in Saskatchewan and Tina Fontaine in Manitoba, once again re-activated the people from within and outside Indigenous communities in Canada to push for policy change. It was akin to the public responses to the Star Light Tours when Neil Stonechild exposed the Saskatoon City Police for their wrong doings.

At the time Justice Minister Jody Wilson Raybould announced changes to the justice system in response to the murder of Colten Boushie. But the murder grabbed global attention and the provincial government was forced to respond. In Saskatchewan, changes to the Trespassing Act brought negative responses from Indigenous groups and their allies. Many people surmised that the Trespassing Act was passed in direct response to the murder of Colten Boushie. That somehow passing an Act of this nature would have prevented the murder. Scholars picked up on the injustices in the ways the investigation was conducted and the subsequent trial of Gerald Stanley. Political response was muted, to say the least. Protestors insisted on more attention to

the systemic racism that is rampant within the justice system and, specifically, among the rural communities on the prairies.

In Canada there continues to be a “struggle over occupation” where the nation state perpetuates colonial systems (Dhillon 2017, 50). Although these spatial injustices continue, the attention brought to them is a result of Indigenous people taking back the power through social media and other avenues. Idle No More lives on, although primarily as an online presence. The movement used the social media platform to share their message across and change the public perceptions of Indigenous peoples (Morris 2014, 252). These same social media platforms continue to be used to promote Indigenous rights and to sustain the key messages of Idle No More. Although splinters of social media groups have emerged, the Idle No More official Facebook page continues to be used as a way for people to connect and stay informed. The movement retains the potential to garner increased awareness surrounding Indigenous issues and Canadian public policy. As Cannon and Sunseri point out, the movement was:

Different from other acts of resistance: it was a bottom-up, informal one, initiated and led by women, and it used social media, arts, round dances and other culturally specific means to address important issues. It also was effective in drawing support from many non-Indigenous people, including environmentalists, youth, labour activists, and some politicians...Idle No More awakened all, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to act responsibly and remember that treaties and original wampums are living documents from which our daily actions must flourish” (Cannon and Sunseri 2018, 230).

This includes, perhaps most importantly, the re-empowerment of Indigenous women. Women have found their voices and are now being more aggressive in making sure their voices are heard.

Governments are anxious about sharing federal and provincial jurisdiction. Aboriginal people are concerned over the intrusion of federal and provincial governments into their jurisdictions and the: “reluctance of those governments to vacate fields of jurisdiction and to recognize aboriginal jurisdiction. Related to this are matters of policy coordination among federal, provincial, and aboriginal governments” (Hawkes 1987, 12).

Youth were key to the movement, they activated themselves in ways that government and communities had not seen before. The following sacred teaching for the youth came from the movement's main founder, Sylvia McAdam, based on her own ancestral teachings:

Learn who you are. Learn your language. Learn about your lands. Learn about the history of the colonizer to understand the in-depth impacts of patriarchy, misogyny, genocide, and the doctrine of discovery. Bury your feet deep into the land. Don't let anyone tell you different: we never ceded or surrendered these lands. Smudge, pray, learn ceremony.

Those things saved my life so many times. I couldn't do this work without that.

(Longman 2017, 18)

The connections to land and ceremony are integral to the message (Longman 2017). McAdam influenced numerous young people through her teachings, and through her work as a faculty member within the academy, just as she did with her teach-ins during Idle No More. Many young people she has worked with have become leaders in their own way; others have simply decided to stand up in support of one another. The youth have accepted these expanded roles, as Dhillon observed: "What Idle No More has most visibly ushered in, is an awareness that Indigenous youth are already on the front line of the fight for decolonization in Canada and are rising to this challenge with passion and power" (Dhillon 2017, 247).

Million (2013) talks about the history of trauma as lived experience and that it: "underlines the felt experience as community knowledge" (57). She insists: "Our voices rock the boat, and perhaps the world. Our voices are dangerous. Knowing this, we must also seek to know how our Indigenous voices are mobilized in the global meshwork that are the larger spheres that inform us and in which we take action" (Million 2013, 57). The voices that came through the movement made change to the way government responded. This activation showed people that their voices counted and demonstrated the power of the people.

Idle No More was itself, an assertion of Indigenous presence (Aguirre 2015, 187). The networking that continues reaffirms this reality. The movement was a reaction to a crisis that was created from the bounded rationality of policy makers resulting in a punctuated equilibrium. The underlying meaning in the words "Idle No More" indicates the stasis of that time. This may be one reason for the divide amongst the Chiefs in supporting the movement. Some of the leaders

agreed they needed to do more; others argued back that they were not ‘idle’, and that they had, in fact, been very busy.

Today’s Indigenous youth are reclaiming their responsibilities and making more headway than their Elders. There are numerous examples of these transitions. In the summer of 2020, a Métis youth named Tristen Durocher from Ille a la Crosse, Saskatchewan won a ruling to keep his teepee camp erected at the Saskatchewan Legislature Building in Regina. Tristen’s camp was known widely as the “Justice for Our Angels Camp” and was attended to by the grassroots, hundreds of people who supported him fully. There appeared a notable absence of Indigenous leaders at Tristen’s camp, perhaps because they were in the process of negotiating for funding for the same things Tristen sought. Tristen was pressing the provincial government in Saskatchewan to address suicide prevention among Indigenous youth.

During this period, the province of Saskatchewan was providing funding to the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations to do a report on youth suicide in Saskatchewan, but there was no connection between the two efforts. Tristen walked from La Ronge, Saskatchewan to the Saskatchewan Legislature Building in Regina where he set up his camp and began his forty-four day fast. The number of days in his fast was symbolic: one day for each of the SaskParty MLAs (including Premier Scott Moe) who voted against suicide prevention legislation. The Court of Queen’s Bench ruled that Tristen had the Freedom of Expression and the Freedom of Conscience and Religion based on charter rights and could keep his camp up and had to be allowed to finish his fast (Polischuk 2020). The judge, Justice Graeme Mitchell, visited Tristen’s camp on the last day of his fast (White-Crummey 2020). Although he was criticized for doing so, Judge Mitchell insisted he needed to attend the camp and learn from the ceremony. It was a significant example of relationship building. The obvious absence of Indigenous leaders on that last day of Tristen’s fast when Judge Mitchell attended was noted by many. Youth commented later that they wanted to see their Chiefs and political representatives supporting Tristen’s court win and to be there in ceremony with the judge.

Tristen’s forty-four day fast forced the Government of Saskatchewan and the federal government to pay attention and to act. More importantly, it showed that the courts could protect the rights of

Indigenous people. Two days before Tristen had scheduled the removal of his camp, the judge ruled in Tristen's favor. This forced the province to make concessions to accommodate future freedoms of expression of this nature. This is demonstrated change that would not have seen before Idle No More. Tristen had the support of community members, but once again there was a noticeable absence of elected Indigenous leaders.

Indigenous youth such as Tristen Durocher, and others including Autumn Pelletier and many more who are yet to come behind them demonstrate the true results of the work of Idle No More. Autumn Peltier was thirteen years old when she spoke at the United Nations in 2018 regarding clean drinking water on reserves in Canada. She had expressed her fears and concerns to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during an AFN Chiefs Assembly one year earlier. Young Indigenous people will not revert to silence. They are speaking their truth now. They will be "Idle No More". The Elders have said that the youth will take the lead, but they have always had concerns on how the youth will frame that role. Elders and Knowledge Keepers have always wanted them to have an informed approach. As Saul argued: "This latest move of public interventions by Indigenous peoples needs to be seen as a sign of self-confidence, a sign of their comeback, of their willingness to take the lead" (Saul 2014, 116).

Idle No More has taken on new life and has morphed into something new yet again over the past two years. Some of this is attributed to the use of social media. More importantly, there have been several new demonstrations that have called on Idle No More to support and to spread the word. The land defenders across Canada and the United States continue to connect through social media and the internet. Although many of these demonstrations included events, some of them have turned online. These recent events have been referred to as the new wave of Idle No More (Palmater 2020).

An example is the "1492 Land Back Lane" camp, established by the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory (Haudenosaunee), who were protesting on their lands located in Caledonia, Ontario, just southwest of Toronto. They currently have over 8000 members on their Facebook page. They are a land reclamation camp that was in operation last summer. They used road blockades to send the message to the local community that they were not moving. They opposed

a joint venture between Losani Homes and Ballantyne Homes who were proposing a 218-unit subdivision called McKenzie Meadows be built on Haudenosaunee lands. (Kennedy, 2020). The local community in Caledonia is standing up against the Six Nations.

In a more recent and perhaps more known protest, the Mi'kmaq people from Sipekne'katik First Nation, lobster fishers in the Maritimes, have taken a stand in defense of their right to catch lobster out of the Government's imposed season. They have been prevented from setting their lobster traps in St. Mary's Bay, Nova Scotia, facing opposition to their fishing by the non-Indigenous commercial fishermen. The protest turned violent so quickly, but it was not violence coming from the Indigenous protesters, but rather non-Indigenous peoples, who attacked First Nations commercial fishermen both on and off the water. The Mi'kmaq are basing their stance on the 1999 Donald Marshall decision that ruled in support of Aboriginal fishing rights on the east coast. The commercial fishermen burned a van and a lobster pound holding the Mi'kmaq lobster catch.

There has been an incredible amount of support for the Mi'kmaq fishers. Some local restaurants in Halifax stopped selling lobster on their menus, to support the Mi'kmaq and send the message to the commercial fishermen that they do not support the violence. The Sipekne'katik First Nation Chief, Mike Sack, was assaulted by the commercial fishermen. Some charges were laid, but the RCMP faced criticism for not moving fast enough, not being harsh enough, and not providing enough protection for the Mi'kmaq fishers. An independent negotiator was appointed by the federal government to try to find a resolution or middle ground. Chief Sack remained reluctant, considering that the negotiator had a relationship with the commercial fishers.

In the Sipekne'katik First Nation crisis, the RCMP were criticized for not acting fast enough and not sending enough police backup to quell the non-Indigenous agitators. People were injured, resources and property were destroyed. Members of Parliament from across the country criticized the government for not acting fast enough (Yu, 2020). Indigenous people across Canada spoke up and social media was active with the updates and images. The Idle No More Facebook page distributed information across their feeds and throughout their networks.

The AFN National Chief at the time, Perry Bellegarde demanded RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki resign from her position because of her handling of the Sipekne'katik situation. Lucki defended the actions of the RCMP, and eventually sent out police to protect the Mi'kmaq but her response was not timely enough. AFN Chief Perry Bellegarde was forced to speak up for the Mi'kmaq fishers, as he is very aware how the AFN was criticized during Idle No More for making side deals with government and not listening to the residents.

The Chief of the Sipekne'katik First Nation accused the commercial fishers of influencing local supports to turn their back on the Mi'kmaq, making it almost impossible for them to continue to pursue their livelihood. For example, those who should be helping them fix their boats that were destroyed by the commercial fishermen refused to do so. At the same time a demonstration in Halifax supporting the Mi'kmaq fishers occurred early. So, it was obvious there were distinct divisions over the dispute.

The Idle No More Facebook Group Page announced and promoted a National Week of Action from October 19-23, 2020 to support the Mi'kmaq right to fish, which they viewed as an Aboriginal Right that was inherent prior to the Treaty of 1752. Their Facebook page called on all people to support the Mi'kmaq fishers in Nova Scotia. The following was posted as a call out from the official Idle No More Facebook page: "Mi'kmaq land defenders are requesting that people lift their pipes and light their medicines, and they are calling for groups to gather in support of Mi'kmaq inherent rights. We need all allies on deck as settlers continue to escalate violent tactics to intimidate members of the Mi'kmaq nation" (Idle No More 2020).

The role of women as water protectors was prominent in the movement and water issues continue today. A prime example is the Neskantaga First Nation in Ontario, just north of Thunder Bay. More than 200 members of that community have recently been evacuated because they have no running water. Their water is toxic, with an obvious oily film on top and tested with high levels of hydrocarbons (The Canadian Press 2020). They have the longest running boil water advisory in Canada. The lack of safe water plagued them for 25 years but just recently their water has been entirely cut off. The community has been displaced from their own homes because of a lack of a basic human right. The Chief of Neskantaga, Chris Moonias is now calling

for an end to their crisis. As a result, many people are defending the Neskantaga First Nation. Some Canadians have shared their anger and outrage towards the politicians. Chief Moonias is calling on both the provincial and federal governments to come to their aid. Issues around jurisdiction should not prevent the provision of safe water to these communities. Chief Moonias has taken a much more aggressive approach than is generally seen, but he demonstrates the frustration of so many others. He is being pressured by his people to speak on their behalf.

Idle No More encouraged people from many diverse places to stand up and take notice regardless of who they are. The movement has remained peaceful and organic, emerging, and morphing as conditions change, based on various circumstances. The same cannot be said for those who oppose the various demonstrations. Those who are standing in opposition to the land defenders such as the commercial lobster fishermen use intimidation, violence, and aggressive behavior. Although Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tried to sit idle and not respond to the crisis, the Mi'kmaq fishers were successful in forcing the federal government to change the way they deal with Indigenous protest.

The messaging on the Idle No More website page reminds the public what the movement is about: "Idle No More Calls on all people to join in a peaceful revolution to honor Indigenous sovereignty and to protect the land & water & sky (<https://idlenomore.ca>)". Anyone listening to the news in Canada can see the ways in which Indigenous people stand up for their rights, as the numbers of Indigenous protests continue to rise. It has changed the public message in many ways:

Civil disobedience is beginning to take on a life of its own. History tells us that the frequency of blockades, protest movements, and 'sit-ins' is increasing. The entire 'Idle No More' movement is a public statement that First Nations people are no longer willing to be passive recipients of policies and programs that the federal government unilaterally imposes" (Frideres 2016, 221).

Land is often at the core of Indigenous protest and dispute. The Elders and Knowledge Keepers speak about First Nations people as being the seeds that were planted here. The Creator planted First Peoples on Turtle Island. Generations have gone back to the earth, to the land. That is why

land is sacred. Natural laws and ways of knowing are now part of the discussion. These have become integral to understanding policy differences in moving forward. As Indigenous people have gathered as land protectors, they have taken those opportunities to bring forward the natural laws and ways of knowing that are relevant to the discourse.

For Indigenous people, the natural laws guide behavior and give meaning to life. Indigenous people have a high regard for their natural laws and demonstrate this through their ongoing commitment to abide by them. Natural laws are incorporated into daily life to maintain personal and community balance. Natural laws are relevant; in many cases, they drive the actions of Indigenous people.

Several major observations emerged from the interviews. The data collected from the Respondents corroborated primary and secondary information and pointed to valuable conclusions. They noted, among other things, that Idle No More produced a change in attitude among Indigenous leaders and communities after the movement. Governments changed the way they negotiated with Indigenous people during the protests and had to alter the way they negotiated with Indigenous people after the movement. Put simply, the protests changed the behavior of governments toward Indigenous people. At the federal level, the change did not occur during the last years of the Harper government but, instead, showed up in the policies and promises of the Trudeau administration.

The behavior of government in each province was unique to each province because the environment and government responses were different. In New Brunswick, the system did not change as much as it did in Saskatchewan and, indeed, the post-Idle No More government took a sharp step backward. Provinces responded to the movement based on local politics and demographics. There was a big difference between the two provinces of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. In Saskatchewan, Indigenous issues are prominent and the population substantial; on the other hand, in New Brunswick there is a minor presence of Indigenous issues. Neither province has been particularly proactive or creative in addressing Indigenous concerns.

Indigenous women took on a strong leadership role during and after the Idle No More movement and continue to do so. Specifically, Indigenous women exercised their roles as leaders within their communities and as Knowledge Keepers, with notable attention as Keepers of the Water and Land Protectors.

Among the major changes were the fact that Indigenous youth were activated to learn and teach about Indigenous rights and relationships. Equally important, social media (especially Facebook) was used as a vital platform to educate and inform and bring people together to support activities and events. The force of change remains in the land. This showed up in such diverse examples between 2012-2020 as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) inquiry, the federal government's embrace of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the outcomes from the Daniels Court decision.

Indigenous leaders were divided on how to respond to the movement and the levels and ways to support. Governments had to accept the fact that many Indigenous people do not see their issues being brought forward by Indigenous leadership at the local, regional, and national levels, and questioned whether their leaders represented them. All governments, including Indigenous administrations, are compelled to listen to the people because of the movement. Many Indigenous people believe that they should be more active at this point.

The study demonstrates that given the experience of the 11 Respondents in Question #1 there was a consensus amongst all Respondents that a change in attitude among Indigenous leaders and/or communities happened after Idle No More, although one Respondent did clarify the change in attitude was seen more in the communities than it was among the Indigenous leaders. According to this Respondent, the Chiefs' attitudes changed because their peoples' attitudes did. The real change was seen in the people in the communities. The study also demonstrates in Question #2 most Respondents believed government changed the way they negotiated with Indigenous people. The study further shows that most Respondents believed the movement changed the behavior of government.

The study also demonstrates that the movement did make a slight difference in processes around Indigenous policy change in Canada. The data from the interviews with government insiders at the federal and provincial levels demonstrates the movement changed the way government negotiates and deals with Indigenous people. Idle No More changed the political landscape of Canada in certain ways, but that does not mean it changed policy dramatically. The protests became a catalyst for Indigenous people to collectively assert their Aboriginal and treaty rights to the land and waters.

Through Idle No More, Indigenous people asserted their authority as keepers of the land and waters and demanded government undertake their consultation and accommodation obligations. Indigenous grassroots people stood up and voiced their opposition and called for change to improve the lives of future generations. The movement activated an awareness of social rights, environmental protection, and democracy.

The media helped to popularize the events of the movement. Media has always been powerful in activating people to take collective action, even before social media existed. Public perception is shaped based on what mass media covers and how it is reported. There are numerous instances where media controlled public response to issues, especially those involving Indigenous people. In the case of Idle No More, social media was the most relevant form of media to spread the word. There was a consistent growth in on-line support for Idle No More over time.

Idle No More brought forward many of the issues faced by the Indigenous people. One of these has been around governance and the role of the Chiefs. In many cases and in many communities across Canada, over the decades, the role of the Chief has been minimized through the complexities of the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5).

The term “Indian Act Chiefs” has been used by people in a derogatory way to describe Chiefs who are recognized as Chiefs under the *Indian Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.1-5) and, therefore, are regulated by the Department of Indian Affairs and consequently do not work to address the real needs of the people. With Idle No More, many of these “Indian Act Chiefs” were no longer recognized by the people as having the authority to speak on behalf of the people in several

different areas. Changes occurred in the political arena that further weakened the voice of the Chiefs in their communities.

Many grassroots people have become tired of waiting for their leaders to make meaningful change. For some communities there is a true sense of hopelessness and helplessness. The social repercussions of that are reflected in the wide gaps between Indigenous and mainstream demographics in this country. There was an obvious disconnect between the Idle No More movement and political leaders and organizations. The movement did not link up to the existing Indigenous political issues.

The movement was driven by the people, not the Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTOs) or the National Organizations that are mandated to protect treaty and Aboriginal rights. These PTOs operate under the imposed election system; their funding comes through the federal government.

Non-Indigenous governments have faced challenges responding to the movement at the provincial, national, and global levels because they were ill-prepared to deal with grassroots movements. Provincial and federal governments are accustomed to being able to speak to identified Indigenous leaders, many of whom have been co-opted by non-Indigenous political systems.

Under the movement, and for the first time, the Canadian and provincial governments faced the challenge of being pressured to hear the collective voices of Indigenous people. The primary strength of Idle No More lay in its collective organizing approach, which also meant there was no clear line of Indigenous leadership and decision-making. The lack of “point people” also caused disorganization, which resulted in sub-optimal results. The fact that there is no one central person or organization leading the movement’s charge may be detrimental to the movement in the long run as it has resulted in a lack of organization and planning at the local, regional, and national levels.

There were many ways in which the movement brought together policy, rights, and relationships to create a ‘perfect storm’ for Idle No More to be born. This dissertation presented the

government and Indigenous responses to Idle No More and focused on rights and relationships. There was a focus on relationships and the impacts to relationships. Then the dissertation looked at changes to policy making approaches. The dissertation moved on to focus on emerging and changed relationships. To bring it together, the dissertation looked at Canada's policy environment in the aftermath of Idle No More.

These three lenses of policy, rights and relationships are mutually incompatible, they do not always stand together, but for the purposes of this dissertation they are brought together to preserve the key elements of each, a view that is inherent in the idea of reconciliation.

Conclusion

In the winter of 2022, Canada witnessed the Freedom Convoy, a mass protest analogous to Idle No More. It lacked a central or clear organization, it burst up spontaneously in communities across the country. It included a high-profile march on Ottawa, was genuinely non-violent, sought and received support for Canadians at large. It focused on contemporary issues (Covid 19 vaccine mandates instead of omnibus legislation) and broader challenges (colonial administration and disrespect for Indigenous rights versus a distaste of government over-reach and intrusion on personal freedoms), organized through social media, attracted strong opposition party support in the House of Commons, and troubled provincial, federal, and municipal employees to the point of inaction and genuine fear of insurrection. However, the Freedom Convoy was unlike Idle No More in key respects: it attracted millions of dollars in donations, flirted with American ideological movements, and, unlike Idle No More, disrupted Canadian life in a sustained and obnoxious way. Idle No More and the Freedom Convoy are markedly different social movements, but they show the capacity of the people to rise, short of revolution or rebellion, to push a particular cause. It remains to be seen if the Freedom Convoy has the long-term impact on Canadian policy making and governance, although the lessons of Idle No More caution against dismissing the potential impacts of the broad social movement.

Despite historic and ongoing policies aimed at facilitating Indigenous peoples, inclusion in the Canadian nation state through frameworks of rights and recognition, Indigenous peoples maintain a unique sovereign status and nationhood in relation to the Canadian nation state. This is happening without the federal government keeping pace. The provincial and federal governments need to stay apprised of Indigenous issues and to listen to the Indigenous voices that speak for the people. They know that they must change and have known this for a decade. But they have not yet settled on a course that is acceptable to Indigenous peoples.

The Respondents described how the government responded to the movement, agreeing on several conclusions that are relevant. Clearly, governments were not prepared for Idle No More. They were caught by surprise when it happened, they did not expect it, and they did not know how to respond to it. Government framed Idle No More as a potential terrorist attack, closely monitoring the activities and movements of the founders and their associates as well as those

who were involved in Idle No More, despite the undeniable peacefulness of the hundreds of protests. Government learned self-serving lessons about the proper way to engage and speak to community members. Although government learned lessons on how to communicate more broadly, such as using social media, the movement really did not change their approach or policy to any significant degree, although the Liberal government elected in 2015 did make grand promises and commitments without changing the fundamental relationships with Indigenous peoples. Governments breathed a sigh of relief as the large-scale movement declined; they were happy that it was over. Despite the efforts of the movement organizers and participants, the federal and provincial governments did not make major or transformative changes.

This dissertation demonstrates that, although no significant policy change occurred, there has been a change in attitude, planning processes, and substance in the federal and select provincial governments' responses to Idle No More and Indigenous people in general. Given the difficulties around making policy change, it is hardly surprising that the movement did not have the impact Indigenous people desired. Due to the ubiquity and enduring nature of the movement, government officials, analysts and Indigenous people know that it remains a force to be reckoned with in Canada. Without substantive government action, the social and political grievances underlying the movement will only increase in intensity and size, particularly due to the well-documented demographic growth of Indigenous populations.

It is vital to look at what happened in the past for us to learn for the future. The way policy, rights and relationships came together in the movement is that the two omnibus Bills were the policies that triggered action, Indigenous people used their treaty and inherent rights to assert their authority through the movement. and the previously established relationships and their structures guided the movement. These three components came together in a timely way to allow the movement's founders and their supporters to expose the vast range of social problems that plague Indigenous peoples.

Idle No More promised to elucidate processes of change within non-Indigenous governments, specifically as it relates to policy and Indigenous peoples. As affirmed through the Respondents in this study, the movement continues to impact Indigenous people and Indigenous governments.

As stated by Niigaan Sinclair, a well-known Indigenous academic: “while the round dances in malls and marches have subsided, the hunger fasts on Victoria Island have ended and the calls for resistance to fast-tracked omnibus legislation has quieted, there is more collective action led by Indigenous grassroots peoples throughout Canada than ever before” (Sinclair, 2014). Many Indigenous people continue to talk about it as still active and relevant. This is because Idle No More retains the potential to change the dynamics of Indigenous policy planning. Idle No More continues to be active in 2022, ten years later, as this dissertation was being finalized. Although there are few marches and rallies that are Idle No More specific, the fact remains that any opposition to resource development and any failure to consult with Indigenous people instigates land protectors to refer to the movement and its ideologies. Many events that are organized by various land protectors are brought through the Idle No More networks.

Lessons were learned by those who were involved in the movement and by governments, both federal and provincial. The responses of governments in the provinces of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick were unique to each province because the political and geographical environments are different. In New Brunswick, the policy system was not impacted as much as it was in Saskatchewan. The two provinces responded to the movement based on their own local politics and demographics which inevitably impacts the way they establish the relevance of Indigenous issues. Indigenous issues in Saskatchewan are on the provincial government’s radar because Indigenous people make up a relevant percentage of the population yet in New Brunswick Indigenous issues are not on the provincial government’s radar because Indigenous people are a small percentage of the population. In addition to this, the change in provincial leadership in New Brunswick was a factor in how that province responded. So, the responses of these two governments were starkly different.

Governments can use what happened with the movement as an opportunity to learn how to do things better moving forward. Within the policy cycle, some policy learning can come from coalitions or networks in advocating policy change. This should be applied in relation to Indigenous policy change as well. With the movement, several policy actors, including environmentalists and Indigenous people, share concerns.

Indigenous people are undoubtedly much more organized because of the movement. The movement's banner continues to be put out on any environmental action or land protection activities that are undertaken by Indigenous peoples. The movement brought forward the voices of those that had been silenced, during and after 2012 women and youth took their rightful places within and outside their communities and found the passion and commitment needed to organize collectively as land protectors. The youth are seeing their role as vital to that process.

As pointed out by one of the Respondents, it will take fifty years to heal the pain in Indigenous communities.

Appendix A: Picture of Amanda Polchies



Amanda Polchies at Elsipogtog First Nation during the shale gas protests kneeling in front of the police holding an Eagle Feather. November 21, 2013.

Jaskiron Dhillon. *Prairie Rising* (49). Figure 5. Protest against SWN Resources. New Brunswick, 2013. (Photo credit: Ossie Michelin, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network APTN).

Appendix B: Idle No More Event and Logo



Image courtesy of Zi Ann Lum - Huffington Post.

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/05/11/rcmp-idle-no-more-bacteria_n_7260024.html



Source: www.idlenomore.ca

Appendix C: Flash Mob Round Dances



Image courtesy of The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, eds. 2014. *The Winter We Danced*. Winnipeg: ARP Books. 125. The Round Dance Revolution, Ottawa, December 20, 2012 (Nadya Kwandibens).



Image courtesy of The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, eds. 2014. *The Winter We Danced*. Winnipeg: ARP Books. 234. Yonge and Dundas Square, Toronto, December 28, 2012 (Hayden King).

Appendix D: Copy of REB Exemption Letter

To: Kenneth Coates, Ph.D.
International Centre for Northern Governance and Development
University of Saskatchewan

Student: Danette Starblanket

Date: January 5, 2018

Re: *Government Response to “Idle no More”*

Thank you for letter regarding your PhD student project at the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. This project meets the requirements for exemption status as per Article 2.1 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS): Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December 2014, which states “*research may involve interaction with individuals who are not themselves the focus of the research in order to obtain information. For example, one may collect information from authorized personnel to release information or data in the ordinary course of their employment about organizations, policies, procedures, professional practices or statistical reports. Such individuals are not considered participants for the purposes of this Policy. This is distinct from situations where individuals are considered participants because they are themselves the focus of the research.*”

It should be noted that though your project is exempt of ethics review, your project should be conducted in an ethical manner (i.e. in accordance with the information that you submitted). This would include an information letter for participants. It should also be noted that any deviation from the original methodology and/or research question should be brought to the attention of the Behavioral Research Ethics Board for further review.

Sincerely,

Vivian Ramsden, PhD
Behavioral Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan

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