Indigenous media relations: reconfiguring the mainstream

by

Tia Hiltz
BA, Saint Mary’s University, 2011

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Anthropology

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University of Victoria

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Much of the scholarly literature on Indigenous media relations frames Indigenous peoples as passive players in the mainstream media, and focuses on negative elements such as stereotypes. This thesis challenges this view, finding that Indigenous peoples in Canada actively and strategically engage with mainstream and social media as they forward their social and political agendas. This thesis provides an analysis of the counter-colonial narrative in Canada by offering a new perspective on Indigenous media relations, focusing as a case on the Idle No More movement. Emphasizing three dimensions of communication—the mainstream print media, social media, and individuals involved in Indigenous media relations—I examine the ways in which Indigenous agency and empowerment have the potential to change discourses in the media.

As sources of insight I draw on a discourse analysis of mainstream news media, a qualitative analysis of social media and on interviews with those who have significant experience in Indigenous media relations. Interviews with prominent media personalities and individuals involved in media relations (including CBC’s Duncan McCue and Janet Rogers; Four Host Nations CEO Tewanee Joseph, and others) illustrate the novel and impactful ways indigenous peoples in Canada are actively and strategically shaping the mainstream media. These representations create a more complex picture of Indigenous peoples as they counter the stereotyped or victimized media narratives within which Indigenous peoples have historically been placed.
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Acknowledgments

I would like to first acknowledge gratitude for the lands on which I have resided. This research was conducted on the unceded traditional territories of the Straight Salish and Coast Salish peoples. My journey began on the traditional territory of the Mi’kmaq peoples, of whom my late grandfather Arthur Frederick Nicholson is a descendant. May we all work hard to respect the history, culture and traditions of these strong communities.

I would like to thank Dr. Brian Thom for his patience, enthusiasm and direction from the beginning of my MA program. He has been an invaluable source of inspiration and knowledge throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Ann Stahl for her support, guidance, and wealth of knowledge. I am also thankful for Dr. Virginia McKendry, and her enthusiasm in being a part of this process.

I am ever so grateful to Alex Rose, Don Bain, Cara McKenna, Janet Rogers, Melissa Quocksister, Tewanee Joseph, Duncan McCue, Dan Wallace and Ernie Crey, for allowing me to connect with them, and for sharing with me the perspectives and insights that shaped my thesis.

This thesis would not have been possible without the encouragement and unconditional support from my friends and family. I would like to thank my parents, Jerome and Tanya, for their long-distance support throughout this process and who inspire me to work hard and follow my heart. I owe so much to my grandparents: to my grandmother Virginia, for her supportive and loving long-distance phone conversations, and genuine interest in my project; and my late grandfather Arthur for his love and humour. Thank you also to Jacob, Rachel and Cassie for you love, humour and inspiration from afar.

My partner Jay has been incredibly patient and caring as I spent many long hours working on this project, and has been a key source of humour, strength and love. A giant thanks to my pug Neeva for prompting me to take long walks and breathe deeply, and for making me laugh on a daily basis.

Lastly, thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for their financial support.
Dedication

For Ramona and Emmeline. Thank you for reminding me of the importance of taking time amidst the chaos, to play, connect, love, and be present.
Chapter 1- Indigenous media relations: a new perspective

The Idle No More Movement

In November of 2012, four women from Saskatchewan started to organize “teach-ins” (Sahlins 2009), which are community educational events that generally involve political issues, to bring awareness to Bill C-45 (History of Idle No More Grassroots Movement, 2012). By making changes to existing legislation, this Bill would deregulate the protection of significant bodies of water and implement changes concerning the Indian Act that “will lower the threshold of community consent in the designation and surrender process of Indian Reserve Lands” (History of Idle No More Grassroots Movement, 2012). These four women, representing both First Nations and settler-Canadians, wanted to bring public awareness to the Bill’s detrimental effects and educate Indigenous and settler-Canadians about how this was going to affect them. When Bill C-45 was to be voted on at the House of Commons, Indigenous leaders who showed up to protest were denied entry and forcibly removed from the Parliament area. The substance of Bill C-45, and Parliament’s refusal to hear Indigenous voices were two central events that led to an Idle No More National Day of Action of December 10, 2012. Idle No More rallies began across the country and around the world on this date, with a flurry of related protests and events in the month following the day of action. These rallies were a place where Indigenous peoples in Canada openly celebrated their cultures with displays of traditional regalia, dance and song, as they challenged the Canadian government’s efforts to alter consultation processes.

A new perspective on Indigenous media relations in Canada

Some settler-Canadians believe in the essentializing narrative of the “vanishing Indian”
(Roy 2006/07:82) which is the idea that Indigenous peoples and their culture are weakening and disappearing. However, Idle No More rallies illustrated the opposite: Indigenous peoples and their cultures are still strong, and these rallies connected this vibrancy with contemporary political life. Organizers of rallies and teach-ins took to social media such as Twitter and Facebook to mobilize support and spread their message. The rallies have continued, albeit with markedly less intensity, since March 2013.

Attention during the Idle No More Movement was not confined to social media and rallies. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) used a controlled and strategic public relations campaign to engage public and political commentators during the height of the movement. At a January 11 2013 meeting with the Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Indigenous leaders presented an eight-point action plan that included recommendations surrounding the implementation and enforcement of treaties, upholding Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution (particularly with regards to Bill C-38 and C-45), and calling for an inquiry into violence against Indigenous women (Assembly of First Nations 2013). The AFN also issued a press release that outlined the eight-point plan, which was picked up and widely commented on by mainstream news media such as The Globe and Mail and the CBC.

This thesis provides an analysis of the counter-colonial narrative in Canada through a focus on Indigenous media relations and more specifically on the Idle No More movement. In my analysis, I emphasize three dimensions of communication: mainstream print media; social media; and individuals involved in Indigenous media relations. I conduct a discourse analysis of mainstream news media, an analysis of social media, and interviews with those who have experience in Indigenous media relations, to examine the ways Indigenous agency and empowerment have the potential to change discourses in the media. I am interested in the
significant agency and empowerment exercised by Indigenous peoples in these media campaigns.

Drawing from a scholarship of discourse and representation, Bamblett (2011) has observed in an analysis of Indigenous Australian identities in sports discourses that athletes are often framed in a discourse of victimhood or marginalization, and that this can be countered by changing to a new discourse which privileges Indigenous voices. Boyd (2006:333) similarly explains that, although Indigenous peoples have unequal access to the production of historical narratives, they can still be a powerful force. My thesis will examine where Indigenous voices are privileged in the media, and how these voices challenge the dominant narrative to create a more complex picture of Indigenous peoples. This aims to countering mainstream essentializing discourses, such as the “vanishing Indian” narrative, along with other stereotypes that I explore in Chapter 2. My research also highlights how mainstream print and social media are used by Indigenous peoples to assert political messages, and will be of benefit to those who wish to use the media to mobilize their messages in the future, as I explore effective ways to engage with the media. In the process of unpacking the Idle No More case, I also provide an account of this unique movement for Indigenous peoples in Canada.

In an early content analysis of Canadian newspapers, Vogan (1979:33) observed that

The Indian community is being represented in the press not merely as an ethnic minority or an interest group, but as a politically potent and astute entity, verbal, aware and organized. While we might have hoped for more attention to some of the issues of importance to Indians at a grassroots level (pollution, housing, etc.) there is a new media image of Indians as important participants in shaping their own and the Canadian future.

While Vogan’s report focused primarily on a statistical analysis of media coverage, it did not incorporate examples of Indigenous agency in the print media. I address this gap in the literature, as I highlight Indigenous agency in mainstream print media, and focus on perspectives and
behind-the-scenes engagement in this area. I also explore social media, which is a fairly new medium of communication, and examine how both social and print media are being engaged by Indigenous communities to challenge mainstream media hegemony.

My analysis of mainstream news media asks the question “How and in what ways is media’s framing of Idle No More consistent with, or does it depart from, colonial representations? In Chapter 2, I highlight how Indigenous narratives frame issues in a way that challenges mainstream media hegemony by offering a media analysis of Idle No More centered on six newspapers over an eight-month period. Drawing mainly from discourse analysis and framing theory, I summarize the common threads that emerged in the news media in the context of this movement. By highlighting articles that privilege Indigenous perspectives, I explore the themes and solutions that they bring forward. Chapter 2 also offers a case study of Coast Salish territory during the movement in which I draw from the ethnographic literature to contextualize politically, socially and culturally the concerns from Coast Salish communities that were brought forward in the movement. This is an important exercise because newspaper stories often do not offer deeper context, largely focusing on surface issues.

My focus in Chapter 3 is on social media where I ask whether social media is destabilizing mainstream media hegemony and if so, how? I draw from the literature on other contemporary social movements, specifically on how the role that social media has played in these events. I explore how other academics have used social media analysis to make sense of these movements, and draw from elements of their methods, including Latour’s (2005) Actor Network Theory (ANT), to follow the circulation of the hashtag “#Oct7proclaim.” ANT is useful in highlighting the dynamic process that involves both social and technical relations, along with the power and agency created in these connections. This hashtag represented a day of
action that was supported by the Idle No More movement, and my central focus is to situate this hashtag historically, politically and culturally, and highlight some of the ways it was circulated and transformed by various actors in the context of the movement. An advantage of this qualitative method of social media analysis over a statistical approach is that it privileges Indigenous voices and highlights the interconnection between social media, people, history, and on-the-ground action, without privileging technology over associated social processes.

Chapter 4 takes up the question of how Indigenous peoples in Canada actively and strategically engage with the media to challenge hegemony and mobilize political messages. I ask how this differs from traditional mainstream media. To answer this question, I rely on interviews with Indigenous peoples and their supporters who have been agents in social and news media. The interviews touch not only on Idle No More, but range more broadly across recent Indigenous media relations’ experiences. My interviewees include nine people from BC and cover a wide range of experience with media relations, from writing for a local newspaper, to being in charge of putting an Aboriginal face to the Vancouver Olympics in 2012. I highlight some of the key media strategies that have worked in the participants’ own experience for forwarding their community’s agendas.

Throughout my thesis, I highlight the central tension between social and traditional print media. Indigenous peoples are engaging both forms of media and the outcomes are both powerful and complex. I highlight examples of Indigenous media representations that move away from stereotypes and highlight agency and self-determination, although I have found in my newspaper analysis that these stereotypes have not vanished completely. While I have separated the chapters on print and social media, there are times when these two intersect and overlap.
Before I develop these cases, I will briefly review the history of Indigenous relations in Canada, to provide basic context and background for readers less familiar with the situation as it has developed.

A brief history of Indigenous/government relationships in British Columbia

The Indigenous population in Canada includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and comprise over 600 recognized bands across the country. According to the 2011 census, 1,400,685 peoples identify as part of this population, which make up four 4.3 percent of the total population of Canada (Statistics Canada 2011). The primary unit of administration for the majority of registered Indians in Canada is the band (Muckle 2007:5). The Indian Act (1989) defines band as “a body of Indians...for whose use and benefit is common lands, the legal title to which is vested in Her majesty, has been set apart” (Muckle 2007:5).

Indigenous peoples in Canada have a “complex reciprocal relationship with the land” (Nadasdy 2002:248) that does not translate into the settler ideas of property ownership (Nadasdy 2002:248). When the first Europeans arrived to settle, the landscape of what is today known as BC was already transformed by Indigenous agriculturalists, but in the European view this was unclaimed wilderness, or terra nullius (Penikett 2006:35). Early Europeans excluded Indigenous peoples from the law of nations (as they understood it) based on their presumption that Indigenous peoples were using the land improperly and did not have strong social organization (Harris 2002:xxi), when in fact these societies in BC represented “a diversity of self-determining political communities” (Poelzer 1998:99).

By the 1930s, that majority of Indigenous peoples in BC, like much of the rest of Canada, were displaced to more than 1,500 small reserves, which the province argued would
“force native people into the workplace, there to learn the habits of industry, thrift and materialism, thus becoming civilized” (Harris 2002:265). Many reserves were detached from important hunting and sacred sites, ignoring the complex spatial patterns and land uses of Indigenous peoples (Harris 2002:271). Today, Indigenous peoples in Canada and anthropologists, often working together, “are continually working to clarify traditional groupings and territories” (Muckle 2007:7) which often counter the colonial-imposed band system (see also Thom 2010, Thom 2009).

Fournier and Crey (1997:17) explain that every era of Indigenous history in Canada has been pervaded policies aimed at separating Indigenous children from their families and assimilating them into the mainstream. This was done through Indian Residential Schools, the foster care system, or non-Aboriginal adoptive families. A system of residential schools was imposed in an attempt to colonize and control Indigenous communities by absorbing them into the state culture (Marker 2009:757). Canadian Indian policy viewed the children from these communities as being malleable and thus “transformed out of a savage past into a civilized present by being removed from their culture and family” (Marker 2009:758). These schools began in the late 1800s, and by 1920 amendments to the Indian Act made it compulsory for Indigenous children to attend industrial or boarding schools (Miller 1978:115 c.f. Haig-Brown 1988:31). Cultural expressions were punished in order to reformat the children’s belief system to emphasize the so-called superior nature of the new colonial empire (Marker 2009; Suttles 1963). Yet children asserted their agency and found strength in acts of resistance such as continuing to speak their traditional languages and playing jokes on their supervisors (Fournier and Crey 1997; Haig-Brown 1988).
While residential schools ended in Canada in the 1980s, Indigenous children still attend public schools, which in many ways continue to assimilate as they teach the western narrative of progress and enforce neoliberal beliefs (Marker 2009). However, there is also an increase of traditional resources (sweat lodges, spiritual counsel) and mainstream resources (psychotherapy, sobriety treatment centres) from which Indigenous communities draw strength, and a stronger generation is emerging and making themselves heard as they attend universities, engage in politics and organize protests (Fournier and Crey 1997:205).

In similar fashion to how youth resisted the assimilation efforts of residential schools, Indigenous peoples did not passively allow settler society to appropriate their land. They protested in a variety of ways (Kunin 1998:20), yet their efforts were largely ignored (Harris 2002:xxiv). As a result of early Indigenous protest, the federal government changed the Indian Act in 1923, making it illegal for Indigenous peoples to have meetings, raise money and hire lawyers to object to imposed federal jurisdiction on land and traditional rights (Kunin 1998:20), yet despite this prohibition on access to legal counsel, Indigenous resistance was still strong. These restrictions (along with restrictions on cultural activities such as the West Coast’s potlatch) were lifted in 1951, resulting in more publicly organized Indigenous claims, and allowing Indigenous peoples to gather province-wide support for their claims (Kunin 1998:20). The momentum built since then in the struggle for recognition of Indigenous land and governance rights has not ceased.

My thesis highlights how the Idle No More movement was used to amass provincial, and even national and international support for a range of Indigenous objectives in Canada. These objectives vary depending on the specific region and, as I will later explore, included elements such as respecting treaties, and the inherent right to protect the natural environment.
While not agreed to everywhere in Canada, where they do exist, Indigenous peoples and colonizers had, and continue to have, differing views of what treaties mean. From an Indigenous perspective, a treaties are a continual process that mediate the sharing of land and ongoing political relationships, while governments often hold that they are “binding arrangements that defin[e] some rights and extinguish[e] others” (Harris 2002:321). Many Indigenous peoples who have no treaties are reluctant to agree to an extinguishment of their rights over lands that they feel are rightfully theirs, and those that do have a treaty reject extinguishment as their ancestors’ historic goal and emphasize the nation-to-nation relationship treaties establish (Harris 2002:321).

Indigenous movements towards self-government aim to assure that Indigenous communities determine their own governance, including the recognition of their jurisdictional authority independent of federal and provincial parliament and legislatures (. Other elements include selecting their representatives by culturally-based methods (as opposed to the current band system), acknowledging the importance of elders in making government judgements, and recognizing unique local needs in forming policy (Coates 1998:259-250). Indigenous peoples continue to assert agency as their nations work toward self-determination, including self-government. This issue is a central one in the dialogue between many Indigenous peoples and the provincial and federal governments (Coates 1998:233).

Because respectful political dialogue has been consistently elusive, Indigenous peoples in Canada have persistently “turned to rights-based arguments and to the courts because there seemed to be no alternative, and the Supreme Court has found for them in qualified ways” (Harris 2002:296). Canadian court cases have increasingly clarified the nature and scope of Indigenous peoples rights (Penikett 2006:96). Decisions made in cases such as Sparrow, Badger, Delgamuukw, and Haida Nation v. BC, have affirmed “Aboriginal rights, fishing and hunting
rights, Aboriginal title, and the requirement for consultation and accommodation” (Penikett 2006:96). For example in 1997, *Deglawmuuk v. R* resulted in the court finding that Indigenous title has not been extinguished, and the court “laid out the terms on the basis of which it may be claimed, without altogether clarifying either from what it derives or how or to what extent it may be infringed” (Harris 2002:296). This court case also placed oral history as equal to other types of evidence it accepts, which has allowed for Indigenous perspectives to be more adequately taken into account (Dickason and Newbigging 2006:291).

For instance, a recent case, *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia*, the Supreme Court established that “[o]ccupation sufficient to ground Aboriginal title is not confined to specific sites of settlement but extends to tracts of land that were regularly used for hunting, fishing or otherwise exploiting resources and over which the group exercised effective control at the time of assertion of European sovereignty” (*Tsilhqot’in Nation v. B.C.*). This landmark case was the first to have Indigenous peoples title declared over a broad area, recognizing 1,750 km of traditional territory in central BC as belonging to Tsilhqot’in peoples. Xeni Gwet’in Chief Roger William of the Tsilhqot’in Nation explains “For us we felt no good faith on the part of the government in the BC treaty process or any negotiations. The offers that the governments provide are, for the record, abysmal” (Paris 2014). This statement highlights how the different vision of treaty relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler-governments persists today. Harris (2002:294) asserts that “the heart of the native land question in BC lies in two basic stories; one about dispossession, the other about development” (2002:294). The Tsilhqot’in case sets out implications for resource development as developers not only need to consult with First Nations, but will need their consent before projects can go further (Mair 2014). With the current
federal government’s push for resource extraction for economic purposes across the country, issues surrounding consent and development are pervasive.
Chapter 2 - Highlighting Indigenous agency in the mainstream news media

Introduction

In December of 2012, mainstream media began to report on this continent-wide Idle No More movement aimed at protesting the Canadian federal government’s omnibus Bills C-38 and C-45, as well as broader issues surrounding land, self-governance, education, housing, healthcare, treaties, and the relationship with the Canadian government, among others (Kinonnda-niimi Collective 2014:22). Inspired by the November 2012 “teach ins” in Saskatchewan, hundreds of thousands of Indigenous peoples, along with settler-allies, participated in events such as protests, blockades and round dances in both public and sacred spaces across Canada to draw attention to these issues (Kinonnda-niimi Collective 2014:22). Print media saw a flurry of attention on the Idle No More movement during the movement’s initial popularity.

About the same time, Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat was staging a hunger strike on Victoria Island in Ottawa. Her aim was to draw attention to the struggles facing Attawapiskat to the government’s neglect in holding up their end of the treaty that covered her nation’s territory in Northern Ontario, and to give voice to other Indigenous communities facing similar issues. These circumstances collided and Chief Spence became a face for the movement. Some mainstream print media began to discredit Chief Spence, questioning her management of funds for her band (Curry 2013:A6) and stating that she was blackmailing Prime Minister Harper with her hunger strike (Galloway 2012:A1).

The goal of this chapter is to evaluate Indigenous agency as it played out during the Idle No More movement. The main part of my analysis focuses on six newspapers across Canada.
during an eight-month period. I examine whether mainstream print media offered a picture of Indigenous peoples in Canada that was more complex than the press’s usual focus on essentializing discourses and stereotypes, and whether it deepened the treatment of substantive issues. I do this by asking what the press focused on, identifying the main threads in stories surrounding the Idle No More movement, and assessing whether mainstream media brought attention to story lines that are important to Indigenous communities. Previous research has focused on the portrayal of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian news media, but has focused primarily on negative portrayals, with attention to topics such as inequalities, stereotypes, lack of voice and oppression (Anderson and Robertson 2011; Furniss 2001; Harding 2006; Klinkhammar 2004; Ross 2000). My focus is on Indigenous empowerment and agency in mainstream news media, and aims to privilege Indigenous concerns and move away from reproducing yet another analysis of negative press stories.

Settler-Canadians have generally held control over conventional news media, as well as the framing and context of stories that it portrays (Anderson and Robertson 2011; Knopft 2010). This control has an effect on the stories and narratives that are portrayed to other settler-Canadians, which, by and large, have replicated negative colonial narratives about Indigenous peoples. While Indigenous stories seldom make the front page, the Idle No More movement galvanized media attention and offered narratives of a broad social movement. From December 2012 through January 2013, this movement regularly made the front page of both national and local Canadian newspapers. In February and March 2013 there were still daily mentions of Idle No More in various news sources, which I documented through a Google alerts subscription. As of June 2014, several alerts occur every week. Blevis (2013) found that the peak for Idle No More on social media was January 11th, 2013, with an eruption of almost 58 000 Idle No More
Tweets, the day of Harper’s meeting with First Nation leaders. While the intensity of the media coverage of these events has subsided, the movement is still active; rallies were held Canada-wide on March 20th 2013, October 7th 2013, and local events related to the movement’s vision continue to be listed on the Idle No More website, including events in June of 2014 (Idle No More Events 2014).

Alongside this, there is an increase of Indigenous news reporters covering stories from their communities, as well as the active use of press releases, social media, and other media strategies from Indigenous groups across Canada. As I discuss more thoroughly in my interview section, I had the opportunity to discuss media relations with reporters Duncan McCue, an Anishinaabe reporter for CBC’s “The National,” and Cara McKenna, a Métis reporter for the Nanaimo Daily News on Vancouver Island, as well as others involved with Indigenous media relations. Other popular Indigenous reporters include Ojibway author Richard Wagamese, who currently writes for the Kenora Daily Miner and News has and produces news articles and fiction novels that are widely syndicated across Canada, as well as Doug Cuthand, a Cree journalist who contributes particularly sharp and well-informed columns to the Star Phoenix (Saskatchewan). These reporters, and others who are well-versed surrounding Indigenous issues, exercise a unique and important agency within the conventional media.

**Methodology**

My first step was to collect data to create a corpus of texts and newspaper clips for analysis. I chose to analyze stories from two national papers (the National Post and The Globe and Mail); two regional papers (the Vancouver Sun and the Toronto Star); and two local British Columbia newspapers (the Times Colonist from Victoria and the Cowichan News Leader from Cowichan). I selected the local papers from Vancouver Island, and one regional paper from
Vancouver because I wanted to keep a local focus on B.C., where I had more ready access to context. I selected the Toronto Star because I wanted to have a gain a sense of what another large Canadian city was focusing on in the context of the movement. I selected this variety of news sources at different scales, as there is a possibility that the scale of the circulation represented may have an effect on the storylines. This attention to scale is suggested by Furniss (2001) who compared the local newspaper (Williams Lake Tribune) with a major (Vancouver Sun) paper’s construction and representation of the Cariboo Chilcotin Justice inquiry in Williams Lake, British Columbia. Furniss found that the local paper was tied into political networks of the community’s elite and powerful (2001:7) and that “many merchants, civic officials, and corporate industry representatives are aligned in their collective opposition to the Aboriginal treaty process, fearing the loss of industry access to forestry lands and the perceived devastating consequence to resource-based communities across the province should Aboriginal groups gain control over significant tracts of land and resources” (2001:8). She found that the local paper perpetuated a view of Aboriginal people as morally inferior to non-Aboriginals, and found that the Vancouver Sun articles were sympathetic towards Aboriginal people at the same time as they perpetuated a “noble savage” stereotype. “Noble savage” imagery draws from the notion of a romanticized outsider who lives in harmony with the natural environment and has not been tainted by “modern” society (Carhart 2004). I will explicate these stereotypes in greater depth below.

To identify my corpus of articles, I used a variety of search engines made available through the University of Victoria’s online library. I searched the term “Idle No More” within each of the newspapers used in my analysis (using the ProQuest and Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly databases). One of the newspapers in my sample (Cowichan News Leader) was
unavailable through these databases so I searched “Idle No More” on the website, which archives its stories (Cowichan News Leader 2014). I retrieved all articles containing the search term within an eight-month period (December 2012-July 2013). I chose this period because it covers the beginning and height of the movement’s media presence, and by June of 2013 the movement became only a bi-weekly or monthly occurrence in my sample. I collated articles from each newspaper into separate electronic files and organized the articles in chronological order. In total my sample included 304 articles for analysis, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Total sample of newspaper articles used in analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>The Cowichan News Leader</th>
<th>The Times-Colonist</th>
<th>The Vancouver Sun</th>
<th>The Toronto Star</th>
<th>The Globe and Mail</th>
<th>The National Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of articles used for sample</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having assembled each corpus, I read them with the aim of developing themes into which I could organize the articles. For this I used van Dijk’s (1983) approach to discourse analysis, coding for themes (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002) that emerged as I worked through the newspaper stories. I used the qualitative analysis software NVivo 10 to organize and code the articles to reveal the distinctive ways that Idle No More has shaped various mainstream media. My key research question was as follows: How/in what ways were the mainstream media frames for Idle No More consistent with, or do they depart from, colonial representation? Colonial representations are un-informed by Indigenous priorities and lack context and history. I compared stories written by Indigenous peoples in the press with those covered by non-Indigenous writers. I asked if the settler-authored articles were informed by Indigenous priorities, for example, did they mention (even at a basic level) why protests were happening?
An essential part of van Dijk’s (1983) method of discourse analysis is to contextualize texts into the wider sociocultural situations in which they arise. I contextualize Idle No More within the wider themes that are dominant in the discourse surrounding Indigenous peoples in Canada. To do this, I have been attentive to other concurrent tropes in the media during this time, such as issues surrounding the *Environmental Assessment Act*, Indigenous leadership politics, key local stories that attend to treaties and the inherent right to fish, as well as broader themes such as the overall representation of Indigenous peoples (i.e., are they being vilified? Stereotyped?). I cast these frames into ongoing struggles to recognize the Douglas Treaties and the inherent right to fish in Coast Salish territory. Aboriginal title to lands between Sooke and Saanich was extinguished between 1850 and 1852, and in Nanaimo in 1854, by James Douglas of the Hudson’s Bay Company (Duff 1969:3). This was done through 14 treaties, known as the Douglas Treaties (Duff 1969:3-4), which today offer constitutional protection of land, hunting and fishing rights to the Coast Salish peoples that these treaties apply to. However, as I explore later in this chapter, the government and First Nations have very different visions of the nature and scope of what these rights are.

I look at whether newspapers are concerned with stereotypes that these story themes may play into (such as the “corrupt chief” or the “warrior”) and how they engage the grounded issues that Indigenous peoples are concerned with in their own media relation’s campaigns. For example, are the issues that Indigenous peoples are voicing at rallies (some of which I was able to attend) being represented in the newspaper reports of these events? I am also attentive to how newspapers have framed certain issues over time, as well as of the distinct actors and voices that are emerging within these stories. As a means to identify relevant issues and contemporaneous tropes I subscribed to the Title and Rights Alliance listserv, which has reasonably
comprehensive coverage of daily news items involving Indigenous issues in Canada, and particularly in B.C.

**Framing Theory**

Focusing a study on media frames and counter-frames is an important decolonizing tool because it highlights ideas that resist mainstream media hegemony. Media shapes opinions in the way that it presents events and issues, framing them in particular ways (de Vreese 2005:51; Entman 2007:164; FrameWorks Institute 2002:1). Framing is a dynamic communicative process “that involves frame-building (how frames emerge) and frame-setting (the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions)” (de Vreese 2005:51). Frames do not emerge only in the form of media but are located at the point of “the communicator, the text, the receiver and the culture” (de Vreese 2005:51), all of which are players in the framing process. Framing theory (deVreese 2005) has the potential to provide insight into processes through which narratives are created and shaped in the media and their influence on the public’s perception of the story. The process “consists of distinct stages; frame-building, frame setting and individual and societal level consequences of framing” (d’Angelo, 2002; Scheufele, 2000; de Vrese 2002 c.f de Vreese 2005:52). Frames in the media emphasize certain elements of a topic over others thus shaping the way readers understand an event or an issue (de Vreese 2005:53). Essentially, framing theory implies that the media tells us both *what* issues to think about, and *how* to think about them (FrameWorks Institute 2002:2).

Frames are identified by “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (Entman 1993:3, c.f. de Vreese 2005:54). Frames also refer to “choices about language, quotations and relevant information” (Shah et al. 2002:367 c.f. de
Vreese 2005:54). In my analysis I paid close attention to quotations used in an article; did the authors quote Indigenous voices? With regards to relevant information, I asked how the author framed the problem or issue; did they provide historical or cultural background about the Indigenous peoples being examined or contextualize colonialism more broadly when speaking of Indigenous communities across the country? Other framing devices that I noted in my analysis included who is pitted against whom? Who was identified as the antagonist (example; Indigenous peoples, the Harper government, settler-Canadians, economic development). I also assessed whether the frame in a story was consistent with or antagonistic to those being set out by Indigenous actors involved in the events in question.

While my central focus is on Indigenous voices, I cannot ignore the other ways that stories about Idle No More were framed and the themes that emerged in these frames. My analysis begins with a focus on examples of Indigenous agency and voices that were highlighted in the news media, given that privileging these voices is an important element of a decolonizing methodology (Kovach 2009). I then offer an overview of recurring media themes related to the Idle No More movement, and analyze which Indigenous priorities were brought forward. Finally, I offer a case study that contextualizes First Nations’ concerns that came forward in Coast Salish territory in newspaper stories that covered the movement.

Analysis

My analysis found that overall, mainstream press surrounding Idle No More focused primarily on “sensational” or surface issues such as Theresa Spence (including her hunger strike and the alleged scandal around her nation’s money allocation), Idle No More events (such as roadblocks and rallies), and anti-Harper sentiment (such as framing Indigenous peoples as being in opposition to the Canadian Harper government). “Parachute Journalism is the media’s
tendency to move rapidly from crisis to crisis, resulting in episodic reporting on many issues” (FrameWorks Institute 2002:336), and it seems that the Idle No More movement was reported on in mainstream print media in a very episodic way. While these articles drew attention to Indigenous issues in Canada, the majority were written in a way that only touched the surface, used minimal space to give historical or political context, and largely were written by non-Indigenous reporters who largely failed to provide background on the larger issues. This seems to align with past research on the newspaper industry that has found it to be concerned with upholding and preserving the capital-driven and state-controlled system within which it operates (Skea 1993/1994), to not give space to alternative views or values (Chomsky and Herman 1988), and thus acting to maintain white dominance in Canada (Harding 2006). It has been argued that journalists conform to the hegemonic beliefs of the privileged elites who oversee media forms, and thus internalize their values (Chomsky 1991:8 Skea 1993/94:7). However, I have found examples that counter these observations and bring forward agendas that do not preserve the capitalistic narrative and instead offer alternative narratives that challenge settler-dominance.

As I will explore below, many of these stories were told in a way that did not offer significant context. However, they still brought Indigenous issues forward, and on occasion to the front page (which is rare). Because of this, I argue that The Idle No More movement contributed a narrative that countered the colonial one, with Indigenous peoples’ concerns highlighted by the press. Stories framed from a colonial perspective are not necessarily negative in that they may draw attention (even if only superficially) to Indigenous issues in Canada. Issues that the public views as important, along with how the public perceives these issues, are determined by the frequency that content surrounding those issues appear in mass media (Esarey and Qiang 2011:312). News media shape attitudes and beliefs (Mahtani 2001:2) and therefore
inform and educate settler-Canadians about issues of concern to both Indigenous peoples in Canada and settler-Canadians (such as environmental issues). For many settler-Canadians, their perception of Indigenous peoples in Canada is “largely derived from the press” (Vogan 1979:7). Because these decontextualized, “parachute” types of stories were the most prevalent, I provide below an overview of the general themes to which they brought attention. However, these stories do not encourage or privilege Indigenous perspectives and history and are essentially telling the story from a colonial perspective. These stories, which I discuss further in this chapter, show that the dominant media framing continues, and will push me to ask, in future chapters, where Indigenous agency and empowerment is present or visible in media relations.

Knopft (2010) has looked at decolonizing media and Aboriginal agency in the context of television (with a particular focus on Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN); and radio, specifically Native Communication Incorporated (NCI) and Wawatay Native Communications Society (WNCS), which runs a newspaper, online news, as well as radio and television programs. These are all Aboriginal-run media whose relatively limited regular audiences tend to be Aboriginal. Knopft finds that overall these Aboriginal-run media are increasing opening up a space for Indigenous peoples to take control of their own media messages and representation, and are therefore contributing to an increase of self-determination and decolonization (2010:114-115). My analysis departs from earlier studies in its focus on mainstream media, which has a more settler-Canadian audience who rely on mainstream print media for their knowledge of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Belanger 2002).

**Indigenous-authored articles**

Five articles in my sample were self-identified Indigenous-authored, as summarized in Table 2. Other articles in my sample may have been written by Indigenous authors, but as I was
told by Métis reporter Cara McKenna, journalists are told not to write themselves into their articles, so it is possible that I have overlooked some authors who did not identify their Indigenous descent. The authors draw from familiar frames such as resource extraction and the economy, to draw attention to their perspectives surrounding issues such as control over land and the importance of their cultures.

**Table 2.** Indigenous-authored articles in sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>The Cowichan News Leader</th>
<th>The Times-Colonist</th>
<th>The Globe and Mail</th>
<th>The National Post</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of articles</td>
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The article published in the *Cowichan News Leader* was written by Victoria’s Poet Laureate Janet Rogers, a Mohawk woman from Six Nations, who was also an interviewee for my study. The article was originally published in *Monday Magazine* (Rogers 2013:33). The piece “Idle No More is about a spiritual awakening” drew the reader’s attention to the movement, to anti-Harper sentiment and to Chief Spence’s hunger strike. Rogers highlighted the importance of this movement to the spiritual awakening and cultural revitalization across Indigenous nations in Canada. She also made her readers aware that the issues at hand do not only affect Indigenous peoples, but that “You, too, Average-Joe and yes, you too Mr. and Mrs. Status-quo, will be affected by Harper’s lust for natural destruction, and yes, you, too, should be toting signs and leaving the comfort of your homes to join the movement” (Rogers 2013:33).

Rogers, a poet and an activist, uses her poetry to make the readers aware of what is going on by making her readers *feel*, rather than giving a detailed history lesson. As an example she points to the significance of land to Indigenous peoples and the effects of its degradation;
The land shapes the people, informs the culture and provides so much of who people are culturally. Indigenous people, by definition, are who we are because of how we have learned to live on the land. It’s where our songs come from, it’s where we pray. Government interference with our way of life has always had painful results. Chief Spence explains: “As a woman, I feel the pain, it goes all over my body. I can’t take it anymore. We need to maintain our cultural ways to survive” (Rogers 2013:33).

Rogers had a mere 450 words for her piece, so her technique of using her art form to inform readers seemed to be her strategy. She draws readers in with the familiar themes of anti-Harper sentiments and Spence’s hunger strike, and then transforms the narrative to emphasize importance of land, place and spirit. In reflecting on this piece in my interview with her, she explained that Monday Magazine rarely features Indigenous writers or well-contextualized Indigenous perspectives and that “all of their news stories are basically white.” As such she thought;

OK, there’s value in creating a presence and I will go ahead and do this. Basically it was at the height of the Idle No More movement, and when I say height I mean December of 2012 when Theresa Spence was in the middle of her quote unquote hunger strike, her action. So I quoted her at the beginning of that article and at the end of that article because what she was doing is she was basically saying ‘F--- you, I am going to put my life on the line for the things that I believe in’. So my response was basically what I saw happening on a national level, on a personal level with this one woman; what she was doing, and what I saw happening in the city and how people were kind of perceiving the movement (Janet Rogers, in interview, January 8 2014).

The Indigenous-authored article in The Globe and Mail was co-authored with someone who did not identify as Indigenous. “Let’s be divided no more” was written by Lloyd Axworthy, a former prominent Canadian politician and currently president of the University of Winnipeg, and Wab Kinew of Anishinaabe descent, and who is also the director of Indigenous inclusion at the University of Winnipeg. Kinew is also a musician who has broadcast for CBC and recently signed a deal with Penguin Canada to write a memoir and a children’s book that he feels will
contribute to a conversation between Settler-Canadians and Indigenous peoples in Canada (Winnipeg Free Press 2014). The article draws from an inclusionary theme, and highlights the importance of Indigenous peoples for the broader success of Canada as a whole.

Indigenous people are standing up for themselves, but they're also standing up for the benefit of all Canadians. Their cultures call on them to be stewards and protectors of the land, and so they raise legitimate concerns about the future of our environment. This will benefit all of our descendants. Their internal dialogue, while sometimes full of rancor and discord, reminds us of the spirited nature of democracy. They're revitalizing cultures that still have reams of untapped wisdom and knowledge to share with the world. As Indigenous peoples young and old, professional and working class, take to the streets and social media, we must ask ourselves one question: What are we doing?” (Axworthy and Kinew 2013:A13).

The article frames the Idle No More movement as being an opportunity for Canada to become a better country by improving the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples, and also illustrates the power that Indigenous peoples have in Canada. Like Janet Rogers, the authors build on anti-Harper sentiment and pro-land and culture themes (the concerns surrounding resource extraction). In similar fashion to Rogers, these authors endeavor to make Indigenous issues relevant to mainstream Canadians by highlighting how Canadians could be affected.

Two Indigenous-authored articles were published in the National Post. One, “No free rides for anyone”; A Canadian of Cree descent explains why he doesn't support the Idle No More movement” was written by Anthony Sowan, an Alberta-based radio host of Cree descent. Sowan expresses sentiments in opposition to a lot of Indigenous opinion that I have read surrounding the movement, and he subscribes to a narrative in which the past is the past and that “it makes no sense to have the innocent Canadian citizens of the present pay for crimes committed by someone else in the distant past” (Sowan 2013:A13). He expresses that he does not see the purpose of traffic blockades, which only attract the attention of the “average Joes”
trying to get to work, and not the politicians, and also that there is no clear goal of the movement, and that instead we should start a constructive discussion.

Understand that you do not need to be consulted for anything, any more than the Canadian sitting next to you does. Your opinion on things doesn't count 'more' than anyone else's. Respect is earned, not given. There's no question that the native people of yesterday were brutalized, hunted, torturd and humiliated for decades. It's awful, and no one should ever have to suffer like that (Sowan 2013:A13).

Sowan’s opinions highlight that ideas surrounding the Idle No More movement and Indigenous issues more broadly are not tied up only in identity. Sowan’s article is not entirely negative and he does bring attention to some important themes such as land, spirit, and culture;

I am so very proud of my culture. The way the plains Indians lived on this land was a fantastic example of community, art, respect for our environment, ingenuity and spirituality. I'm proud of the native-inspired tattoos that I sport permanently on my body. As a father, I'm teaching my son that same respect and understanding of where his blood derives from, in the hopes that his pride will outshine the prejudice he will inevitably experience growing up, or at some point in his life” (Sowan 2013:A13).

The next day, the National Post published an article that seems to offer a balanced perspective to the Sowan’s sentiments regarding the Idle No More movement and the current relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada. In an article “Idle No More,” National Inuit Leader Terry Audla gave voice to her nation and highlighted some of the critical issues that need to be addressed in her homeland, such as education, housing and health. In identifying specific reasons why attention needs to be paid to Indigenous issues, she explains,

It is vital that the critical issues identified as priorities for Inuit are substantially addressed. The Arctic is experiencing a resource-development boom. The economies of some Inuit communities will change significantly as a result. We want to ensure that our youth are well prepared to take advantage of the resource-development jobs that exist, and those being planned (Audla 2013:A12).

These themes are consistent with some of the eight-point plan strategies from the AFN, such as prioritizing education and sharing benefits of resource development. She also drew from familiar themes, such as economy and resource-development, to situate the priorities of her
nation. Like Rogers and Kinew, she pointed out how these issues affect all Canadians, and ended by reframing Inuit issues as Canadian issues; “Expansion of our collective understanding within our own borders can only benefit us as a united country” (Audla 2013:A12).

The Times-Colonist published one Indigenous-authored article in the context of the Idle No More movement, “Mining industry needs to recognize native rights; Failure to address First Nation issues thwarting B.C.’s resource potential,” co-written by Chief Bev Sellars of the Xat’ Sull (Soda Creek) First Nation, and president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip. This article highlights the wealth that the mining industry in B.C. could create, but points to how this is hindered by the mining industry’s failure to address First Nations rights and environmental concerns. Like the other Indigenous-authored articles under discussion, the authors show how these failed negotiations affect more than just First Nations; the mining industry and its investors have lost hundreds of millions of dollars because of the lack of consultation. “If mining is to achieve its potential - for all of us - then the usual hyperbole at this roundup needs to be replaced with serious talk and planning, and B.C.'s provincial politicians need to come to the table and start showing leadership” (Sellars and Stewart 2013:A11). These authors, similar to others, use the familiar frames surrounding industrial development and economic growth to situate their priorities, such as the recognition and respect of their rights, which they frame as broader Canadian issues.

**Interviews with Indigenous peoples**

The Globe and Mail published three interviews with Indigenous peoples in the period covered by this study. These articles highlighted Indigenous voices and offered significant insights from their perspective, often offering a counter-narrative to the paper’s tendency to privilege settler-Canadian voices.
Thomas King, a writer of mixed Cherokee and Greek/American descent, offered insight that contrasts with the government’s push for natural resource extraction by making reserve land available to private sale;

The Conservatives have completely stonewalled native people, and with the recent omnibus bill it's very clear they're going back to a 1950s mentality - when the idea was to abrogate treaties, divide up native land and make it vulnerable for private enterprise. It's easy enough to do. What you do is, you starve reserves, you ignore them; it's not by chance that water services on reserves, for example, are as bad as they are, or health care and education. It's not the fault of native people” (Chase and King 2013:F3).

King also highlighted a solution that he points to in his book *The Inconvenient Indian* (2012), which is to focus on “practical sovereignty”;

Practical sovereignty is the sovereignty that any nation, no matter what size, has…The point is control of our own lives. I think that's what native bands and tribes will be looking at as these discussions go on. For instance, completely controlling our own membership. Controlling our land base and controlling any profits that come from that land base or any use of that land base. Right now, the federal government can force leases on tribes. That can't keep happening if we expect to succeed as nations (Chase and King 2013:F3).

This conversation departs from the colonial representations in the mainstream news media as it does not just focus on a problem or a confrontation, but re-frames issues by contextualizing them and offering solutions, thus adding to a discourse that gives agency to Indigenous peoples by showing that they have choices and can have control over their own future.

Judith Sayers is former chief of the Hupacasath First Nation and currently a visiting professor at University of Victoria in the business school and law department. In an interview that appeared in *The Globe and Mail* conducted after an Idle No More highway blockade near Victoria, which she attended, Sayers expressed optimism and highlighted the enthusiasm and dialogue that emerged during Idle No More;
We're having these conversations in the longhouses and everywhere else. There's a lot of work to be done, but there's so much enthusiasm, more than I've ever seen. This is creating dialogue that hasn't happened for a long, long time...I think change is in the air. What kind of change, I don't know. But in my 30 plus years in politics, I've never seen this kind of an action before. Never” (Mickleburgh and Sayers 2013:S1).

Sayer’s interview differs from the colonial frame as it situates her personal history from an insider vantage point, highlighting unique elements of her culture (such as the longhouse), as well as her observation surrounding the increase in political action from Indigenous peoples.

*The Globe and Mail* also published an interview with former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Sean Atleo, who spoke in a solution-oriented way, much like King.

I just spent some time with the B.C. leadership and the focus in British Columbia is on comprehensive [land] claims. It's been decades trying to get that process changed and get the attention of the Prime Minister. ...If you take treaties and comprehensive claims, we then can identify and address issues with the economy, the relationship with development. And we can address even the challenges, in my view, that people in the Idle No More movement are saying: We're going to stand up for the rivers, for the fish, for the environment. Well, absolutely. That's what treaties and comprehensive claims, that's what negotiations, are all about” (Galloway and Atleo 2013:A3).

Like Rogers, Audla, Sellers, and Stewart, Atleo uses familiar frames surrounding economy and then draws attention to treaties and issues surrounding the importance of protecting the natural environment. As National Chief of the AFN at the time of this interview, he drew attention to the issues brought forward by the AFN’s eight-point plan, such as treaties, comprehensive claims and shared governance surrounding development.

Notably, I found few direct examples of Indigenous authors in the overall sample of pieces related to Idle No More in the period under review. Only a small percentage were written by Indigenous authors, or co-authored, and there were a few letters from members of the Indigenous communities. The small sample size may relate to difficulties around identifying whether or not authors were Indigenous. I searched author bios (if there was one available) on the paper’s website, as well as their Twitter bios in an attempt to find out if authors identify as
Indigenous. Because the movement was grassroots and did not have a central leader or organizer, there was not an overall controlled mainstream media message for the movement. However, there are examples of organized and direct media relation’s campaigns, such as the AFN eight-point action plan, social media campaigns (as I will discuss in the next chapter), and events, such as rallies, that were organized to relay specific messages to broader settler-Canadian audiences.

Despite the limited sample, a common approach among these articles was to re-frame Indigenous issues as Canadian issues. All three interviews articles highlight possible solutions to the issues at hand, and frame Indigenous peoples as having agency and the ability to control their futures. King and Atleo both offer suggestions for potential solutions (practical sovereignty and treaty and comprehensive claims, respectively). The Indigenous-authored and interview articles also draw from frames that are familiar to settler audiences (economy, resource development, anti-Harper sentiments) and then re-frame these to highlight and contextualize specific Indigenous issues such as co-management, treaties, and education, from an Indigenous perspective. “Reframing seeks to identify alternative frames of interpretation that although weaker and less common to media, can nevertheless serve the labelling function and foreground different policies or actions. Essentially, reframing changes the lens through which a person can think about the issue, so that different interpretations and outcomes become visible to them” (FrameWorks 2002:35). By offering potential solutions or ways to begin to address the issues at hand, these authors are able to reframe the issue and thus show readers how new outcomes and solutions are possible.

In the next section I shift my focus to a discussion of issues in relation to how frequently they arose in my coding of the sample. This discussion aims to summarize the overall themes
news media was focusing on in the context of the Idle No More movement. I focus on the top-three most frequently coded topics.

**A media focus on Idle No More events**

Among my sample of articles referencing Idle No More, threads that challenged mainstream media hegemony were a strong presence. Many articles were written in a tone supportive of Indigenous peoples in Canada, while others were belittling and negative. The most prominent themes coded were descriptions of INM events, which occurred in all 6 papers as summarized in Table 3. These articles essentially described the protests, rallies, round dances, or blockades associated with the movement. The articles generally focused on where the events were held, and how many people were there. Some touched on the environmental or political underpinnings of the movement with a sentence or two, and the pieces often mentioned the drumming or dancing associated with the event. Some included one or two quotes from Indigenous peoples explaining the location-specific reasons for coming together, or a broader quote that questioned the government’s environmental policies (or lack thereof). For example, the opening paragraph of an article published in *The Globe and Mail*, read “OTTAWA -- Hundreds of native protesters waved flags, chanted slogans and shook a collective fist at the federal government Friday as they gathered on Parliament Hill to put Canada on notice they would be ‘idle no more.’” (Pedwell 2012:A19). While there may not have been explicit or direct media strategies behind these events, they nonetheless drew significant media attention to and put Indigenous issues in the spotlight.
Table 3. Articles with a focus on Idle No More events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>The Cowichan News Leader</th>
<th>The Times-Colonist</th>
<th>The Vancouver Sun</th>
<th>The Toronto Star</th>
<th>The Globe and Mail</th>
<th>The National Post</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of articles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
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Duncan McCue, a CBC National reporter of Anishinaabe descent, found that there tends to be a “WD4 Rule” on how Indigenous people make the news; by being a warrior, drumming, dancing, being drunk or being dead (McCue 2014). Each of these portrayals has repercussions for the way that Indigenous peoples are framed and thus perceived by the broader settler audience. For example, the warrior portrayal perpetuates an idea of being uncivilized and disorderly, while the drumming and dancing portrayals perpetuate ideas of an exotic “other” who is frozen in time. Although these articles brought attention to some Indigenous issues, the overall framing highlighted elements such as drumming, dancing; “As drumbeats and chants reverberated…drummers and dancers performed a round dance…Women chanted traditional songs and mean beat their drums loudly” (Lavoie 2012:A8), implying an unruliness; with phrases like “The noisy blockade” (Palmer and Ljunggren 2013:A2), articles framed participants in the movement as a threat to the larger settler-society, as activists who “wreak economic havoc across the country” (Carlson 2013:A1). Such framings, by and large, perpetuate the negative stereotypes that Duncan has observed.

Janet Rogers helped organize a blockade at the Blackball Ferry Line terminal’s “point of entry” (service from Port Angeles, WA to downtown Victoria) during the height of the Idle No More movement. Rogers, along with the other organizers, chose that location because as Indigenous peoples they do not recognize the Canada-USA border, and wanted to “make the point of having a little bit of power and control in that.” The event was organized using
Facebook, illustrating the significance of social media in this movement. When I asked her if the media showed up for this blockade, she explained;

Oh yeah, they showed up before the fact. They wanted to get the details of what that event was and why it was and I basically explained why we chose that location and there were two reasons why we chose it. Number one because of the border issue, and number two because it had to do with a little bit of economy and I think it was important to say to the media that we understand our message about our heart-based relationship with the land does not translate in government, there is no way (Janet Rogers, in interview, January 8 2014).

The *Times-Colonist* article that covered this blockade (Kines 2013) focused neither on the border issue nor the economic issue, but instead covered the basic elements of the event, stating “First Nation singers and drummers shut down the intersection at Belleville and Oswego streets shortly before the Coho ferry arrived from Port Angeles about 3:30p.m” (Kines 2013), as along with mention of the broader issues brought forward by the movement such as Bill C-45 and the proposed Enbridge pipeline. This exemplifies the disconnectedness between Indigenous peoples and reporters, and shows how problems can arise in getting a specific message across. This problem is not confined to Indigenous peoples, and reporters often bring pre-existing frames to their stories, which overtake the concerns forwarded by interviewees when they write the article (Richard and King 2000). As I will explore more in my interviews with experienced media relations’ personnel, establishing an ongoing relationship with a trusted reporter is a strategy that can aid in controlling specific media messages.

**Chief Theresa Spence in the media spotlight**

The second most coded items in my sample of articles were those about the persona, struggle and characterization of Chief Theresa Spence, as summarize in Table 4. Notably the *Cowichan News Leader* was the only paper that did not make Spence the main subject of any of their stories, although she was mentioned briefly in some articles. The other local paper, *The
*Times-Colonist*, published only two articles about Spence, and instead focused on local angles and concerns in the context of the Idle No More movement. Despite its genesis independent of the Idle No More movement, the prominence of the Spence story in relation to the movement suggests that media felt the need to put a face to put to the movement. Spence, whose hunger strike co-occurred with the movement, was this face.

**Table 4.** Articles with a focus on Chief Theresa Spence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>The Times-Colonist</th>
<th>The Vancouver Sun</th>
<th>The Toronto Star</th>
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<td># of articles</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
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While Spence’s desire was to bring government attention to Attawapiskat and more broadly the ways in which Indigenous people in Canada are suffering, the media focused on a variety of side issues such as allegations that Spence appeared to be gaining weight, or that she was unfit as a leader and did not responsibly manage millions of dollars for her community. These tended to draw on well-trodden stereotypes of Indigenous peoples, as for example, the opening paragraph of a piece that ran in *The Globe and Mail* at the height if the Idle No More and Spence media flurry;

Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat and the radical aboriginal activists who have appropriated the Idle No More movement have succeeded only in creating a regional rift among the chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations. This has overshadowed the practical conversations between the federal government and a part of the First Nations leadership, and also the actual progress on land-use agreements announced today (Globe & Mail 2013:F8).

This framing of Chief Spence and the “radical aboriginal activists” as at fault for the rift that occurred amongst the AFN, implied that they were hindering any sort of “actual progress.”
Chief Spence’s central demand was a meeting along with other First Nations, with Stephen Harper and a member of the Crown, to discuss treaties. Instead of focusing and contextualizing these elements of her story, the media ran away with more sensationalized issues. From the beginning, she was portrayed as blackmailing the Prime Minister with her hunger strike (Galloway 2012:A1); as failing to properly manage her nation’s funds as an expense report was leaked in January 2013 (Curry 2013:A6); and as being too demanding because she did not show up at the meeting that she requested because a member of the Crown was not present (Galloway 2013:A1). Despite her campaigns for the specific issues surrounding treaties, the mainstream print media continued to focus on these negative elements, taking attention away from the substantive issues to which her hunger strike was meant to bring attention.

**Anti-Harper sentiments in the news**

All six papers published articles that negatively framed the Harper government. These were the third most coded items, as summarized in Table 5. One example, an excerpt from the *Cowichan News Leader*, stated, “The Idle No More movement is about all of us. It may be attributed to our Native cousins at this moment in time but it reflects the growing unrest being stirred by the antics of politicians who no longer listen to the people but dance to the drum beat of industry” (Fletcher 2013:22). The prevalence of anti-Harper sentiments comes as no surprise in the context of the Idle No More movement given the Harper government’s increasing privileging of economy over environment and the interests of Indigenous peoples in Canada, as illustrated by Omnibus Bills C-45 and C-38. These newspaper articles forwarded a narrative that contrasts with the reigning governments’ tendency to privilege economic growth over the natural environment and highlighted the independence of the media from the state. This illustrates how
the media can act as a “moral watchdog” (Furniss 2001) and did so in this case by highlighting
the social and environmental consequences of the conservative government’s actions.

Table 5. Articles with anti-Harper sentiments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>The Cowichan News Leader</th>
<th>The Times-Colonist</th>
<th>The Vancouver Sun</th>
<th>The Toronto Star</th>
<th>The Globe and Mail</th>
<th>The National Post</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of articles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
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Coast Salish Case Study

Introduction

I now shift my analytical focus from looking at a national scale to a local scale, as I delve
into Idle No More-related media in Coast Salish territories. The Coast Salish peoples’ traditional
territory includes southwest British Columbia and northwest Washington (Thom 2009:179).
Living in Victoria during the height of this movement gave me the opportunity to better
contextualize and understand the variety of local issues that emerged in connection with the
movement. In an effort to bring context to the concerns expressed in the context of the Idle No
More movement, I undertook a case study of Coast Salish territory, looking at newspaper
coverage of the events from December 2012-April 2013. As recommended by van Dijk’s
discourse analysis (1983), newspaper texts need to be placed into the wider sociopolitical and
cultural context to make sense of what is being said. My central focus is to highlight and bring to
the forefront the issues voiced by members of Coast Salish communities, and contextualize them
culturally, historically and politically.

The Coast Salish cultural region is connected by marriage, ceremonial practices (i.e.
potlatches, naming ceremonies) and common languages, and in the past was “a multi-village
universe in constant motion” (Marker 2009:762). The local descent groups of Coast Salish are kindreds that connect equally to both parent’s families (Bierwert 1999:201). Coast Salish groups that were traditionally relatively independent (households, villages) were organized into Indian Bands and forced onto small Indian Reserves by early colonial governments (Thom 2009:182). These administratively-created bands “have nevertheless become the focus of personal and group identity” (Miller 2007:xxxii), and are composed of competing corporate groups, or “families,” to which members are more loyal than to the larger political units, or bands (Miller 2007:xxxv). It is not uncommon for members to move to a new band if it offers better resources or a stronger position within the family (Miller 2007:xxxv). Marker’s (2009) statement that the Coast Salish universe is in constant motion still rings true.

Kovach (2009:85) explains “The purpose of decolonization is to create space in everyday life, research, academia and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked or dismissed.” As a researcher drawing from ideas surrounding Indigenous methodologies and decolonization, bringing forward information from the ethnographic record to contextualize and bring insight to Coast Salish meanings is central in developing context for local frames. Throughout this Coast Salish case study I return to ethnographic and historical records to highlight some context and history behind these local events.

Methodology

Through an extensive media search of “Idle No More” and of various Coast Salish community names (including DIAND Bands, umbrella political organizations and urban centers) in the library newspaper database, I imported 49 articles from local papers into NVivo 10 for analysis. I then looked for direct quotes from Coast Salish peoples in these articles, as my focus
is on the concerns of distinct Coast Salish voices. I looked for themes in the concerns across Coast Salish territory, as well as concerns based on distinct bands. I used van Dijk’s (1983) discourse analysis to code the articles and organized the comments and concerns into themes. I then looked for evidence from the ethnographic record to make sense of these themes, for there is often very little contextual data in the newspaper articles. This media practice is well established by Harding (2007) who found that mainstream media representations of aboriginal people in Canada are often decontextualized.

**Theme One: The Douglas Treaties**

Members from the Snuneymuxw, Tsawout, Tseycum and Tsartlip First Nations all expressed concerns surrounding the Douglas Treaties during the Idle No More events (LaVoie 2013a:A3, 2013b:A1; Pearson 2013). For example, on January 16\textsuperscript{th} 2013, when more than 300 people blocked the Patricia Bay highway in an event associated with Idle No More, Tsawout elder Eric Pelkey expressed that a central concern for the Saanich Peninsula is the lack of recognition for the Douglas Treaty, and states “the government still fails to recognize, honour and implement the treaty” (LaVoie 2013a:A3), and Tseycum elder Mary Jack states “I hope the government hears and sees what we are doing. They have broken a lot of our treaty rights” (Lavoie 2013b:A1).

The Snuneymuxw traditional territories are in and around what is now known as Nanaimo; Tsawout, Tseycum and Tsartlip traditional territories are today known as Victoria, Saanich and the Gulf Islands. While the majority of Coast Salish groups located in British Columbia do not have formal treaty arrangements with the state, and have been contesting issues surrounding land and resource control for the past 200 years (Thom 2009:182), these are four of the Coast Salish bands which have a Douglas Treaty. Indian title to lands between Sooke and
Saanich was extinguished between 1850 and 1852, and in Nanaimo in 1854, by James Douglas of the Hudson’s Bay Company (Duff 1969:3). There is a lot of contestation around the validity of these documents, including the Chief’s signatory X’s that all look strikingly similar (Duff 1969:11-12; Elliot Sr., 1990); the territorial boundaries seemingly added by a different hand at a later time (Duff 1969:24); and lack of consideration of seasonal sites (Elliot Sr. 1990:42-54).

Coast Salish peoples assert that these treaties were understood by their ancestors as treaties of peace, and not of purchase, and that they did not understand the colonial impositions of land ownership that were written on the paper (Claxton 2007; Egan 2012; Elliot Sr. 1990; Foster 1989). However, the treaties made one thing clear; First Nations included in the treaty could “hunt over the unoccupied lands” (Duff 1969:54), had a right “to carry on [their] fisheries as formerly” (Duff 1969:54), and that their “village sites and enclosed fields are to be kept for [their] own use, for the use of [their] children, and those who may follow after” (Duff 1969:44).

The Douglas Treaties have been upheld by Canadian courts, and in 1987 the Tsawout First Nation used the Treaty to acquire an injunction which permanently restrained a marina that was to be built in Saanichton Bay on the basis that it would interfere with the fishing rights assured to them in the treaty (Douglas Treaties: 1849-1854 2013; Foster 1989). Elliot Sr., of Coast Salish descent, explains how the significance and history of this place was highlighted by Tsawout member Earl Claxton Sr., who presented a map in court that detailed Saanich place names and uses of sites to support that it is their traditional territory (1990:19). These physical place names are very significant in that they tell the stories of his people (see Elliot Sr. 1990, for an extensive list and map). The use of oral histories and traditions has been accepted by the Canadian Supreme Court as evidence in many cases (McNeil 2008). Pelkey, a Tsawout member at the Patricia Bay Blockade, pointed out that there was no consultation or compensation when
the Patricia Bay Highway was built on his ancestor’s traditional territory (Lavoie 2013b:A1). In recent years, the Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed that “the Crown must consult with First Nations when in contemplates making decisions that may impact on a First Nation’s Aboriginal title or rights” (First Nation Panel on Fisheries 2004:22). This suggests that a case similar to the Saanichton Bay case could hold suit, for example, if the Tsawout First Nation were to seek recognition that the construction of the Patricia Bay Highway impacted the ability of First Nations to exercise their treaty rights, but did not involve consultation or cooperation from the Crown.

The media has largely failed to give context surrounding the Douglas Treaties, and the contested history behind them is not something that is well known by the broader settler population. Without giving this context and history, the Coast Salish voices and priorities quoted in the papers will not have little meaning for settler-readers, and therefore do little to inform this population. By not giving history or context surrounding treaties, the newspaper also risks playing into the common frame that Coast Salish peoples are asking for handouts, when in reality, the shortcomings of government practice in implementing and respecting treaty rights is the real issue. As highlighted by Janet Roger’s cap of 450 words for her piece in Monday Magazine, another issue that leads to lack of context is the short format of news articles, which simply do not offer enough space to give significant background and history.

**Theme two: An Inherent Right to Fish**

At an Idle No More rally at the Vancouver Waterfront Station, Musqueam First Nation Member Christie Charles expressed that she has “grown impatient with the Federal Government’s native policies and strained relationship with the First Nation community (Ip 2013:A9). In a newspaper article about Idle No More, Grand Chief of the Stó:lō Tribal Council
said “You are going to get demonstrations, you’re going to get direct action,” and explains that Stó:lō peoples have successfully used direct action, such as unauthorized fishing on the Fraser River, to get the attention of the government and force changes in policy (O’Neil 2013:B1). Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 says, “The existing Aboriginal and Treaty Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed” (Borrows 2008:162). Members of both Musqueam and the Stó:lō First Nations have been involved in Supreme Court decisions which sought clarification of this vague provision of the Constitution (See R v. Sparrow and R v. Van Der Peet), which have recognized a priority right to fish for food, social and ceremonial purposes, subject only to conservation, public health, and safety.

Despite these court findings, fishing is still disputed on the Fraser River. Stó:lō communities have been resisting restrictive resource rights by “illegally” fishing on the Fraser River for most of the twentieth century (Bierwert 1999:224). They sell these fish in a “black market” practice that opposes the legal structures set in place by the state which allows them to only fish in designated areas and certain times (Bierwert 1999:224). Authorized Stó:lō fisheries are monitored by the government, which adds extra steps to the process, while the economic gains parallel those of the fish sold on the “black market” (Bierwert 1999). The relationship between the Stó:lō Nation and the government-appointed warden mirrors the distrust that exists between First Nations and the government stemming from the history of colonization (Bierwert 1999: Boyd 2006). Since the early 1900’s, the Stó:lō community has often been framed by the media as the primary cause of the depleting fish resources, (Bierwert 1999:234), in spite of a lack of evidence for this to actually be the case. Like many Coast Salish peoples, Stó:lō communities have been living on the Fraser River and watching the lifecycle of the salmon since time immemorial. Salmon is central to Coast Salish culture, and they perform a First Salmon
ceremony when the first salmon of the year is caught (Boxberger 2007:44). This ceremony thanks the first fish for giving its flesh to the people, and this respectful ritual assures that fish will return the following year (Suttles 1981:706). Stó:lō fishing practices stem from this respectful nature and self-management rooted in these respectful relationships ensure that the fisheries will not be depleted.

However, the Cohen Commission’s inquiry into the decline of the Sockeye Salmon on the Fraser River has shown that the government policy-makers, including the Department of Fisheries and Ocean and Commissioner Cohen himself, do not value the traditional knowledge practices of First Nations. Nor does the government respect First Nations’ interpretations of the meaning of Section 35 of the Canadian Constitutions Act 1982, which acknowledges the inherent right for Aboriginal people of Canada of Canada to govern themselves in community-related, cultural, and traditional matters, as well as their lands and resources. There have been recent efforts by First Nations in BC, which include the Coast Salish, to work with the Government of Canada to develop a co-managed fishery that takes into consideration First Nation perspectives on how to manage and allocate the fishery, such as the BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan (2004), and Our Place at the Table: First Nations in the B.C. Fishery (2004), yet First Nations peoples continue to have their voices reduced to advisory or consultant roles, rather than co-governing the resource (for example, the Cohen Commission inquiry). Such events make it evident why Chief Kelley of the Stó:lō Nation will use direct action, such as fishing “illegally,” to get the attention of the government. The government typically responds in a paternalistic and non-negotiable way, leaving direct action and litigation as the only ways to get the government’s attention and press for change. Direct action also has been part of Idle No More; highway and ferry blockades have been recently organized by Coast Salish peoples to
draw public and government attention to issues (Lavoie 2013:A3; Kines 2013:A3), and these have also been used in earlier Coast Salish acts of resistance (Blomley 1996). In my discourse analysis of six newspapers, I revealed that Idle No More events and rallies were the highest coded theme. This shows that direct action makes headlines, and reveals the strategic agency of Indigenous peoples as they bring coverage to their events. However, media coverage of these events often sensationalizes the events, and obscures the more complex issues, as they do not delve into the deeper political, historical and cultural contexts.

**Case Study Conclusion**

Coast Salish peoples have used the Idle No More movement as a chance to mobilize their messages in the print media. The gatherings generate media attention and allow a chance for their voices to be heard by the wider Canadian audience. This mobilization is significant as it offers a counter narrative to the dominant settler discourse. I used van Dijk’s (1983) approach to discourse analysis to situate Coast Salish concerns into a wider sociopolitical and cultural context. Coast Salish communities express concerns that include the Douglas Treaties and fishing rights. Other concerns include the cultural disruption from the Indian Residential Schools, and the protection of the natural environment. None of these are new issues, yet Idle No More is a new movement that has the potential to inform more settler-Canadians about these issues, a process important to the Coast Salish peoples. Informing settler-Canadians is an important part of the de-colonization process, as it acknowledges history from an Indigenous perspective, thus challenging the settler-narrative.

Alfred and Corntassel (2005) explain that “Contemporary settlers follow the mandate provided them by their imperial forefather’s colonial legacy, not by attempting to eradicate the physical signs of Indigenous peoples as human bodies, but by trying to eradicate their existence
as peoples through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundations for Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self” (598). This erasure of history is not a problem restricted to coverage of Indigenous issues, and occurs on a broader level when it comes to the contexts that inform relations of conflict in many areas (Huyssen 2000). For example, Barton and Gregg (1982:184) find, in a content analysis of CBS news coverage surrounding a 1978 conflict in the Middle East, that the coverage is stripped of historical context and complexity. The newspaper articles that contained Coast Salish concerns generally did not contain sufficient detail to contextualize the concerns and agendas of Coast Salish peoples; details of the colonial histories and the significance of their geography are not given much space in the mainstream print media. This seems to mirror what Egan (2012:403) found was happening in the treaty process for the Hul’qumi’num peoples; the Crown refuses to address colonial injustices and this obscures the historically unequal relations between the Crown and First Nation peoples. These unequal relations are made apparent when Coast Salish peoples are required to use the legal system of those with whom they are in conflict, rather than their own values of justice. The Idle No More movement has allowed Coast Salish concerns to reach the readers of the local papers, yet not all news readers have the ethnographic and sociopolitical insights required to contextualize these concerns. There should be more efforts to contextualize these stories in the mainstream media, so that settler-Canadians can be made aware of historical imbalances.

Hegemony, however, is unstable (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991) and having a chance to offer their narratives both gives strength to these First Nations peoples, and actively challenges the colonial narrative. While Coast Salish peoples do not comprise an aggregated political body (Thom 2010), they have had a history of acting with common purpose when facing a common battle, and have successfully defeated threats (Angelbeck and McLay 2011). Many concerns
surrounding Idle No More illustrate common themes throughout Coast Salish territory. The physical gatherings of Idle No More, such as flash mobs, blockades and rallies, are spaces where Coast Salish peoples assert their agency through displays of their culture to one another and to settler-Canadians. Tseycum elder Mary Jack stated, “This makes me feel stronger” when she attended the Patricia Bay highway blockade (Lavoie 2013b:A1). As this strength increases the settler-narrative becomes increasingly unstable. While this case study is an analysis only of Coast Salish peoples in British Columbia, I contend that the results are generalizable; Idle No More is weakening setter-narratives all across Canada, as Indigenous peoples find strength in this movement.

**Media Analysis Chapter Conclusion**

The Idle No More movement had a strong presence in the mainstream print media. However, the stories were generally framed in a way that did not offer significant context, and focused on sensationalized issues. Coverage was mainly by non-Indigenous reporters and focused centrally on the movement in a way that did not offer significant contextualization. Instead the central focus was on the events (rallies, blockages, protests) that occurred in the context of the movement, and the hunger strike that was tangentially linked to the movement. However, there was a common thread that called out the Harper government for various wrongdoings that included failing to keep promises to Indigenous peoples, neglecting the role Indigenous people in Canada should have in decision making processes (for example in the implementation of Bills C-38 and C-45), and privileging the economy over the natural environment, (such as proposed pipelines which could have significant detrimental effects on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians). This thread challenges mainstream media hegemony, which maintains the elite-driven narrative that tends to support economics over the
environment and over Indigenous concerns.

There was a critical lack of Indigenous voices in this mainstream print media coverage of Idle No More. Although the examples of writing from an Indigenous perspective were few, when they did occur they brought forward voices that highlighted possible solutions, and also showed that the issues brought forth in the movement also have an effect on settler-Canadians. Many highlighted that for Canada to become a better country, and more specifically to prosper with regards to natural resource extraction and development, critical Indigenous issues must be addressed. These include acknowledging the power that Indigenous peoples have over their own future, the historical promises that were made to them which acknowledge their control over land resources, and improving negotiations and the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler-Canadians. Essentially, the Indigenous voices that did come through in the mainstream print media were generally optimistic towards the movement, and offered solutions that framed their communities as actively taking control over their future.

Because the Idle No More movement was grassroots and not centrally orchestrated, the messages in the mainstream news media varied significantly and a common critique of the movement was the lack of unified goal. “Idle No More adopted a radically decentralized character, having no single individual or group ‘leader’. Instead, communities would join together for distinct purposes, temporarily or for long-term activism. Events were local, regional, and wide-scale. This often confused and frustrated those (particularly the media) who looked for the ‘voice’ of the movement or somebody who could-or would-speak on behalf of all participants. Idle No More, however, was inherently different. It “defied orthodox politics” (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014:21). Instead of relying on the mainstream print media to voice their opinions, the voices of the actors in this movement resonated more clearly on social media
than in conventional print media, which is the focus of my next chapter.

This chapter contributes to the field of Indigenous newspaper analysis by highlighting the few contributions that individual Indigenous voices made to the mainstream print media and how these voices can contribute to a narrative that differ from mainstream media hegemony in Canada. My research shifts the analytical focus to highlight Indigenous agency instead of focusing on stereotypes and victimization. I offer a discourse of representation (Bamblett 2011), which shifts the focus and discourse from viewing Indigenous peoples as powerless victims to a discourse of being strategic players in media relations, and with the power to determine their own future. In the Coast Salish case study drawing from the ethnographic record to situate and contextualize some of the First Nations concerns that were brought forward revealed the context and background to the issues that the mainstream media largely ignored or omitted, highlighting that there is a role for anthropologists in these discursive practices.
Chapter 3- Social Media: Tracing the connections from a hashtag to on-the-ground collective action

This was the first time we had the capacity and technological tools to represent ourselves and our perspectives on the movement and broadcast those voices throughout Canada and the world—we wrote about the movement while it was taking place. Through social media—but also through good old word of mouth and discussions in lodges and kitchen tables—these words spread quickly and dynamically, trending through venues like Twitter and Facebook. Never before have Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers and artists presented to Canadians such rich art, stories, and expressive forms to others in such personal, intimate, and dynamic ways that provoke and evoke visions of the past, present and future (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014:25).

Introduction

In both my newspaper research and interviews with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia surrounding the Idle No More (INM) movement, a recurring theme was the idea that social media had a large effect on the rapid circulation of the messages surrounding the movement (see Donkin 2013; Hamilton 2013) and contributed to both mobilizing support and organizing events (such as rallies, flash-mobs and teach-ins). Scholarship surrounding the analysis of social media is only recently emerging, and I draw from recent literature on social media and movements, such as the Arab Spring, to develop a qualitative methodological strategy that explores social media produced in the context of the INM movement. Given the social, technological and political entanglements surrounding the use of social media during the INM movement, I will use Actor Network Theory\(^1\) (Latour 2005, Law 2006) to explore these

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\(^1\) While it is a helpful methodology, there are other anthropologists and social theories that look at similar ideas using different language. Tim Ingold (2007) focuses on using meshwork to describe the power that comes from the physical engagements between humans and materials. McFarlane (2009) moves away from using ‘network’ and instead uses ‘assemblage’ to look at power and space in the context of social movements. These frameworks may be useful to consider in my future studies of social media.
entanglements, focusing on text-based social media (specifically Twitter) in the context of the Idle No More movement. A key question that directs this study is whether mass media hegemony is being destabilized through social media, and if so, how? Are the discourses circulated via social media counter-narratives to the western ideas that are being perpetuated in the mass media? Having shown in the analysis of the previous chapter, these counter-perspectives and Indigenous voices are present, but not prevalent in mainstream media.

Social media allows alternative and diverse voices to be heard (Kahn and Kellner 2004; Poell et al. 2013; Tierney 2013) in contrast to the mainstream media, which tends to privilege the settler narrative. Ginsburg (1994:366) views Aboriginal producers of media as engaging in a form of powerful collective self-expression that can be culturally revitalizing. Comaroff and Comaroff (1991:27) view hegemony as “intrinsically unstable and always vulnerable;” therefore, I argue that acts of resistance, such as Idle No More, can destabilize hegemony and strengthen the networks of collective power that makes the movement.

Between November 25, 2012 and January 19, 2013, there were 867,614 Tweets surrounding the Idle No More movement produced by 113,409 Tweeters (Blevis 2013). Just under 78.7 percent of these Tweets came from Canada, 15.5 percent from the USA, and 5.8 percent from other countries, with the United Kingdom, Australia, Egypt and Finland making the majority of this portion (Blevis 2013). Because of the high volume of Tweets constituting the INM movement, it would be impossible to qualitatively analyze the whole corpus. Instead I draw from ANT to describe the circulation of one Twitter hashtag (#Oct7Proclaim) and its associations, connections and transformations (Latour 2005). I also draw from Kopytoff’s (1986) notion of the cultural biography of things, which tracks an object temporarily, and also asks questions of these things that we would ask a person in creating their biography, such as “What
are the recognized ‘ages’ or periods in the thing’s ‘life’, and… How does the thing’s use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?’” (Kopytoff 1986:67). I briefly introduce social media studies, and examine recent scholarly examples that apply ANT to social media studies in the context of social movements. I have created my own methodological strategy to follow a hashtag (#Oct7Proclaim) from its beginning on Twitter, to how it helped choreograph on-the-ground collective action across the world. This chapter also aims to broaden understanding of how contemporary Indigenous communities engage mainstream and social media to foster self-determination and mobilize support.

Whereas conventional print media is so pervasive, we make a choice to tune into social media. However, there are spaces where print media and social media crossover. In my interview with Don Bain, the executive at the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), he explained to me that social media is changing the way that press releases are used;

Social media and online resources have changed how people get their news… If CBC wants to send a crew down here and do an on-camera interview, that’s awesome…but it’s not the driving force of press releases any more. It’s part of it, but it’s not the reason that we do it this way. I am tracking the number of re-Tweets, the number of likes. I’ve stopped using newswire services about four years ago… I still use it from time to time, but you can distribute a press release arguably… way more cost effectively, and perhaps even as effective as a newswire service, now, using social media feeds. It’s pretty amazing (Don Bain, in interview, December 5 2013).

Bain uses Twitter to get the UBCIC messages across and mentioned that he does not even use the newswire anymore, but prefers to upload press releases directly to Twitter. Bain explained to me that reporters follow his UBCIC account on Twitter and so he does not have to rely on newswire to get stories out. Reporters will sometimes re-Tweet his stories, or they might call him with questions about a press release. He said that a good press release is “Tweetable,” has a hook in the title and doesn’t tell the full story- this way a reporter will have to call to get the story. This is an example of how social media and mainstream news media intersect, and
Bain’s strategy draws from this intersection.

This highlights how social media, a fairly new phenomenon, is changing the game for media relations and dissemination of news. Bain observed, “The other thing I like about social media feeds is you become the reporter,” and he feels that he has more control over his story when he uses social media. Social media has destabilizing consequences (Couldry 2012), and offers a space for alternative and diverse voices to be heard by contrast with the mainstream media, which tends to privilege the colonial narrative (Harding 2006). Bain uses social media to mobilize support, inform others and destabilize mainstream media hegemony in the process.

**Literature Review: Actor Network Theory and Social Media Studies**

In this section, I briefly outline the development of ANT, but more specifically discuss scholarship that has used ANT to look at social media and activism. This study is novel in its focus on Canadian and Indigenous examples, and addresses a lack of scholarship regarding the Idle No More movement. Nick Couldry's (2012) book *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice* is one of the few books that explores social media using ANT. Couldry asks how social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, are used and what sorts of habits, social relations and meanings come from our use of these forms of media. Couldry (2012:41) explores the use of unauthorized commentary via Twitter and the destabilizing consequences this can have on authoritative structures. This supports my argument that, in the context of the Idle No More movement, Indigenous peoples use social media to destabilize the authoritative structures that control mass media hegemony.

Gramsci understood hegemony as “a complex mixture of compulsion and assent that a particular social group is able to enforce” (Schweppenhäuser 2009:156). The concept of hegemony inspired the school of British cultural studies to explore “how media culture
articulates a set of dominant values, political ideologies, and cultural forms into a hegemonic project that incorporates individuals into a shared consensus, as individuals became integrated into the consumer society and political projects like Raeganism or Thatcherism” (Keller 2002:36). Drawing from these authors, I use the term mass media hegemony to illustrate how, as discussed in the previous chapter, mass media tends to uphold the ideology of the elite, capitalist-driven and state-owned systems and perpetuates negative colonial attitudes towards Indigenous peoples.

Instead of explaining social order through an essentialized notion of ‘the social’, Actor Network Theory (ANT) explains it through the networks of connections between various entities (people, technologies, objects), which “acquire power through the number, extensiveness and stability of the connections routed through them, and nothing else ” (Couldry 2004:1). Bruno Latour (2005) questions the notion of ‘the technical’ and ‘the social’ and points out that the two are not separate. Latour (2005) draws from a “sociology of associations”; the ‘social’ is held together by other connectors, as opposed to a “sociology of the social” in which the social is what holds things together. ANT challenges underlying frameworks and academic categories, and encourages focus instead on following and describing relation and flows (Latour 2005). I draw from these ideas to follow the circulations of the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim, the connections that it formed, and how it was transformed as actors used it within different contexts.

Despite its name, ANT is more of a methodology than a theory, for it is made up of “a set of interventions to reduce and analyze complex social phenomena which are bounded and supported by certain epistemological commitments” (Cavanagh 2007:33). One of its central commitments, “radical relationality,” is the idea that a given object, person or idea does not necessarily have attached to it a priori significance or properties (Cavanagh 2007:33). This idea
is illustrated in the fact that ANT does not see a necessary difference between “the natural” and “the social”, as networks are “assemblages of objects, of which people are only one element” (Cavanagh 2007:33). Essentially, objects and people are equal participants in social relations, and ANT seeks to transcend the dualities between “the natural” and “the social”. Latour (2005:67) views ANT as a tool that enables us to describe in a way that which does not need an explanation, while Law highlights this importance of description, “…we might then embrace an art of describing, an art of describing the patterns and textures that form intellectual patchwork” (2006:62). ANT fits my research purpose specifically because it allows me to bring history, politics and culture into social media studies.

ANT does have limitations. For example it does not tell us why human actors in social movements made the decisions that they did, and therefore ANT should be used more as a methodology than a critical theory (Andrade & Urquhart 2010; McNamara et al. 2004, cf. Heeks and Seo-Zindy 2013:19). To address this critique, I have conducted interviews with Indigenous peoples in BC who are involved in media relations and was therefore able to talk about choices and decisions and gain first-hand information, which I discuss in the next chapter. Also, some Tweets offer brief insight into the decisions made by the actors. Another critique, drawing again from Heeks and Seo-Zindy, is the authors’ assertion that ANT “may better be used in combination with supplemental causal and moral frameworks” (2013:19), I use ANT along with the ideas of mass media hegemony, as well as a historical contextualization for this chapter to explore the circulation of one hashtag, (#Oct7Proclaim), and the networks connecting this hashtag to people, technology, social media and events.

Much of the literature on social movements and technology/social media underplays agency and instead relies on either social or technological determinism (Heeks and Seo-Zindy
2013:6). Communello and Anzera (2012), in their exploration of social media and the Arab Spring, develop a conceptual framework for understanding social media. Although they do not explicitly use ANT, their framework has many similarities. Like Heeks and Seo-Zindy, the authors first argue that a dichotomous view of the topic prevails: social media is either portrayed as revolutionary (digital evangelist view), or it is completely minimized (techno-realistic view). They also find that “social media cannot be interpreted as the ‘main cause’ of such complex processes, nor can they be seen as completely un-influential” (Communello and Anzera 2012:453). The authors combine Internet studies with international relations to provide a more nuanced and complex view that eschews technological determinism (“the consequences of technology for society;” 2012:465) and focuses instead on “the complex interactions between society, technology and political systems” (2012:465).

In similar light, Wolfsfeld et al. (2013:132) explore social media and the Arab Spring and find that we need to move away from overemphasizing the role of social media in protests to first focus on political context. Literature tends to either focus on the causes or the outcomes of movements that rely on Internet Communications Technology (ICT), instead of explaining “the process and dynamics of those social movements” (Heeks and Seo-Zindy 2013:6). ANT is useful in avoiding reliance on either the technological or social side, but to instead look at the dynamic processes that involve both, along with the power and agency created in these connections. Heeks and Seo-Zindy (2013), in applying ANT to explore the role of ICTs in Iran’s Green Movement, also seek to transcend the duality between viewing either technology or society as the cause of modern social movements. They find that from an ANT perspective “social networks are hybrid and contingent associations of human and non-human elements that are in constant flux, with ANT not seeking to uncover causes or effects but spotlighting the
dynamic processes of collective action reflected in network formation, growth, dissolution, etc.” (Heeks and Seo-Zindy 2013:7). Like my research process, the authors allow one key question to inform their area of study: “from an actor-network perspective, what role do ICTs play in the development of a social movement network?” (Heeks and Seo-Zindy 2013:8). While these authors are look at ICT’s more broadly, and not strictly social media, their research and methodology still proves very useful. In their research, the author’s triangulate pre-existing literature on the Green Movement with texts and audiovisuals from blogs and news sources, as well as Iranian citizen-generated media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Heeks and Seo-Zindy 2013:8). For my thesis, I triangulate a newspaper analysis, interviews with Indigenous peoples involved in the movement and social media, current literature on movements, activism and social media, as well as historical context. I also briefly draw from YouTube videos in my analysis of the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim, to show how the hashtag is being reconstructed beyond Twitter. This reconstruction, or translation, of material is central to ANT (Latour 2005).

Poell et al. (2013) use ANT to explore Chinese social media, specifically seeking to show how political and social controversies become viral. These authors have found that past research in this area considers social media to be “neutral ‘platforms’ or ‘tools’ that can be appropriated and shaped by particular social actors” (2013:2). Moving away from the idea of neutrality, and giving agency to social media, the authors explore a lens through which they view social media as participant, or what Latour terms an “actant” (2005:71). Poell et al. reveal that:

Tracing the actor-networks of online contention unveils a wilderness that is not defined by the interests of any particular actor, but is mutually shaped by a wide range of actors, including a variety of technologies. What these temporary assemblages will produce is impossible to predict. Their speed and cultural vitality are potentially explosive and can generate political change (2013:14).

These authors’ observations surrounding social media within a network that is both
“potentially explosive” and can generate political change, parallels the use of social media in the Idle No More movement. Obviously finding ANT useful, the authors conclude that “researchers should shift their focus from individual actors and interests to the constantly-shifting associations between actors, which include objects and technologies” (Poell et al. 2013:14) and find that the social media platform they are exploring (Weibo) is not an entity in itself, but a “technocultural assemblage which becomes entangled with a wide variety of other actors in the course of contentious episodes” (2013:14). Also mirroring the entanglements between people, action and social media in Idle No More movement that I explore, the authors reveal that “(e)ach assemblage holds the potential to disrupt the everyday, the stable, and the static” (2013:14). These findings are also similar to Couldry's (2012) idea of social media's destabilizing consequences. Indigenous peoples in Canada are using social media to mobilize support and inform others and are destabilizing mainstream media hegemony in the process. While these destabilizing consequences are momentary and partial, they still open up a space for an alternative dialogue to form and for Indigenous priorities to be circulated. The use of Twitter during the Idle No More movement is a key example of this, as I demonstrate through an exploration of how the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim helped to give voice to Indigenous concerns in Canada.

Poell et al. argue that the “speed” and “cultural vitality” (2013:14) of the assemblages of actors and actants associated with social media generate its potential power for change. In spite of speed and cultural vitality, Idle No More did not appear to generate significant change among state actors in terms of legislative approach to environmental deregulation. The government is still pushing for streamlined industrial development processes and extensive deregulation in relation to possible detrimental environmental effects. Nonetheless, speed and cultural vitality do
seem to distinguish social media from conventional mainstream media, and these distinct elements of social media redistribute power to a more local level. For example, Sean Atleo recently resigned from the AFN during discussions surrounding First Nations education with Bill-C33, after significant criticism through social media and from other Chiefs across Canada. A central critique of the bill was that there would still be federal oversight of on-reserve education, therefore not giving First Nations decision-making power. Prior to this, the leadership of the AFN split surrounding whether or not they should meet with Harper on January 11, 2013, if the Governor General was not present. This marginalization of the AFN by the Idle No More movement, often perpetuated with comments from social media, seems to be redistributing First Nation political power to a more local level, pushing for local voices to be heard as they challenge the power of the AFN.

**Case Study: #Oct7Proclaim**

As I sifted through scholarship surrounding Twitter analysis, the methods that I found were quantitative and relied on both statistical and analytic tools, which offer minimal qualitative insights (see González et al. 2014; Kumar et al. 2014) as they do not explore the connections between history, people, technology, politics and action. Instead, these approaches explored social media very broadly, theorizing and situating it in a sociological perspective. This includes the literature on ANT that I reviewed in the last section. I did not find an analysis that follows one particular hashtag or Tweet. Qualitative and single case studies are more prevalent in anthropological inquiry; therefore, I created my own methodological tool to find and follow one hashtag (#Oct7Proclaim) because I am more interested in a qualitative exploration, as this approach allows me to highlight some of the individuals who used the hashtag and is consistent with my desire to promote a discourse that privileges Indigenous voices, and provides historical,
political and cultural context to the hashtag’s circulation.

I decided to follow the specific hashtag #Oct7Proclaim because I was able to trace it back to its original “Tweeter” and also because I attended a local event that was inspired by this Tweet. This hashtag is also a part of the broader Idle No More movement; therefore it fits into my research interests, and offers a social media case study for this thesis. Law (2006) explains “That one might represent actor network theory by performing it rather than summarizing it. By exploring a small number of case studies rather than seeking to uncover its ‘fundamental rules’” (47). My experimental methodological strategy is as follows:

1. Search #Oct7Proclaim on Twitter.
2. Locate the first use by scrolling back.
3. Trace who picked up (re-Tweeted) the original #Oct7Proclaim Tweet, and trace some of its subsequent uses on Twitter.
4. Draw from ANT, and social media studies to explore how #Oct7Proclaim was used/reconstructed in establishing connections between people, technology, social media and on-the-ground collective action.
5. Contextualize this historically, socially, and politically.
6. Consider the limitations of my project.

Drawing from Kopytoff (1986:66), I asked “Where does the thing come from and who made it?” The first Tweet of #Oct7Proclaim came from the main Idle No More Twitter account (@IdleNoMore4) on September 14, 2013; “#Oct7Proclaim RAISE YOUR VOICES and take ACTION #IdleNoMore.” This Tweet also included a link to a “Call for Action,” encouraging readers to organize events in their community that represented the local issues facing First Nation peoples. The Idle No More website explains;

The call to action was issued by Idle No more and Defenders of the Land to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the British Royal Proclamation of 1763, which was the first document in which an imperial nation recognized indigenous sovereignty and their right to self-determination. As we wrote last week, treaties with First Nations are not being honored, and even the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples does not adequately recognize the sovereignty of indigenous peoples” (#Oct7Proclaim at Idle No More, 2013).
The Royal Proclamation, issued in 1763 by Britain’s King George III, is a document that outlines the guidelines surrounding European settlement of Indigenous territories in what is today known as North America. This document is recognized by many Indigenous and legal scholars as an important first step in accepting existing Aboriginal rights and title, which includes the right to self-determination. The Proclamation outlines a process for establishing treaties, which includes the presence and support of First Nations in establishing a treaty, as well as compensation to First Nations peoples for both lands and resources (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013).

In British Columbia, where the majority of land has never been ceded by its First Nations peoples, it is often argued that non-First Nation settlement in BC is on stolen or unceded land. However, the province of BC has claimed that the Proclamation is inapplicable to much of British Columbia because the British had not yet settled it when the Proclamation was issued in 1763 (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013). Evidently, there is a lot of contention and debate among the government, academics and Indigenous peoples surrounding this document (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013). This includes the idea that the Proclamation became valid in BC when sovereignty was established in the province (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013). The principles of the Royal Proclamation are reflected in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, which states, “The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed” (Constitution Act 1982 Section 35(1)).

This one hashtag was part of the catalyst for 50 actions held worldwide by Indigenous nations and their allies who were proclaiming Indigenous sovereignty. Actors on social media re-Tweeted this hashtag and made it their own as they used it to organize location-specific
events. The first to Tweet this, Idle No More, has a Twitter following 21.3k people, including Idle No More Quebec (4996 followers), Occupy Minnesota (676 followers), and famous Cree Canadian/American musician Buffy Sainte-Marie (2381 followers). These three were among the 19 people who re-Tweeted the original Tweet. Buffy Sainte-Marie’s followers include many well-known names in Indigenous politics and media in Canada. These include CBC Aboriginal (13 200 followers), CBC National reporter Duncan McCue (4 281 followers), First Nations Summit (3 140 followers), and Ojibway author and journalist Richard Wagamese (4 591 followers). I mention these well-known names because they tend to have a larger following than the average Twitter user, who has 208 followers (Smith 2014). As such these individuals have a larger network of actors to whom they can reach out to mobilize support. Idle No More Quebec has 4807 followers, and Occupy Minnesota has just under 11 000. The 19 re-Tweeters of this original hashtag mention have a total of 26,902 followers. Each of those 26,902 followers has its own followers as well. This gives an indication of how quickly a hashtag can become circulated, and potentially become “viral.”

Latour explains “any thing that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor—or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant. Thus, the questions to ask about any agent include whether it makes a “difference in the course of some other agent’s action or not?” (Latour 2005:71). The #Oct7Proclaim is a participant, or an actant, because it prompts actors to do things (Latour 2005:55). The hashtag’s power is not a priori, but is established through its connections with other actors. The hashtag’s agency is established in the connections between itself, and other actors and actants such as people (the users and viewers), technology (cellphones, computers, tablets), politics, and history. Social media is not neutral; it is political and in this context opens up possibilities for circulations of voices and ideas that transform the
users into active participants. As the hashtag was re-Tweeted, the users made the message their own; their messages varied but the hashtag remained. Social media can be produced by any user (granting they have access), and this contrasts with mainstream print media, which, as the previous chapter’s analysis illustrates, does not offer the same breadth of voices and opinions, as it is largely dominated by settler-frames because it is generally settler-controlled.

Kopytoff asks, “How does a thing’s use change with its age?” (1986:66), so I asked this question of the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim. Searching subsequent uses of this hashtag on Twitter, I came across other forms of media such as photos, newspaper articles, blogs, and YouTube videos, embedded in Tweets that contain the #Oct7Proclaim hashtag. The hashtag was no longer strictly being used on Twitter, but was reconstructed in other media forms. Law explains that, “as [technologies] pass they are changed” (2006:49). YouTube videos all used the hashtag as their connecting point and came from First Nation people such as now former National Chief Sean Atleo, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip (UBCIC), as well as Indigenous elders, children, and non-Indigenous supporters, including the well known scholar and environmental and women’s rights activist Vandana Shiva. The emerging themes from the videos I viewed included: a call for protection of the land and natural environment (including waterways); protecting future generations; cultural diversity; and an anti-Harper government discourse, specifically critiquing the government’s privileging of economy and industry over the natural environment. The people in the videos urged viewers to support the Idle No More movement and specifically to join their local, on-the-ground rallies on October 7, 2013. These videos, as well as many of the Tweets and the themes emerging in the on-the-ground collective action, all contain similar messages that challenge hegemonic discourse perpetuated by mainstream media, which has the potential to unsettle state and industry actors.
The events related to #Oct7Proclaim were locally specific; they varied by city and ranged in themes depending on the specific issues facing the areas. The event in Victoria was a march against the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline; others did not have specific themes, but more broadly brought attention to Indigenous rights and self-determination. Events took place mainly across North America, but also as far as India and England. The hashtag #Oct7Proclaim transcended traditional geographic boundaries as it drew these actors together for a common cause. The “choreograph of assembly” is “made visible in the use of social media in directing people towards specific protest events, in providing participants with suggestions and instructions about how to act, and in the construction of an emotional narration to sustain their coming together in public space” (Gerbaudo 2012:13), which are “new forms of proximity and face to face interaction” (Gerbaudo 2012:13).

As one example, social media helped to choreograph a “Day of Action” inspired by #Oct7Proclaim in downtown Victoria, BC. The event started at 11am at Centennial Square at which an estimated 200 people gathered. Taking the stage at Centennial Square, Victoria’s poet laureate Janet Rogers, a Mohawk woman from Six Nations in Ontario who has lived in BC for 20 years, spoke against environmental destruction and made it clear that the issues affect both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. While I do not have a transcript of this speech, I was able to interview Janet a few months later. She explained,

I think it was important to say to the media that we understand [that] our message about our heart-based relationship with the land does not translate in government, there is no way. What government understands is one message and one message only and that is about economics. And so if we fuck with their economics then we get our message through. And as activists we understand that (Janet Rogers, in interview, January 8 2014).

The government’s privileging of economics over the environment was a central theme during the event. Other Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples took the stage, sharing their
concerns about environmental issues. During this time some organizers circulated papers with chants for attendees to perform during the march, for example “No dirty energy on unceded lands, no pipelines, no fracking, shut down the tar sands.”

After the speeches ended, the crowd of which I was a part marched down Government Street and stopped to round dance in the intersection that joins Wharf, Government and Humbolt Streets. We blocked the intersection while others round-danced and sang, and still others held signs, made noise, and took pictures. We then marched to the legislature building lawn. Local media took photos and video and talked to participants in the rally. We gathered around the main stairs in the front of the building and more people spoke out about the pipelines, environmental degradation, and Indigenous rights. The participants also wanted to deliver a large pipeline made out of black plastic to BC Premier Christy Clark. The organizer’s intentions were to present this to her and tell her that this was the only pipeline that she was going to get. I left the event at 1 pm, just before a session was going to be held on civil disobedience.

In undertaking the biography of a thing, Kopytoff asks “What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its “status” and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized?” (1986:66). The hashtag #Oct7Proclaim, along with its network of social media, technology, people, and politics, acted to organize on the ground collective action which gave space a collective of people to express their views. Gerbaudo (2012:11-12) explains, “We need to understand media in general and social media in particular as processes responsible for ‘re-cast[ing] the organization of the spatial and emporia scenes of social life’ (Barnett 2003 c.f. Couldry and McCarthy 2005:59) rather than as involved in the construction of another ‘virtual’ space bereft of physical geography.” This on-the-ground collective action, as well as the other rallies held around the world on this day, are examples of how social media can be used not just
in a virtual way, but in a way that can materialize in a very physical way “to choreograph collective action” (Gerbaudo 2012:4).

At the Victoria rally, collective action materialized in a physical sense. The choreography materialized when the actors came together to rally for a cause, and in the form of the round dance that many took part in. There is significant empowerment in enacting public displays of their culture, sharing their traditions with each other and with settler-Canadians (Roy 2002). Social media has been a tool choreographing these events. The choreography of collective action at this rally has also united Indigenous and settler-Canadian voices in a way that transcends mainstream news media, creating allies and establishing personal, on-the-ground connections. Wellburn (2012) explores the power of these settler/Indigenous alliances in her thesis as she examines how they worked as a community to reject a proposed gold-copper mine in Tsilhqot’in territories, and Crist (2012) highlights the importance of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships, based on intersecting values, as she explored the resistance to the Northern Gateway Pipeline in Haida Gwaii, BC.

Unifying emblems are a central part of movements; Heeks and Seo-Zindy found in their application of ANT to the use of ICT’s during the Iranian “Green Movement” that supporters of Mir-Hossein Mousavi used the Internet as a place to support Mousavi’s Green Movement, and by doing so adopted the colour green as an “unifying emblem” (2013:10) which was shared in profile pictures, images and videos. In the process, this election campaign “started to make visible a potential network of dispersed actors” (2013:10). The colour green as a unifying emblem be paralleled with the widespread use of Idle No More imagery circulating on the web, print media, and social media. For example, in the height of the INM movement, I saw many of my Facebook friends change their profile picture to an INM photo. In the context of this case
study, the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim on Twitter can be seen as the unifier, making visible and bringing together a scattered network of people who are rallying around the same cause. Locating where this imagery originated and how it became attached to Idle No More could draw in valuable observations in a future study.

Social media contributed to unifying Indigenous activists with settler-Canadians who were supportive of the cause. McFarlane (2009:565) asserts that there is power in a variety of groups working against the authoritative narrative; “the larger the number of outside interests to negotiate, the more varied the mix of resources, the greater the potential for authority to be disrupted.” The #Oct7Proclaim was not only used by Indigenous peoples, but was also picked up by non-Indigenous activists. The event that I attended seemed to be made up of mostly Euro-Canadian students. This seems to point to a crossing of boundaries and formed alliances between settlers and Indigenous peoples (See Crist 2012 and Wellburn 2012, for similar examples of these alliances). Indigenous issues have been largely framed as environmental issues throughout the Idle Mo More Movement. The Indigenous peoples who spoke at the event often stated that they are the stewards and protectors of the environment. Indigenous peoples in Canada have distinct power in this regard; the Royal Proclamation recognizes their land rights and title, and non-Indigenous participants in this rally support recognize and support the power in these rights as an alternative to state maneuvers, as these Indigenous rights are supported by jurisdiction. Euro-Canadians attending the events were also concerned about environmental issues; these shared concerns brought them together.

Esarey and Qiang (2011:299) suggest that in China, information communications technology “empower networks of communications that threaten the party’s political hegemony,” and that the internet has allowed for more direct communication between the people
and the government, leading to the public’s opinion being given “unprecedented consideration” (299). In similar light, the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim used in social media, and the related “Call to Action” drew attention to environmental concerns surrounding the pipeline, which are in opposition to the state’s political economic desires.

On June 17, 2014, the Northern Gateway pipeline was granted approval by the federal government “subject to 209 conditions recommended by the National Energy Board and further talks with aboriginal communities” (Payton and Mass 2014). There are currently consultations surrounding the proposed pipeline between government and Indigenous peoples across Canada. The terms laid out in Royal Proclamation are the basis for these negotiations. Since the announcement of approval from the federal government, the AFN responded with a press release;

AFN British Columbia Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould stated: ‘First Nations leadership in B.C. overwhelmingly oppose the Conservative government’s irresponsible decision to approve Northern Gateway and will pursue all lawful means to ensure it does not get built… it is unconscionable that the government would, in its approval, offload its legal responsibility to consult and accommodate with Aboriginal peoples to Enbridge’ (AFN 2014).

Canada’s Liberal party, NDP, and Green party also all oppose to the pipeline approval.
Indigenous rights and title established in the Royal Proclamation, along with public support from settler-activists and non-conservative political parties, have the potential to disrupt the plans for this pipeline. Social media has the potential to bridge the divides between these various players, as it puts their dialogue on an equal field, where they have full control of their message. For example, the hashtag #noenbridge has been used by a variety of players; UBCIC, Andrew Weaver (BC Green Party MLA), Thomas Mulclair (NDP Leader), and Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson, and like #Oct7proclaim has the potential to unify a variety of groups based on
common interests to work together for a similar cause.

Kopytoff asks, “what happens when (the thing) reaches the end of its usefulness” (1986:66)? With the exception of three Tweets between December 2013 and March 2014, the hashtag was not used on Twitter after October 23, 2013. The majority of the Tweets using this hashtag took place the week before October 7, 2013, and a few days after the event, with peak usage on October 7, 2013 (Blevis 2013). This makes sense given that the hashtag was intended to draw attention to a specific date and its historical resonances. People may re-use the hashtag in October 2014, but it currently seems to have reached the end of its usefulness in that it is not being actively re-Tweeted by users. However, the hashtag continues to inform as it is archived and saved on the Internet and its past uses can be retrieved through a simple Google or Twitter search. Photos of the events and dialogue surrounding the issues have the potential to continue to circulate and inform. Perhaps more importantly, the strength felt by those involved in the collective action, along with their new-formed alliances and the messages they brought to the mainstream continue to ripple beyond the Twitter newsfeed.

**Conclusion**

While a potential critique of this analysis could be that I did not draw from a statistical analysis of all of the Tweets with the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim, I contend that this qualitative analysis opens possibilities for stories that a graph would not tell. While statistical Twitter analytics could reveal the popularity and peak usage of a hashtag, and the geographical dispersion of users, they can not offer the nuanced analysis of the interconnection between people, history, politics, and collective action, that my analysis aims to reveal. Another limitation is that my project focuses on what I would consider to be positive uses of social media; I do not delve into issues such as cyber-surveillance (Lesitert 2012), the vulnerability of
infrastructure (Starosielski 2012), or accessibility and “the digital divide” of users vs. non-users (Henley and Mignone 2009). Lastly, my analysis was mainly based on text-based representations. Considerable artwork, YouTube films, and photographs were circulated during this movement and I think there would be value in the looking deeper into the forms and materiality of these objects.

Boyd (2006:333) explains that, although they are coming from a group that has unequal access to the production of historical narratives, Indigenous peoples can still offer a powerful force. Social media is not neutral, and, rather, is “generally thought to be democratizing” (Howard and Parks 2012:361) as it gives voice to the public. Baiocchi et al. (2013:328) find that Actor Network Theory is a useful methodology to highlight this, as it

invites much more than descriptions of our clumsy interactions with objects or how people use technologies. More important is understanding the often-ignored ways that these seemingly passive and inert objects act upon us and shape our subjectivities and actions. As Latour and Venn (2002) argue, “Technologies bombard human beings with a ceaseless offer of previously unheard of positions—engagements, suggestions, allowances, interdictions, habits, positions, alienations, prescriptions, calculations, memories”.

As I have illustrated, social media is used to mobilize support and oppose the more powerful narrative, through actions such as mobilizing activists, circulating of alternative content, and choreographing collective action for political movements.

To address my research question, I argue that the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim and the network of which it is a part, challenge mass media hegemony. Hegemony is vulnerable, and intrinsically unstable (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:27). The themes and thoughts expressed in Tweets, and linked content (blogs, YouTube, etc.), as well as the on-the-ground collective of people who are a part of this network challenge the Canadian government’s ideas surrounding the economy, the primacy of settler-laws, and environmentally destructive actions, which, as the previous chapter points out, are left largely unexamined and are less profoundly challenged by
the hegemonic mass media discourse. Social media provides a virtual space that can act like a traditional “community meeting,” bringing together those who are dispersed by geography. One of Idle No More’s founders Tanya Kappo explains that she thinks Indigenous people love social media so much because

our voices have been silenced for such a long time. Not only by society generally but also our own communities sometimes. So social media has provided a forum for us. It’s like this constant community meeting and you can go and hang out there anytime, a regular space to visit. And especially now that our people live in so many different locations, social media has also become the place to share thoughts on anything and everything. Because the nature of our societies now, it’s really an ideal medium for important conversations (Kappo and King 2014:68).

Kappo, and others (see Donkin 2013; Hamilton 2013) have highlighted that social media made the Idle No More movement different from past Indigenous resurgences. If we compare Idle No More to past Indigenous protests, what is different? Kappo highlights one element; members of individual Indigenous communities in Canada are becoming increasingly geographically dispersed, and social media can act as a substitute for a community meeting by hosting important conversations.

In an interview, Dan Wallace, a hereditary chief from the Campbell River area on Quadra Island and of Lek-Kwil-Taich (Kwakwaka’wakw) and Haida descent, highlighted another key element that social media can contribute; sharing messages quickly on social media can make mainstream print media accountable. Referring to the protest against fracking at Elispogtog, New Brunswick, in October 2013 he explained,

There is a serious benefit. If not for social media news about police, enforcement would have made it seem like the Mi'Kmaq were armed or some crap like that and there would have been another Dudley George, Ipperwash incident. So in short it is helping save lives. Did you see how fast the police and media displayed hunting rifles and other hunting knives... They also put on the table a lot of ammo that didn't belong to Mi'Kmaq but it made for good TV didn't it? Three hunting rifles (Dan Wallace, in interview, November 27 2013).
Indeed, at the Ipperwash incident, which occurred prior to the era of social media, Indigenous peoples were protesting development of sacred burial grounds in Ontario in 1998, and the Ontario Provincial Police shot and killed George. Wallace attributes the benefits of social media as a reason that Elispogtog did not end in any shootings. He also highlights the way that the mainstream media failed to report in a balanced way on the events, and how social media can contribute to destabilizing these narratives. This also supports my print media analysis, as it highlights that the mainstream press frequently frames Indigenous peoples in Canada as warriors who are in conflict with the state, rather than focusing on the actual issues at hand, which in the Elispogtog case, would be the environmentally destructive effects of “fracking”, the contentious practice of fracturing rock with pressurized liquid in order to extract oil and gas. The mainstream media also largely ignore or gloss over the complex jurisdictional and property rights that Indigenous peoples in Canada assert when they protest destructive treatment of their lands.

Social media is also being used to choreograph collective direct action such as sit-ins at parliamentary offices, and other forms of non-violent direct action, thus drawing attention to issues that the mainstream media are not thoroughly covering. Wallace recently organized an event using Facebook and, on May 30, 2014, he and two other activists drew attention to Indigenous sovereignty, the Federal and Provincial government’s detrimental treatment of the environment, and climate change by locking themselves to a gate that lets trucks into the North Burnaby Chevron (Hornick 2014). Wallace, who I have as a friend on Facebook, uses this social medium to plan more direct actions this summer to protest the Northern Gateway Pipeline and draw attention to Indigenous sovereignty and environmental issues.

Similar to Wallace’s observations surrounding social media holding mainstream media
accountable, CBC National reporter Duncan McCue observed something very unique happening on Twitter, and that is the degree to which citizens are pressing mass media outlets to report on trending Tweets;

The interesting thing that I thought too was that (people using social media during Idle No More) were also displaying an incredible amount of media literacy and holding us to account for not broadcasting their message, number one. So for the first three weeks they was like ‘Hey CBC, why aren’t you doing a story on this?’ ‘Hey National, why aren’t you doing a story on this?’ And then they spent a lot of energy critiquing the stories that we did do. … (They were) voicing displeasure but also some very smart critiques of the media and some of their biases (Duncan McCue, in interview, January 23 2014).

Newman (2011:55) explains that social media’s “reach is global and the speed with which individual citizens can create and move information can help to bring down governments and humble mighty corporations”, and that this revitalization of power in the public sphere could keep authorities within bounds. In similar light, both Wallace and McCue highlight how social media’s instantaneous nature and broad reach allowed people at the grassroots level to hold the mainstream news media accountable, and also opened up the space for diverse and alternative voices to be expressed.

Another way that social media differentiates Idle No More from past protests is that it gives participants control over their messages, as they do not have to rely on mainstream print media to get their message across. As I previously mentioned, Don Bain stated that as a participant using social media, he becomes the reporter. He told me “This morning I took this picture and Tweeted it…[Because of the response I got to it on social media] The Globe and Mail BC said ‘we are going to report on that in 22 minutes’” (in interview, December 5, 2013). News reporters follow organizations such as UBCIC, and they scan social media feeds for story ideas. Twitter also allows users to upload their own photographs, which can be used in news
articles that are picked up from the social media stream, contributing to the grassroots control over their media message.

Social media also makes this movement different because it increases communication and alliances over geographically widespread spaces. #Oct7Proclaim brought together people across North America, and beyond the continental border, in supported of a similar cause. Not only were geographic boundaries transcended; there was a crossing of boundaries in the partnerships formed among Indigenous communities, as well as between Indigenous peoples and settlers (as observed at the event in Victoria, see also Crist 2012; Wellburn 2012). The instantaneous nature of social media contributes to this rapid mobilization of connecting actors across space.

Indigenous peoples in Canada are using social media to mobilize support, inform others and are destabilizing mainstream media hegemony in the process. The use of Twitter and during the Idle No More movement is a key example of this. Technology, or the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim alone did not cause these actions to take place, nor did history, people, or social action, but the power in the network of all of these elements combined. Actor Network Theory is a useful way to highlight the connections and blurred boundaries between people, politics, history and technology, and helps illustrate the power that emerges through these connections.

Using my own methodological tool to locate the first use of a hashtag, and follow some of its subsequent uses, as well as the “choreography of assembly” (Gerbaudo 2012:12) that materialized on the ground, has been a useful exercise in following the lifespan of an object (the hashtag #Oct7Proclaim). Situating this object politically and historically, as well as triangulating it with existing literature in social media studies has helped me to explore my research question surrounding the potentially destabilizing consequence of social media to hegemonic media...
frames, and the wider networks involved in this process. ANT is beneficial because it allows us to transcend dualities that are often created in analysis and focus instead on the connections created between both people and non-human actors.
Chapter 4- Reporters, strategists, community leaders and activists: exercising agency to re-frame the dominant discourse

Introduction
For me, the most important and compelling part of my research process were the nine interviews that I conducted with people who had knowledge of, and experience with, Indigenous media relations in Canada. I asked questions to ignite conversations around media strategies and Indigenous agency in the media. Some of these questions are specific to Idle No More, and others were more general in their focus on the context of media relations processes and the strategies involved in forwarding distinct agendas. My hope was to gain some insight on their behind-the-scenes media engagements. These interviews provided insight into strategies and priorities in mobilizing Indigenous voices in the media. They also generated insights surrounding the processes through which Indigenous peoples are breaking the colonial narratives using explicit media strategies. The aim of this project is to highlight these voices. I situate them historically, politically, and socially.

Methodology
I recruited my interviewees through email, using an ethics-approved script to see if they were interested in participating. Some were suggested and introduced to me through an initial email from my advisor, Dr. Brian Thom, and earlier participants referred others; for example, Alex Rose suggested that I contact Tewanee Joseph and Melissa Quocksister because he had worked with them in the past and knew that they could offer insight on the topic. I selected my interviewees based on their having experience surrounding Indigenous media relations, participating in the Idle No More movement, or a combination of both.

With regards to confidentiality, I gave the option to my interviewees to be referred to
using a pseudonym in the dissemination of my results; however, they all opted to be identified by their real names. The interviews were between one and two hours long, and took place in various locations; my home, public spaces (café’s, restaurants), and some were conducted in the workplace of my interviewees. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed.

As in my newspaper analysis, I used van Dijk’s (1983) approach to discourse analysis for my interview data, through which I coded for themes (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002) that emerged as I worked through that interviews. I used NVivo 10 to code and organize these conversations. I brought pre-established codes to my analysis such as ‘advantages of using social media’ and ‘how to reach out to mainstream Canadians’, while others emerged as themes raised by my interviewees, such as using strategic key messaging as well as issues surrounding trust between Indigenous communities and media. The questions that guided my research process obviously produced a specific set of results and directed the conversations in specific ways. The key questions I wanted to answer with my interviews were; how are Indigenous peoples in Canada actively and strategically engaging with the media to challenge hegemony and mobilize political messages? How is this different from the traditional mainstream media?

Analysis

The most frequently occurring coded themes in my interview analysis included: using specific strategies to use media to achieve a goal; the positive uses of social media; reaching out to mainstream Canadians; how Idle No More brought attention to issues or made news; critiques of Idle No More; a desire to focus on the positive; the relationships between reporters and Indigenous peoples; and a critique of newspapers. Here I discuss elements of these conversations that focus on some of these prevalent themes, as well as a few more that don’t fit neatly into these categories. My central goal is to highlight Indigenous voices and explore how they offer an
alternative narrative to the traditional mainstream media.

Mainstream reporters: working from the “inside” to re-frame mainstream Indigenous media representations

Cara McKenna

Cara McKenna, a young Métis reporter, was hired by the Nanaimo Daily news on Vancouver Island amidst a storm of debates and protests surrounding the publication of two racist, anti-First Nation letters to the editor. Though she was hired to cover an urban beat, McKenna has been actively pitching and reporting Indigenous stories for this traditionally conservative, business-oriented paper. She is motivated to bring Indigenous stories to mainstream Canadians and feel that the Canadian public needs to be better educated and updated about these stories and issues. Before McKenna was hired, positive Indigenous stories that offer a depth of background and analysis seldom appeared in The Nanaimo Daily News. She shared with me her strategy for bringing these stories into a generally conservative, white male-dominated newsroom:

Just pitch it and make it sound really interesting in two sentences. With the series I did I knew if I went to my editor and I was like “there is this First Nation and they are doing this land management process and they are opting out of the Indian Act and I really want to do three stories on it” he would probably say “…maybe one.” But the way I pitched it “there was this First Nation and they are building this huge- because I know its a business paper that I work for-- they are building this huge hundred- million dollar economy and it’s going to change the face of this area. There’s going to be a mine and these huge developments, this huge economy, and it’s going to build this huge town between Nanaimo and Ladysmith,” and so, of course, they were like “Yeah, we want that story”. And so when I did the series the story was like that, but the one story was about [the] First Nation Land Management [Act] and the Indian Act, and the other story was about the First Nation journey. It’s kind of interesting because I think if I pitched it differently maybe it wouldn't have flown (Cara McKenna, in interview, January 13 2014).

McKenna is engaged in the art of pitching Indigenous stories at the editorial boardroom
table; this is an “inside job” that requires her to frame news as business stories in order to have approval from her editor. She exercises significant subtlety in her craft to give effect to an alternate voice within the conventional media. In June, 2013, *The Nanaimo Daily News* had Indigenous peoples protesting outside the newsroom. In stark contrast, in April 2014 McKenna was awarded a silver medal from the BC and Yukon Community Newspaper Association for her three-part feature series on the Stz’uminus First Nation, the piece that she refers to pitching in the quote above. McKenna’s stories are reshaping, from the inside, the traditionally conservative paper for which she works as she reaches out to readers with stories featuring Indigenous peoples beyond the stereotype, something that the paper has not previously done.

More specifically, in her three-part series featuring the Stz’uminus First Nation, McKenna highlights the nation’s journey towards self-governance and focuses on the work they are doing to create business and job opportunities for their membership (McKenna 2013a). McKenna told me “I am in this important role that could probably make a difference in some way and so to me these are some of the most compelling stories in Canada to tell and the media doesn’t really focus on aboriginal stories in a way that I like a lot of the time” (in interview, January 13, 2014). Part of her important role is that she passionate about, well versed and interested in, Indigenous issues. My analysis shows this to be a dimension of knowledge that is lacking in most journalists. In contrast to many of the stories that I highlighted surrounding Indigenous issues in the context of Idle No More, McKenna incorporates often-ignored subjects. For example, in her series on the Stz’uminus First Nation, she explains the paternalistic nature of the *Indian Act*, which hinders self-determination by having reserve land controlled by the federal government. She describes, in plain and accessible language, how the recently established *First Nations Land Management Act* allows First Nations to get out of the *Indian Act*, and reinstates
the nation’s power to govern its own land (McKenna 2013b). McKenna highlights the federal obstacles that prevent First Nations’ success, rather than reify the stereotype that there is something wrong with First Nations peoples. Overall, her three-part series frames the Stz’uminus First Nation as active and resilient players, who have control over, and are very excited about, their future (McKenna 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). This challenges the “vanishing Indian” narrative and breaks away from the un-contextualized and negative stories that have been pervasive in the mainstream news media. The success of McKenna’s award-winning stories illustrates that there is a space in the mainstream print media for these positive media stories.

I asked McKenna how she strikes a balance between covering negative issues and statistics and not victimizing Indigenous peoples when she is writing a piece. She explained:

I had a really hard time with this series I was doing because the First Nation is completely in poverty and a huge number of them are on welfare. I think the median income is something like thirteen-grand a year. That is really, really low. And if you go there you can see that everything is beaten down and stuff. But it’s a really positive story; how they got out of the Indian Act and are building this huge hundred-million dollar economy. I kind of explained I need to report this negative side of the story, and I told them that, because if I don’t report it, it doesn’t mean as much, it’s just like ‘Wow, they are awesome’. They were really worried and they didn’t want me to report the negative side at all, the people I was interviewing. And I was like ‘Well I am going to, but we can talk about it, I’ll walk you through it a bit’. They just wanted me to talk about the good stuff. I told them it was a positive story. It was mostly the one guy, he is a business guy and he wants a certain impression out there...The story I wrote turned out to be very much focused on the Chief. I put in the statistics and I contrasted things in a certain way that I felt comfortable with it. There was this one story on CBC recently that the first line was something like ‘When you walk on this reserve there are people doing drugs’, all of this stuff for shock value. But for this one... I had to put some of that information in there because it is important so, I did it. I said ‘You guys just have to trust me’. So they said ‘OK, we trust you, don’t do anything bad; warning me. I did it and they were like ‘Yeah, we are happy with it’ (Cara McKenna, in interview, January 13 2014).

McKenna had previously explained that there is often mistrust between an Indigenous person or community and the reporter, because many times reporters write negative stories without letting the community know their agenda. It is important to her to highlight success
rather than perpetuate negative storylines. As I explained in my media analysis, many stories involving Indigenous peoples have a strong focus on the negative, including negative statistics. McKenna’s focus was on a success story about the community on which she reported; however, she felt that if she did not contrast the success with some of the obstacles that the community has overcome, the story would not mean as much and the readers would not fully comprehend the degree of success that the community has achieved. An example of how she addressed a negative statistic in a way that she felt comfortable with is when she addressed the issue of poverty on reserve. McKenna wrote:

According to the results of a 2011 National Household Survey, the median yearly income of those living on-reserve is just $11,314 and the unemployment rate is 35.6 per cent. But things are improving, and the community is seeing the results of the nation’s efforts. Now, 20 per cent of every dollar that Stz’uminus makes goes directly back into the community in the form of a dividend cheque at Christmastime. It’s currently only about $100 per person, but the amount will increase as the nation’s income grows (McKenna 2013a).

As a young Métis woman with a strong interest in giving voice to Indigenous stories and perspectives, McKenna exercises agency as she challenges mainstream news media’s traditional narrative that negatively frames Indigenous peoples. She has found a way to re-frame these stories in a way that offers a balanced and optimistic portrayal of Indigenous peoples, as exhibited in her series on the Stz’uminus First Nation.

**Duncan McCue**

Duncan McCue, an Anishinabe member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, occupies a very unique position; every night he is on TV in living rooms all across Canada as a reporter on CBC’s The National. Duncan uses his position as a national news reporter to bring attention to storylines that highlight agency and give voice to Indigenous peoples, as he found that in the past Indigenous peoples have been framed in a way that does not offer their voice in history, literature and the news.
McCue told me about his stories on CBC National, as well as his written pieces:

If you go through and look at the First Nation stories that I do, what you will find is strong First Nations voices. And so whether it is a boot maker, who is making their own handicraft made boots, or whether it is the organizer of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or whether it is a sexual assault victim, I always try to have the First Nations people that are in my stories, have agency. To be able to show that they exercise determination- that they can determine their own future, if you will (Duncan McCue, in interview, January 23 2014).

McCue, in consciously framing his news stories to highlight Indigenous agency, is emblematic of the approach I highlight in this thesis; that Indigenous peoples in Canada are exercising agency and considerable self-determination in engaging media relations. He uses his position as a CBC reporter to recast Indigenous characters in news stories into a place of power, thereby challenging traditional news discourse. McCue is essentially reframing the discussion in a way that privileges Indigenous perspectives and highlights agency, rather than perpetuating stereotypes or discourses of victimization. In similar fashion as I conceptualize the goals of my research, McCue highlights how Indigenous peoples make active choices about their future.

McCue recalled how people often approach him from his community to cover their stories. Because he is a national reporter, these stories are often considered too small or local to be covered on The National, so he leads them to local reporters who may be able to help them out. I asked him what, from a community or grassroots perspective, is the best way to bring their agenda to the media. He explained

What works is A) Reaching out, period. Flooding people with press releases doesn’t work. OK. It used to be back in the day we had fax machines and they were just “brrrrrrrrrrr” in the news room and people just flood a newsroom, everybody floods them with faxes, press releases, all this sort of stuff. That doesn’t work… What does work, for me, I know from experience, is when somebody takes a little extra time and gives me a call, me personally a call, and said “Have I got a story for you, and guess what, on top of that it is an exclusive, and I have got a real person and a real character who wants to go on camera”. All of these things [work] (Duncan McCue, in interview, January 23 2014).

McCue sees value in a community taking time to make personal connections with a trusted
reporter. He highlights that a story essentially has to be “pitchable” to be picked up by the news. Also, by doing the work beforehand of having an exclusive story and character that is willing to speak, a community has a better chance of having their story told. Bonner (2003:47) explains, “reporters are expected to produce numerous stories quickly, accurately and interestingly. The difficulty or ease with which the reporter gathers information to produce the story can and does have an enormous bearing on the final product.” McCue’s advice is consistent with this observation; a community having significant information ready for a trusted reporter increases the potential for a high-quality final product. McCue, in establishing these relationships with the community, shows that he is keeping on top of conventional media “best practices,” which allow for a transformative media engagement with a higher quality of insight from the community’s perspective.

In similar light of McKenna’s discussion around trust, McCue also highlighted the importance of having a relationship with a reporter. He explained that having someone call him up personally is another strategy that works.

If I was a communications person for a small First Nation, I would have a small number of reporters who I know do good work based on their past experience, I would have them on my rolodex and just keep pestering them with story ideas. And knowing that some days, five times out of ten maybe they won’t show up, and maybe if they did do a story on me then maybe it might be a year before they will come and do another story, but, that is what I would be doing (Duncan McCue, in interview, January 23 2014).

Like McKenna, McCue highlights the significance and importance of having a strong relationship between the communities and reporter, which can often be a challenge because of a legacy of distrust and negative portrayals by reporters. He also highlights that it takes persistence and determination to make a media presence, and it is not something that generally happens overnight. This approach, of establishing quality connections with trusted journalists to convey
messages, contrasts with the often “viral” overnight success of social media. Connecting with a trusting reporter to promote a community’s goal has the potential for a community to exert more control over the specific message. Social media, as I highlighted in the case of #Oct7Proclaim, opens a space for users to re-tell or transform the message to make it their own, and they could “run away” with their own interpretation of an idea. Social media also tends to bombard participants with a wider array of perspectives, which could detract from the efficacy of having one or two key messages from an individual community. I discuss key messaging in more detail further on in this chapter.

McCue teaches a journalism class at UBC that explores reporting in Indigenous communities. He also has launched a website “Reporting In Indigenous Communities” (http://www.riic.ca), aimed towards professional working journalists. He indicated that the majority of the traffic on the website comes from Canadian professors and students, and from Indigenous communities, who use the site “as kind of a measuring stick when they deal with journalists” (in interview, January 23, 2014). McCue argued for the need for journalism education that explored best practices for how to report respectfully in Indigenous communities, and described a meeting at the CBC several years back where “one of the key recommendations that came out of that gathering was that there needs to be some sort of education for news reporters who are in the newsroom right now who haven’t dealt with Indigenous people” (in interview, January 23, 2014). His website includes items such as: how to strike a balance between good and bad news; how to understand “Indian Time” (that Indigenous people may run on a different schedule, which can be frustrating with a deadline approaching); and the importance of highlighting Aboriginal agency instead telling your story through a narrative of victimization (Reporting in Indigenous Communities 2014). A new generation of journalists
with which McCue works at UBC, along with those who are accessing his website, are likely to have more balanced and complex Indigenous stories that no longer perpetuate stereotypes and victimization, and instead reframe Indigenous peoples and issues and within a balanced and contextualized discourse of self-determination.

“Behind-the-Scenes” Media Strategists

Don Bain

Don Bain, from the Lheidli T’enneh community in Prince George is the executive for the Union of BC Indian Chiefs in Vancouver. On top of his management duties, Don runs the social media for the UBCIC and also runs listservs that he uses to share information, news, and media surrounding Indigenous issues. It was obvious to me that Don was busy. As we sat down at the UBCIC office in downtown Vancouver, he said that he was in the middle of working on a press release that he wanted to get out today. He also notified the receptionist before we entered the meeting room that if either Grand Chief Stewart Phillip (UBCIC President) or Chief Bob Chamberlain (UBCIC Vice President) called, he would like to be notified. It seemed that issues with these men were time sensitive and that he was devoted to his work for the Union. His phone beeped a few times during our conversations and he would pause for a moment to read what I assumed, based on the alert tone, were updates for the social media for which he is in charge.

What struck me most about Don Bain was that he did not seem to think that UBCIC had a distinct strategy for engaging with the media. His attitude was very laid back and he seemed to imply that the organization worked out of their values, and did not act aggressively to get media attention. He maintains two very active and important listservs that redistribute Indigenous-focused news and as mentioned, relies on Twitter extensively to get the UBCIC message across.
When I asked whether he used the media spotlight on the Idle No More movement to bring attention to the UBCIC, he explained:

Stepping back to it, we were very vocal about [the Omnibus Bill] C-38…And it was natural for us to find allies in that. And likewise when things started to really escalate, and they did so quickly, the people; the organizers in Vancouver and in BC, would put out a call and say ‘We’re going to do this. We’re going to be in Metrotown, we’re going to be in Waterfront station, we’re going to be marching to City Hall’ and as it would be it just seemed like for the most part Stewart or Bob were available, and they would go. And the interesting thing is they never went there and said ‘Hi, I’m here, tell me who the organizer is, I’m Chief Bob Chamberlain, I’m the vice president of the UBCIC, tell me when you want me to speak’. They never did that at all. It was that the organizers would see Stewart or Bob and invite them up (Don Bain, in interview, December 5 2013).

Grand Chief Phillip and Chief Chamberlain attended the events not with the intention to bring attention to UBCIC, but were viewed as potentially having something valuable to say at these events and when they spoke it often brought media attention. This attention was more of a side effect of their actions rather than part of their agenda. Bain, along with UBCIC, is playing the strong and steady card when it comes to strategy in media relations. In his powerful role as executive director at UBCIC, he takes great care in the organization’s media relations and has carefully controlled the public images of both Grand Chief Phillip and Chief Chamberlain. Both men are faces for the organization’s strong set of core values that guide their actions. Part of the UBCIC vision is to “support the work of our people, whether at the community, nation or international level, in our common fight for the recognition of our aboriginal rights and respect for our cultures and societies” (UBCIC 2014). UBCIC were strong supporters of the Idle No More movement because the values of the movement aligned with their own.

Alex Rose

Alex Rose has the newspaper industry in his blood. He grew up in a family of reporters going back 5 generations; his father was a city editor at the Vancouver Sun. Alex attended
journalism school at 29 and then worked 20 years as a magazine freelance writer. He is well versed in the mechanics of the newspaper industry and he is sought after as a “spin doctor.” Rose, although not Indigenous, has substantial experience working on the inside to lead high-stakes media relations’ campaigns on behalf of important Indigenous organizations in Canada. These include, amongst others, working with Tewanee Joseph during the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, with Joseph Gosnell of the Nisga’a Nation leading up to the ratification of their treaty in 2000, and with Kim Baird and the Tswassen Band during their treaty ratification process.

Rose has written three books on the Nisga’a; *Nisga’a: People of the Nass River* (1992), *Bringing Our Ancestors Home: the Repatriation of Nisga’a Artifacts* (1998), and more recently, *Spirit Dance at Meziadin* (2000). In *Spirit Dance* Rose highlights his role in helping to develop a strategy of ‘soft’ public education—books, speeches, opinion page articles, brochures, videos and a Web site—to build support and understanding for the treaty. However, as the battle for public support intensified, we helped Joseph Gosnell and the Nisga’a team shift to a program of hardball media tactics that continued right through the countdown to treaty ratification. Through it all, Gosnell’s high-road presentation and on-camera dignity was critical to our success. (Rose 2000:115).

This book focuses more broadly on the negotiations, media relations, and controversy leading up to the Nisga’a Treaty. Rose’s most recent book *First Dollars; Pipelines, Ports, Prisons and Private Property* (2014) features Joseph and Baird, among others, all highlighting their successes engaging in Canada’s economic mainstream.

When I asked him about his strategies to help his clients make news he explained that you need a good, clear, concise message. Not only this, but you need to have connections in the newspaper world, such as establishing a relationship with a reporter, and make sure that your story is about something that is already making news. He explains:

You have to understand them (the media); what does *The Globe and Mail* consider news? Now, you don’t have to be an expert on it but if they are writing today, a lot of the stories
on First Nations are about LNG; liquid natural gas. Is the pipeline going to fuck up the environment? So, that is where you might start. Do you, if you are a First Nation in Terrace, do you have a strong position on a proposed LNG pipeline coming through your traditional territory? So we said this to a number of people and they are all scared. We’re not telling them what to do, but don’t be disappointed if another group gets page one (Alex Rose, in interview, December 5 2013).

From Rose’s perspective, to make news you need to find out what the newspaper wants to hear about and what they consider to be newsworthy, and shape you storyline from there. This is similar to what Cara McKenna did with her series on the Stz’uminus, and also, as my newspaper analysis revealed, was a technique from which many Indigenous authors draw. Like Cara McKenna and Duncan McCue, Rose highlighted the significance of establishing a relationship with a reporter, which was a common thread in my interviews.

In his 11 years working with the Nisga’a, a central part of Rose’s job during their campaign was to educate mainstream Canadians about the treaty through the media. I asked him his techniques behind using the media for educating the mainstream, and how he managed to make it interesting and relevant to mainstream Canadians. He responded:

Originaly with the Nisga’a it was a fair bit of history, and there was an exotic aspect to it. This is probably the first group making history, so there was a historical thing for that. But later on it got into a fierce fight and you have to be, and it wasn’t just me dreaming this up, to make Canadians care, it’s that the Nisga’a will break the pattern of dependency. They will become independent, educated citizens, entering the economic mainstream...Canadians are very interested and they want to hear success stories (Alex Rose, in interview, December 5 2013).

When I asked them how to make Canadians understand the issues surrounding treaties he explained “You engage the Canadian public with plain language, you don’t obfuscate, you don’t use lawyer language, and you realize as you get closer there’s going to be a lot of opposition; it’s going to be hot button, so you have other tools. You have key messages, press lines; you have to have an instant system of media relations” (in interview, December 5 2013). Press lines, also known as key messages, are strategic simple and specific messages that convey central key ideas.
to the public audience (Howe 2013). In similar light of a well-crafted Tweet that Rose relies on to convey messages, press lines are important tools for boiling down messages to something that is short, and to the point. In Rose’s experiences, focusing on these “to the point” methods of communication is more efficient than relying on jargon with which the wider audience may not be familiar.

I asked Mr. Rose to reflect more deeply on how Indigenous organizations can keep control over their media messages when involved in a high-stakes, very public campaigns, such as the Nisga’a Treaty. He explained:

This term is overused, but in the final fury, or dramatic climax to the Nisga’a deal, we almost set up a ‘war room’. Now, not a war room like Clinton did in that famous documentary, but my whole role then was newsroom in reverse. That’s all I did for about a year. And then we went through the legislature in Victoria and media, media, media, and down to Ottawa; media, media, media. I became a full-time spin-doctor, that’s all I did; media relations. So every day, or maybe 3-4 times a day, updating the media message, in constant touch with Joe Gosnell or whomever the spokesperson was, constantly briefing and updating reporters. And there’s a mountain of newspapers of media coverage of the Nisga’a treaty (Alex Rose, in interview, December 5 2013).

Rose’s work on the Nisga’a Treaty is an example of a First Nation actively taking control of the media. The “war room” metaphor highlights the pro-active and time-sensitive nature of this campaign, and its set up was central in transforming the media relations surrounding the campaign from hostile to celebratory of this historic achievement. The Nisga’a, aided by Alex, maintained control over their message with these strategies, even when oppositional stories showed up in the papers, such as when the National Post published a series of seven anti-treaty opinion articles in the fall of 1999 (Rose 2000:186).

Rose’s writing skills and media connections, helped the Nisga’a to control their media campaign surrounding the treaty and educate mainstream Canadians about the process. He has successfully managed media relations, which has made his reputation as a trustworthy choice for
First Nation media campaigns. As I explored in my conversations with Duncan McCue and Cara McKenna, trust has been a common thread in my conversations surrounding relationships between Indigenous communities and media personnel.

In his work on media relations for the Nisga’a, Alex Rose was asked to develop strategies to raise the profile of Nisga’a leader Chief Joseph Gosnell (Rose 2000:153). He explained that “Gosnell’s high-road presentation and on-camera dignity was critical to our success” (Rose 2000:13) and by “standing firmly on higher ground, appealing to the better nature of the Canadian public that had grown to trust and empathize with him, he was able to convey the public impression that he was able to resist the insidious ideological gamesmanship without the coarsening of mind that comes from doing battle” (Rose 2000:153). Gosnell’s media persona was carefully crafted and maintained, similar to UBCIC Grand Chief Philip and Chief Chamberlain, both of who have Don Bain to manage their media representations. The public personas of these men have yielded very different outcomes than that of the media relations surrounding Chief Spence, as the media ran quickly focused on negative and stereotyped versions of the “corrupt Chief”, as discussed in Chapter 2. Indigenous agency in the media is being asserted through this strategy of consciously creating, and framing, a persona.

As I showed in my newspaper analysis, news coverage typically does not put effort into contextualizing or giving history when it comes to many Indigenous issues. I asked Alex Rose about this and he told me,

This is back to my point again and is a very good question. The National Post editors, tough-minded people, they’re not going to do history lessons. They’re making news, however arbitrary that is. Yes, they’ll allow a paragraph or two of that, but a whole lecture about what happened at Oka, they’ll just say that’s old news… The editor’s would say we’ve got 800 words for a powerful news story. They will say ‘why don’t people just go to the Encyclopedia of British Columbia’. This is what they have to debate; why should it be the newspaper’s thing to tell the history of Aboriginal people? Now, on the internet, the web version, you could have a link-to the Encyclopedia of Canada- it’s a really lovely tool.
Rose’s comment highlights how online-news, rather than print media, may be a tool that is better educating people about Indigenous issues in Canada. CBC Aboriginal, a recently launched section on the CBC website, is an example of mainstream news media making in-depth stories available and accessible to public audiences. Having links embedded into an online article can lead people to more in-depth and informative pieces that cover context and history for which the newspaper does not always have space. It also highlights that the newspaper really is mainly concerned with “parachute issues,” or what is making news, rather contextualizing and offering history lessons. However, this is not always the case, as I have illustrated with the examples from Cara McKenna’s stories surrounding the Stz’uminus First Nation, which take the time to explore history while still delivering the story her editor desires. Twitter users can add links in their Tweets, which shows that social media opens up opportunities to point participants to more contextualized sources.

Community Leaders

Tewanee Joseph

Tewanee Joseph, of Maori and Squamish First Nation descent, was the CEO of the Four Host Nations (the First Nations on whose traditional territory the Olympics were held) during the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. Today he runs a consulting company, which specializes in Aboriginal relations and communications. Tewanee is often credited for the media relations during these Olympics that highlighted Canada’s diverse Indigenous communities. The Four Host Nations were active partners in every aspect of the games, and not, as Tewanee put it “Dime Store Indians,” used only to be put on display in events such as the opening and closing ceremonies. Tewanee and the Four Host Nations saw the Olympics as an excellent opportunity
for First Nations to prosper financially, socially, as well as in sporting, and to break Indigenous stereotypes.

Joseph has a very direct strategy for engaging with the media and controlling his stories and messages. He explained;

A lot of it was coming back to that basic principle; as much coverage as I could do no matter what time of day, and if it killed me I was going to do it...Because our messaging was so tight... The toughest part about messaging for the games was when you think about Canada and First Nations and Inuit and Métis people, it’s so big, it’s so vast and it’s so different. And so, our goal over a period of time, was that, well there’s so many issues too when you have 200 plus First Nations in BC, 600 plus in Canada. How do you really educate people? So what I did was, we asked ourselves a question: If you had one minute to tell a story, what would you say? That was it...For media we had to make it very clear and understandable to them. Because if I mentioned things like treaty, non-treaty, comprehensive claims, specific claims, they would never understand it at all, so the messaging had to be very simple. So that is how we challenged ourselves and tested ourselves (Tewanee Joseph, in interview, January 24 2014).

These media strategies are consistent with those of Alex Rose and Don Bain; boiling your points down to one or a few simple messages, rather than being caught up in the complexities and intricacies of Indigenous rights and history. Their messages focus on framing Indigenous peoples in Canada as active, productive, culturally vibrant and diverse, which contrast with the “vanishing Indian” narrative, as well as many of the stereotypes that I have already explored, such as Duncan McCue’s W4D rule. Tewanee Joseph’s specific focus during the Olympics was to break stereotype and to highlight that there is a strong and diverse presence of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Joseph employed strategies that went beyond print media to highlight this strong presence and diversity. A “Four Host First Nations Welcome” video launched two weeks before the Olympics breaks stereotype by highlighting the vivaciousness and diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada in a montage of high-resolution video clips and accessible on YouTube and
currently has 36 621 views (Four Host First Nations 2010). In a 2010 *Globe and Mail* story, Joseph said he wanted “straight emotion and inspiration” (Hume 2010) for the video, and explained “we don’t very often celebrate success in our community. I don’t know why that is, but if the images you see about yourself are always negative, you begin to think things are impossible… You see your people as being victims all the time, that’s how you start to see yourself, and that is very limiting” (Hume 2010). The FHFN also hosted the Aboriginal Pavilion during the games, which showed the video and featured performances and work from hundreds of Aboriginal artists from across Canada (Hume 2010). The video and pavilion both acted to break stereotype by highlighting the strength and diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada on an international level. These interactions illustrated a sort of boundary crossing, as the Aboriginal Pavilion was an open invitation for Indigenous, settler-Canadian, and international participants to assemble around celebrations of Indigenous cultural diversity and vibrancy. This approach went beyond the scope of mainstream print media and choreographed on-the-ground interactions, in similar light of the rallies organized during Idle No More.

Tewanee Joseph is well-versed in the mechanics of the newspaper industry and he employed Alex Rose to help him get as much coverage as he could during the Olympics. He, like Cara McKenna, Alex Rose and Duncan McCue, emphasized importance of ongoing engagement with news reporters, and he engaged with as many reporters as he could, any time of the day, during the Olympics. He is also well-aware that settler-Canadians rely on mainstream print media for their knowledge of Indigenous peoples in Canada and therefore messages must be clear and simple in order to resonate with readers and break the stereotype. If you look back at the media coverage of the Vancouver Olympics in 2010, you can see clearly that there was a strong Aboriginal presence. Through diverse media, Joseph orchestrated a campaign that showed
the rest of Canada, and the world, that there is a strong and diverse First Nation, Métis and Inuit presence in Canada.

Joseph does work on specific claims and treaties for First Nations with his consulting company, and he continues to share the media strategies that he and Alex Rose used during the Olympics to help other Indigenous communities take control over their own media messages. He carries forward what worked well during the Olympics; key messaging. He also offers media training which helps to prepare people for when the spotlight is on them, thus controlling their message and relaying information confidently to achieve their goals. He shared his basic strategies:

I believe to be truthful. If you give people the right information in the right way people will make the right decisions. When it comes to external media, obviously we message everything three or four key messages, every single time, we prepare with questions and answers so people will know the types of questions that might be coming down that might be not related to their issues. So when we do media training and such with people that it was I always try to get people to do, is to say ‘If we are going to have a conversation and you are going to explain this to me, how would it be?’ We use those same tools and tactics today. And also I think is what makes something unique, and that is always the thing about working with media is, what is going to make it unique? I think that when it comes to media they have got to sell papers, so I think for us it is always about that... We don’t spend as much time on crisis media as we used to, that was a lot of what I would do, but now we are thinking more pro-actively. We have a fact sheet, a background, a Q&A, a chronology of events, and a power point presentation, those are your key elements every single time...That’s how it has worked for us and we continue to do it today. (Tewanee Joseph, in interview, January 24 2014).

Joseph highlights that they are thinking much more pro-actively now, and later in the interview explained to me that from 2001 to now he has seen a huge change in that most First Nations have a communications person today, and are working more actively to gain control over their media messages; “I can’t even believe this, how far it has come. And so I think that First Nations people over the last decade really realized even more and more how important it is” (in interview, January 24, 2014).
In an effort to get basic communications resources to potential clients and interested First Nations in Canada, Joseph was contracted by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) in 2011 to write a “First Nations Communications Toolkit” based on his experiences. In the preface he writes

Oral history has been a fundamental part of First Nations culture for many generations - First Nations people have been effective communicators for centuries. The challenge in modern times is to find the appropriate mainstream tools to share our vision in a clear and understandable way - with membership, the surrounding community and with the media (AANDC 2011).

This toolkit was circulated to all First Nations in BC, as well as with some in eastern Canada, and is also available online. Reiterating the key messages that Joseph uses in his business, this toolkit gives readers the tools to build an effective communications plan, covering areas such as branding, reporter relations and community engagement. Its circulation highlights the interest that Indigenous people have in controlling their media messages.

This state-sponsored toolkit challenges my earlier assumptions surrounding the hegemonic, state-sponsored, stereotype-perpetuating nature of the mainstream media. It calls into question the state’s complex and at times contradictory nature. The state does not always hinder First Nation self-determination. The FHFN worked closely and was sponsored by the government during the Vancouver Olympics, and Joseph told me that he felt supported and had an overall positive experience with the government during this time. AANDC also sponsored workshops surrounding media relations that Joseph has facilitated. Sponsoring this Toolkit does not seem to be significantly different from what the government has always done with First Nations people, which is to give them tools they view as being supportive, while perpetuating paternal and oppressive structures. Another possibility is that this toolkit is representative of a gap in previous academic literature, which focuses only on what the state is doing to stereotype
and oppress Indigenous peoples, and shows that alliances are being formed and new relationships are being established.

**Melissa Quocksister**

Melissa Quocksister is a councilor and a treaty negotiator for the K’ómoks First Nation, and became the first communications person for her band through her willingness to go on camera. Like Tewanee Joseph, she runs her own consulting business, and does work for First Nation bands throughout British Columbia.

Quocksister was hired by her band’s treaty team to be their communications person, and worked the job during an Agreement In Principle (AIP) ratification. Her job was to communicate this agreement to the members of her community, as well as to mainstream Canadians. “We would get asked by the local media lots about what was going on. We were working up to a vote so they wanted to know what was going on. A lot of the times what we did was we would put together a press release and give it out to them and let them run their story with that. They would call me once in a while for some quotes.”

Quocksister, along with members of the K’ómoks First Nation, employed specific strategies to effectively control their media messages. She told me that “using the media is always on our list of strategies and actions to get things that we need” (in interview, January 22 2014). The K’ómoks First Nation also employed Alex Rose to help strategize effective media communications. After her first brush with the media, Quocksister would get calls from reporters, asking her opinion pertaining the AIP. To ensure a controlled and strategic message, she would find out what exactly the media wanted to know, and then call Alex Rose and the Chief Negotiator to carefully craft their exact message, before responding to the media. This controlled and calculated technique parallels with the strategies Rose and the Nisga’a used to
maintain control of their messages surrounding the Treaty, and more recently used by Rose and Joseph during the Olympics. This highlights the perceived effectiveness of using clear and concise key messages.

I asked her what else is involved in successfully controlling her media message and she explained

Being friends with the reporters, relationships. One day I randomly met a couple of people from CNN, and they gave me some business cards and said if I ever needed anything media wise to give them a call, for anything that’s a big deal. And they said for the right price we will spin anything the way you want it. That’s what media does. You pay your advertising costs, you tell them what you want to happen, and they will shape things, put it out the way you need to put it out, to tell your story (Melissa Quocksister, in interview, January 22 2014).

This comment reinforces the importance of establishing connections and relationships with reporters and media, and Quocksister may use these connections soon; her nation is in the process of treaty negotiations and she told me that the main thing holding them back is the government not doing their part of the work. She is considering using the media as a tool to draw attention the government’s lack of effort in this process, but is waiting until the time is right:

We have our strategies and usually hitting the media would be just before protesting, on a scale of how to handle a situation. For example, if we are having trouble with some sort of negotiations and it is at a standstill and we can’t move forward, but it is super important to us, and we can’t have a treaty without it, we would try the negotiations first. If that was getting nowhere, then we could bring it to the minister level. If nothing would happen there, we would do a public campaign, which would be media stuff, and if still no movement then we would probably go into a blockade or a road block situation, a protest situation, and that has always been our action plan. We have never had to go that far, the furthest we have ever gone with that action plan is media. And because we have had so much success with it and the governments know that they don't usually let it go that far either, because they can be horribly embarrassed by some of the thing they are doing, I think, as far as holding (us) up (in) negotiations in trying to move forward and trying to be independent. It’s a tough go (Melissa Quocksister, in interview, January 22 2014).

It is evident that the media plays a key role for her community’s strategies towards self-determination, and that they have an explicit step-by-step plan that would direct them to their
goal. Like Dan Wallace and Duncan McCue reveal in my social media chapter, Quocksister is aware of the role of the media as a public watchdog. Her nation has a very specific protocol when it comes to strategies towards self-determination, and the media is a central tool for taking action.

One strategy that Quocksister and the other leaders in her community employed during the Idle No More movement was to not be a part of the protests because of the potential harm to ongoing relationships with the government. She explained that there were many environmental groups that were promoting things that took the movement to a level beyond what it was meant to be.

The last thing that we wanted was to be standing there in a corner, and somebody behind us with a sign saying ‘down with the government’ or something like that, and then the next thing you know we are supporting the sign behind us. That is just one of the downsides of media, is that you really have to be careful, especially when you are a politician, where you are and what you are doing so that people perceive you are representing something that you’re not. That was a whole new something for me to learn; what I can’t do anymore. But it’s not that we didn’t support it (Melissa Quocksister, in interview, January 22 2014).

While she supported the ideas behind the movement, she was aware of the types of frames that the media may draw from if they published photographs with her next to protesters holding “anti-government” signs. She is very conscious that media messages are often skewed and did not want to take the chance of being pitted against the government during a time that the government is playing a key role in their goal of attaining a treaty.

Strategic Activists

Ernie Crey

Ernie Crey, an advisor for the Stó:lō Tribal Council near Vancouver, and former social worker, began a media career early on when the Ministry of Child and Family brought him to a television show, as well as various conferences, to speak to audiences about his experiences in
the adoption system in Canada. Today he is an activist and is outspoken in the media about many issues, including his concerns surrounding the fisheries, as well as missing and murdered Aboriginal women. He is also the co-author of *Stolen From Our Embrace*, a book about the residential school system and “The Sixties Scoop”, which involved Indigenous children being forcibly taken from their families and adopted out to largely non-Indigenous families. For years he has helped First Nations across Canada gain media attention in order to persuade the government to keep their promises to these communities. Crey explained to me;

Over the years, becoming a social worker and travelling around BC working, I finally put two and two together and thought; ‘I could probably get a reporter to report on the abominable, horrific, conditions of these communities, such that these politicians here can be embarrassed into doing something. Aha! I guess these reporters can be useful... That is what I call my ‘First Responder’ type of response. When I am called into these crisis, which I have done all my life, all different places across Canada... all of these places that have just been forgotten.... In isolation and no way of getting anyone’s attention, no one gives a shit, so I go there and I teach people how to force politicians and corporations and provincial governments [to respond] (Ernie Crey, in interview, January 23 2014).

Crey’s “First Responder” approach is essentially to shame or embarrass governments, politicians and corporations into responding to Indigenous needs. He states that those in power will often “do the right thing for the wrong reason.” He draws from his connections with the news media to spotlight the wrongdoings that governments, politicians and corporations have committed to Indigenous peoples. Ernie knows that these powerful organizations work hard to create and maintain positive public images and threatening this reputation has been a powerful strategy provoking change. He challenges those in power when he prods at their soft spots, by threatening their very character, actions and intentions, and brings forward Indigenous concerns. Furniss (2001) finds that Aboriginal leaders may generate support using the media, as they recognize the “moral watchdog” function of the media. Crey’s “First Responder” response relies on a similar action. Duncan McCue and Dan Bain noted a similar strategy when participants
used social media to critique mainstream media coverage of events surrounding the Idle No
More movement. This approach is also a part of the K'ómoks First Nation’s action plan.

Crey showed a fair bit of skepticism towards the Idle No More movement. He critiqued
their lack of organization and infrastructure, two elements that he views as central to a
movement:

What’s a movement? A movement demands organization; not just organizing yourself to
get out of bed and grab your drum and go down to the mall. An organization has it its core,
an infrastructure. It has people coordinating, planning, and strategizing. And I said ‘You
don’t have that’. Organization precedes a movement. And some of them, I can see their
minds light up, and many of them just don’t, they say ‘Ernie, that’s old school,’ and I said
‘that is never old school, that is just the way it is whether it is 1640, 1200 or 1400 BC’. It’s
universal. It’s the same, it’s for all time. You can’t have a movement without an
organization and you don’t have an organization. That is why Idle No More fell flat on its
face. It was a good concept, but it became a social network phenomenon (Ernie Crey, in
interview, January 23 2014).

He compared the actions of the participants in the movement to those who dropped out of
society to join communes in the 1960’s. He explained to me that he has had conversations with
the youth involved in the movement, telling them that they are too caught up in the romanticism;
that they should be getting involved in politics and other things with which they may not
necessarily feel comfortable. Ernie promotes the idea that youth could create change by working
from “the inside”;

Look at what happened at the conservative party convention in Calgary a few months
back. If about 40 or 50 of you had taken out membership in the conservative party and
gone back at delegates, and you got up to the microphone and you said ‘Our party’s
policies on Aboriginal people, this is what I think.’ What do you think would have
happened? Instead we are worried, we are outside singing and drumming, what did that
do? Where did that get you? Who was listening to you? Nobody. That’s right. Nobody.
These were the same arguments I was having back in the 60’s (Ernie Crey, in interview,

Crey is not opposed to activism, but he seems to like to push younger activists to an
uncomfortable zone and make them really consider the power and efficacy of their actions, as
well as the intention behind them:

My question always is; what did it contribute? How did it advance you down the field? What yardage did you gain? Did it take you closer to your goals? And by the way, what are your goals? “Well man to bring the system down man, we want people to stop burning fossil fuels and poisoning mother earth,” and I’m going “oh, OK, so that is going to do that?” (Ernie Crey, in interview, January 23 2014).

Crey’s insights and skepticism surrounding the movement highlight that gatherings alone, may not create the change that is wanted, and actions have to continue on a personal and daily basis in order to generate long-term differences.

**Janet Rogers**

Janet Rogers, a Mohawk writer from Six Nations, is an artist, activist and the Poet Laureate of Victoria. She also hosts a bi-weekly show on CBC radio called “Tribal Clefs” on which she features First Nations, Métis and Inuit musicians. When it comes to her work, including her media engagements, her desire is to “build that message, the message of independence, of land protection, resistance against corporate development, build that message into everything you do every single day of your life.” One way that Rogers consciously builds a strong Indigenous message into everything that she does is by highlighting Indigenous music for her audience of Canadian CBC listeners.

When I asked her about her choices behind the artists that she brings to CBC listeners, Rogers explained to me;

the music I have will often have a message in it. So I am able to – not in a subversive way, but in a way that unapologetically says ‘I am proud of this music and I am excited about this music that is coming from the Indigenous community, and yeah there is a message there’. So if you dig it you can dig it on the activist level, you can appreciate it on a musical level, or even on a cultural level, because what is happening in the native music scene now is part and parcel of what is happening in the current cultural context as well, and so it’s pretty groovy what I get to do (Janet Rogers, in interview, January 8 2014).

Roger’s role as a public broadcaster allows her to reach out to Canadian listeners through
the Indigenous musicians that she features, exposing listeners to nuanced themes surrounding Indigenous culture, activism and social justice. Her work with CBC news highlights how music also is a part of mainstream media. Focusing on this cultural element is a different strategy than depending on headlines and news stories to bring Indigenous issues forward. Instead of using news stories about Indigenous peoples, Janet uses music and poetry to bring social change. The themes she brings forward, such as land protection and anti-corporate development, challenge the national narrative that privileges economy over environment.

**Dan Wallace**

Dan Wallace is a hereditary chief from the Campbell River area on Quadra Island and is of Lek-Kwil-Taich (Kwakwaka’wakw) and Haida descent. He has worked as an instructor at the Native Education College in Vancouver, and is also an artist and activist. I found Wallace on the Idle No More group page on Facebook, noticing that he organized events during the height of the movement and is very active on the Facebook page. Our interview was conducted through a web-chat; thus, we did not meet in person. Although he has had minimal direct experience working in media relations, I was mainly interested in his participation in the Idle No More movement.

Wallace, who has been an activist since OKA, takes a solution-oriented approach to Idle No More and sees the potential that is has to open up a dialogue. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Wallace saw that social media was a positive tool for choreographing the events for the movement that he organized, but did not use it as a substitute for meeting face to face, so he held meetings in his home in Vancouver with other organizers. He has also organized actions before social media existed, and explains:

I have noticed a huge difference in organizing. Back then when organizing we actually had to use the phone and meet face to face. Today some people think that just posting an event
on Facebook is all it takes to organize, so some INM events flopped. It has also created a knee jerk reaction way of organizing and that itself is somewhat devaluing of the issues that people want to put out there… I have had to not get involved with every little action that people want to organize because it takes its toll as a parent and even a supporter. I have even went to certain events and spoke up on the mic, telling people that organizing an event has to have a focus and the end result is not the event (Dan Wallace, in interview, November 27 2013).

Although Wallace is supportive of Idle No More movement, he echoed elements of Ernie Crey’s critique. He feels that events, in similar light to press lines, key messaging, or a well-written Tweet, must have a specific focus in order to effectively relay a message. He also points out that some people just post an event on Facebook and assume that it will be a success; however, it seems that effective events need more than just web-communication. Wallace stressed the importance of face-to-face interactions for event planning, and this interaction, along with having a specific goal in mind, are critical to the success of an event. He also explained “the end result is not the event,” and Idle No More is about more than just rallies. “What INM means to me today is the ability to not only organize events but have an established way to communicate on a national level and get heard. It can be a gateway into obtaining a national consensus on how to move forward as a people outside the established Indian Act structure on the imposed Indian Act elected system” (Dan Wallace, in interview, November 27 2013). Wallace views Idle No More as a chance to open up a dialogue about the future direction for Indigenous peoples in Canada, and as a stepping stone to mobilize support for these new directions (for example, getting out of the processes surrounding the imposed Indian Act).

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to highlight Indigenous voices in conversations about Indigenous media relations, as well as the Idle No More movement with individuals experienced
in media communications. My aim was to highlight the strategic relations as Indigenous peoples take control over their media messages, whether it be through hiring an experienced ‘spin doctor’, writing balanced news stories for local papers, highlighting Indigenous agency on a national level, helping other Indigenous peoples control their messages and strategize, actively crafting press releases or using social media to share their story. These behind-the-scenes engagements offer insight that highlights Indigenous agency and eschews a framing of Indigenous peoples as victims or powerless in the media. These could also offer insight to Indigenous peoples who would like to exercise agency surrounding their media representation, and draw from media relations to achieve a goal.

While the interviewees come from different communities, some share common goals including: bringing Indigenous issues into the mainstream; establishing better relationships between Indigenous communities and reporters; making their issues relevant to mainstream Canadians; giving their nation a voice; and sharing their skills with others who may be able to use them to achieve their own goals. Many recognize that the media can be used in a way to hold the government or other organizations accountable. All of these strategies seem to have an underlying thread: self-determination. The individuals interviewed use their skills to work towards the goals of their own and of other Indigenous communities.

These interviews provide an important supplement to anthropological inquiry on Indigenous communities and the media; instead of relying only on newspaper analysis to explore Indigenous media relations and representation, I have gained first-hand insight from individuals who have had significant experience in this field. Rather than promote a victimizing narrative, these examples highlight Indigenous peoples in Canada taking control over their media messages and employing very direct strategies to do so.
These strategies could be beneficial to other Indigenous communities who want to take a more pro-active approach to media relations, or reporters who would like to offer a more balanced approach to their reporting on Indigenous communities. To summarize, some of the key insights that I have highlighted are the value of:

1) Establishing a strong relationship with reporters or other media personnel.
2) Taking advantage of social media, such as Twitter, to give community a voice.
3) Pitching a story in a way that appeals to the newspaper as a business; finding out what kind of stories they are looking for.
4) Not drowning reporters or media outlets with press releases; instead give them a call focus on establishing a relationship.
5) Having a few key messages (assuring they are unified and coherent) and being prepared to explain them in a direct, jargon-free way.
6) Highlighting success stories and agency.
7) Being pro-active rather than reactive.
8) If possible, have a spokesperson; people like to put a face to a community or a specific issue.
9) Being truthful.
10) Pushing reporters to give more context and history (if you are a reporter, frame stories in a way that allows you to add more context and history).
11) Accessing resources, such as Tewanee Joseph’s “First Nations Communications Toolkit” or Duncan McCue’s “Reporting in Indigenous Communities” website, and if funding permits, hiring a consultant to help establish direction.
12) Realizing that media can be used as a “public watchdog”; politicians, industry, and the government do not like to look bad.
Chapter 5- Conclusion

Indigenous peoples in Canada are not passive victims of stereotypes, racism and colonialism (which is a common way they are framed), but are instead actively and strategically engaging media and offering counter-narratives to the dominant discourse. I have offered an analysis of three separate forms of media: mainstream print media; social media; and media relations, all with a focus on Indigenous empowerment and agency. Drawing from a discourse of empowerment and representation shifts the analytical focus away from what is negative, and instead digs deeper into a focus on what is positive. Highlighting those strategies that successfully bring attention to Indigenous perspectives makes a more meaningful contribution to the scholarship of Indigenous media relations than does a focus only on strategies that recapitulate stereotypes. Successful strategies may provide models for Indigenous communities who seek to take more control over their media messages. While I do not ignore stereotypes or victimization, I hope that this perspective of focusing on agency and power will inspire other academics to be mindful of their representations of communities that have historically been oppressed or victimized.

My newspaper analysis found that, although there was a critical lack of well-contextualized Indigenous perspectives, the Idle No more movement nonetheless flooded papers with stories that focused on the movement and on some of the broader concerns that it raised. However, because the movement was grassroots, there was no strategic control over the media message. The press focused on what they observed, such as rallies and protests, and, in fulfilling its desire to put a face to the movement, the press also focused significantly on Chief Theresa Spence. Traditionally, settler-Canadian’s narratives have had central control over the mainstream
print media, and Indigenous stories are infrequent. However, this hegemonic narrative is unstable, and I highlighted a few Indigenous people in Canada who are asserting agency as they engaged with the mainstream print media by authoring articles in the papers, or through interviews that were published. Indigenous engagement surrounding the Idle No More movement has put many Indigenous issues in the mainstream media. However, social media also hosted a wider array Indigenous priorities and grassroots voices, as I highlighted in my case study on #Oct7Proclaim.

In the articles I read surrounding Idle No More, many viewed social media as central to this movement, and I have reviewed how other contemporary social movements have used this tool to mobilize action. My social media analysis took a qualitative approach as I followed one hashtag, #Oct7proclaim, from its origins to its ascent, and traced some of its uses both in cyberspace and on the ground. Instead of looking at social media from a statistical perspective, I illustrated the benefit of historically contextualizing a hashtag, following how it was used to choreograph on-the-ground action. I illustrated that it is not social media, but the larger networks of people, technology, history, politics and collective action, that have power to challenge mainstream media hegemony.

While social media contributed to the viral nature of the Idle No More movement, my interviews seem to point to the conclusion that strategic engagements with mainstream media, supplemented with the use of social media (such as Don Bain’s use of Twitter to engage news reporters) can have a more transformative effect on overall media representations. Ernie Crey’s assertion that Idle No More was a social media phenomenon seems to back up the focus on conventional media approaches of my interviewees. However, social media was used to choreograph events during the Idle No More movement, and it was these events that got the
most press attention, as supported by my mainstream media analysis. My Coast Salish case study also highlighted the newspaper articles that covered these events and brought forward Coast Salish concerns, despite the fact that these stories remained largely un-contextualized.

Ideas surrounding trust and relationships between Indigenous communities and those involved in media relations was a common thread brought forward by my interviewees. These quality-based relationships contrast with the relationships based on quantity that social media establishes. While Twitter can unite geographically dispersed voices quickly and make content “viral,” it seems that sustained and strategic mainstream media relations have more potential to transform discourse and reform these institutions.

Interviews with experienced media relations’ personnel allowed me to look at how a few distinct actors use the Idle No More movement and media relations more broadly to exercise agency as they actively engage mainstream and social media. From these interviews, I was able to summarize some key strategies that could be beneficial to other Indigenous peoples or communities who would like to have a stronger media presence and use the media to achieve a specific goal. This chapter gave first-hand insights into media relations and illustrated that Indigenous peoples in Canada are actively and strategically engaging with the mainstream media to achieve their goals. My interviews focused on strategy--particularly on “what works”--from those with first-hand experience in media relations. These strategies could be of use to Indigenous communities who would like to engage with mainstream media to achieve a goal or to create a media presence.

Discussions surrounding Idle No More and social media have garnered a variety of responses. While Janet Rogers and Dan Wallace have actively participated in organizing events and were engaged with and overall supportive of the movement, Ernie Crey’s perspective was
more critical of the movement and the social media “phenomenon” that it became. One thing these gatherings have contributed to is an increase of strength among Indigenous peoples. Both younger and older generations revealed that participating in Idle No More gatherings has made them feel stronger, increased collective self-esteem and made them feel proud that their people are coming together (Griffin and McKnight 2013:B2; Lavoie 2013b:A1; Rusland 2013). Historically, gatherings have been a source of strength for Coast Salish peoples (of which Crey is a descendant) as for example big house potlatches and winter dance ceremonies, which were outlawed by the Indian Act in 1885 (Bierwer 1999:23). Today Indigenous peoples are finding strength as they gather and openly share their culture with each other and with settler-Canadians.

My interviewee’s experience and expertise within media relations draw from their knowledge of how conventional media perpetuates a hegemonic discourse, which they draw from and then re-frame in order to get their messages through. Cara McKenna pitches her Indigenous-focused stories within the economic focus of The Nanaimo Daily News, while focusing on important and often-ignored Indigenous contexts, and consciously frames her stories in a positive way. Duncan McCue knows what makes a good story and draws from these components (such as having an exclusive story, and a “character” who is willing to talk) to work within this pre-existing news story framework to bring Indigenous stories to the media, while simultaneously challenging stereotypes by highlighting Indigenous agency. He also acknowledges the opportunity to educate reporters on best practices for reporting Indigenous stories, and has brought these issues forward to his colleagues at the CBC, and students at UBC.

Essentially encompassing the role of media strategist as UBCIC executive, my interviewee Don Bain has found where social media and mainstream news media overlap. Bain uses the UBCIC Twitter feed to attract potential news coverage from mainstream reporters. He
also acts as his own reporter through Twitter, finding that this gives him more control over the story he wants to tell. An experienced spin-doctor, Alex Rose, well-versed in the mechanics of the newspaper industry, works with Indigenous organizations to control their media message using traditional methods such as key messaging. He knows the importance of the organization having a well-respected face for the issue, and has worked hard in his media campaigns to garner public support for the leaders, such as Chief Gosnell during the Nisga’a Treaty.

Tewanee Joseph wanted to break from stereotypes during the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, and knew he had to portray messages surrounding Indigenous diversity and cultural vitality in a clear and understandable way. Janet Rogers draws from a similar strategy as she highlights the variety of Indigenous musical artists in Canada by sharing their music that contains activist messages. She uses her position as a CBC radio columnist to share these messages with broader Canadian audiences.

Melissa Quocksister and Ernie Crey recognize the mainstream media’s role as “public watchdog” and, while Ernie has used the media to shame those in power to provide aid for Indigenous communities, Melissa has not yet used this strategy, although it may be the next step in the K'ómoks First Nation’s action plan. Dan Wallace knows that social media can also act as “public watchdog” and has seen this in action when participants used social media to hold the mainstream media accountable for inaccurately portraying Mi’kmaq activists at the October 2013 protests in Elsipogtog, New Brunswick.

On January 29 2014, the city of Nanaimo, Vancouver Island University and the Snuneymuxw First Nation hosted an event in response to the series of racist, anti-First Nation letters that were published in the Nanaimo Daily News. Chief Doug White, in his opening remarks, asked “How can we use the media in new and positive ways?” The panel, moderated by
former AFN National Chief Sean Atleo, consisted of Duncan McCue, Wab Kinew, and freelance journalist Judith Lavoie. Each of the panel members addressed this and other questions surrounding the role that media plays in the relationship between Indigenous and settler-Canadians and in reconciliation. The auditorium for this event was standing room only, a sign of the public’s interest in this subject, and served as a space where boundaries between Indigenous peoples, the press and mainstream Canadians were crossed. The theme of relationship was brought into their discussions; Lavoie, a settler-Canadian, highlighted that too often Indigenous communities and organizations shut out reporters, and while she understands this distrust, she does not think that it benefits these communities in terms of countering stereotypes and raising the issues that most concern them. McCue highlighted the importance of training all journalists to a point that they have cultural competencies in Indigenous issues so that they can create more developed and complex stories, and how establishing relationships with Indigenous communities is central to this. All of the panelists cited the need for more Indigenous reporters, and Kinew noted the need for more Indigenous peoples working higher up, at the decision-making positions of news organizations.

The VIU event was notable for how it opened up a dialogue surrounding the shortcomings, as well as positive potential, of the current state of Indigenous media relations and brought attention to many of the themes explored in this thesis: Indigenous agency and empowerment through media engagement; the need for increased context and history in Indigenous stories, focusing on positive Indigenous stories instead of perpetuating the narrative of victimization; and the importance of establishing reporter-community relationships. This public event’s focus on these themes highlights that these issues are timely and important. As we engage and educate broader audiences and cross boundaries to work on solutions, we can
establish better, more informed, and more trusting relationships. There was a critical lack of well-contextualized Indigenous media representations during Idle No More, and these new relationships and dialogues could contribute to an increase of well-balanced stories. My interviews with individuals involved in media relations highlight how having an interest in Indigenous issues, and taking the time to engage meaningfully when reporting on Indigenous communities, can significantly affect the quality of stories that are written. The balanced stories not only better inform settler-Canadians on Indigenous issues in Canada, but also strengthen the bonds between Indigenous communities and news media, and give Indigenous communities more control over their representation.

Indigenous control over media representations is now more important than ever. With the federal government’s recent approval of the Northern Gateway Pipeline, having a controlled media message will be central for Indigenous communities’ (and settler-allies’) resistance to this project, and could play an important role in mobilizing support from the broader nation. My insights surrounding social media, and its ability to both organize collective action and redistribute power would also be of benefit to these communities’ action plans. These insights could be mobilized through in-person training and education sessions for Indigenous and ally activists and communicators, as well as through online content such as a personal blog or Twitter. I would also like to publish some of my findings in accessible publications such as Windspeaker, or local community newspapers, so that I can share these findings with a wide variety of organizations that may find the strategic directions useful in controlling their own messages.

One limitation of my project is that I did not conduct participant observation/fieldwork in a media relations campaign for an Indigenous community in Canada. This experience would
offer first-hand insights that interviews and discourse analysis alone cannot generate. This would be a strong future avenue to explore in order to gain more insight surrounding the behind-the-scenes strategic engagements involved in establishing and controlling media messages, and these further insights would be invaluable to other communities who want to control their own messages.

Journalists’ lack of knowledge surrounding Indigenous issues and history is another issue that needs more attention. A study of journalism’s best practices, and a discourse analysis of course materials from journalism schools, could lead to a transformation of best practices, and a revised curriculum. This would be helpful to point out the shortcomings of current curriculum in the area of Indigenous media relationships, and where these conversations could be brought into the classroom. These transformations would stress a focus on early education for journalists surrounding reporting in Indigenous communities. This shift in focus would also highlight the importance of journalists establishing more trustworthy relationships with the communities about which they write about, and therefore lead to deeper and more balanced portrayals.
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