

**DOES INDIGENOUS INVOLVEMENT MATTER?
INDIGENOUS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND
REPRESENTATION IN CANADIAN ELECTORAL
INSTITUTIONS**

-

*ASSESSING THE FORTY SECOND FEDERAL ELECTION AND
PARLIAMENT*

by

Chadwick R. J. Cowie

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Department of Political Science
University of Alberta

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis seeks to consider whether or not Indigenous participation in Canadian federal electoral politics matters and whether such participation can effect change. In order to answer this question, this doctoral thesis will first analyse the complex relationship between Indigenous peoples, and their respective nations, and the Canadian state. In doing so, the traditional western understanding of citizenship and civic duty do not fit into the Indigenous psyche when looking at said participation – especially when considering concepts such as reconciliation. Additionally, the question of whether or not change and reconciliation can be achieved by casting ballots in high numbers will be examined through a specific focus on the 2015 Canadian federal election and the first term of the Justin Trudeau-led government. Furthermore, in discussing and assessing Indigenous participation during the Trudeau government’s first term, the use of interviews with Indigenous peoples who were active participants will be included as their responses assist with offering understanding from first-hand accounts of involvement at a time that reconciliation was promised and promoted not only within platforms but also while campaigning. Despite the promises made, and the initial hope of many of those who participated, this doctoral thesis will conclude that the form of reconciliation that is actually in practice comes specifically from Indigenous participants as they seek to reconcile with Canada’s top-down approach and the slow pace of progress that Canada practices.

DEDICATION

As was the case for my Master of Arts Thesis, I dedicate my Dissertation Thesis to my nephews and nieces: Tyson Weekes, Trent Weekes, Amilee Weekes, Brayden Brett, and Brooklyn Brett. You each inspire me to continuously push for better understanding between Indigenous peoples and Canadians – to push for a better future for each of them, their children, their generations, and the generations to come who share this territory. Additionally, during the period of working towards my Doctor of Philosophy, I have had to cope with the loss of key figures who have had a direct impact on my life and academic pursuits. Therefore, I also dedicate this Dissertation Thesis in the name of three individuals who have gone to the spirit world since I began this journey: My dear friend Joyce (Thomas) Rood, my Mother-in-Law Linda (Hume) Brett, and ngashi (my mother) Beverly Ann-Mary Cowie/Msko Nimkii Binessii Kwe. I am so thankful for the time I had you each in my life. To my mother especially:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Introduction.....	1
 Chapter One: Forms of Indigenous Political ‘Participation; Before the Dominion’s Encroachment:	
1.0 Introduction.....	15
1.1 Confederacies, Representation, & Belonging: Indigenous Political Constructions Pre-1492.....	16
1.2 From Allies and Enemies to Settler ‘Responsible’ Government.....	26
1.3 Conclusion.....	40
 Chapter Two: The Evolution of the Dominion and the ‘Indigenous Voice’ (1867-1991)	
2.0 Introduction.....	42
2.1 First Nations ‘Participation;’ From Wards of the State to Conflict Over Involvement.....	43
2.2 Métis ‘Participation:’ From Tyranny of the English Majority to Ongoing Recognition.....	69
2.3 Inuit ‘Participation:’ From Human Flagpoles to Self-Representation in the HoC.....	79
2.4 Conclusion: Reflecting on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ‘Participation’ (1867-1991)	86
 Chapter Three: From Charlottetown and Political Shock to Increased Presence (1991-2013)	
3.0 Introduction.....	89
3.1 From ‘Listening’ to Looking the Other Way: Charlottetown to RCAP.....	90
3.2 What RCAP? Fiscal Austerity, Court Cases, and Jean Chretien’s Retirement.....	96
3.3 The Martin Blip: A Positive Change in Indigenous Relations and Participation?.....	100
3.4 From Partners to Idle No More: The Harper Years.....	106

3.5 Conclusion.....	118
Chapter Four: Enough is Enough: Unilateral Imposition, #IdleNoMoe, and the 2015 Canadian Federal Election	
4.0 Introduction.....	120
4.1 The Final Straw: Omnibus Bill C-45 and #IdleNoMore.....	121
4.2 #IdleNoMore: A Stepping Stone to Increased Indigenous Participation.....	134
4.3 Bubbling Over: Indigenous Recruitment, Engagement, and Participation in 2015.....	149
4.4 Conclusion.....	173
Chapter Five: A New and Renewed Relationship or a Skipping Record? Indigenous/Canadian ‘Progress’ (2015-2019)	
5.0 Introduction.....	176
5.1 From Cautious Optimism to “Same Old Story:” Trudeau’s Cabinet and Budget of 2016.....	178
5.2 We Win Some and We Lose Some: Policy, Legislation, and Choices Made (2015-2019).....	194
5.3 A Decline in Indigenous Allies, Representation, and Support for the LPC.....	219
5.4 Conclusion.....	231
Chapter Six: Did Indigenous Involvement Matter? Responses from Indigenous Volunteers, Candidates, and MPs Between the 2015-2019 Canadian Federal Elections	
6.0 Introduction.....	235
6.1 Climbing the LPC Volunteer Ladder (2005-2018): An Indigenous First-Hand Account.....	236
6.2 Does Indigenous Involvement Matter? What to Ask and Who to Ask?.....	245
6.3 Indigenous Participation: A Victory or a Reconciliation with Slow-Paced Action?	248
6.4 Conclusion.....	269
Chapter Seven: Conclusion: The Reconciliation of the Long-Road of Indigenous Involvement and Participation.....	
Work Cited.....	287

Introduction:

On January 18, 2024, Canadian news media and social media was abuzz with what many deemed a historic and monumental event. The territorial government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc, and the federal government of Canada announced that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, alongside Nunavut's Inuk Premier, P.J. Akeeagok, had formulated a devolution agreement – giving the territory more control and decision-making power over large swaths of the territory.¹ According to the PMO and Prime Minister Trudeau, “It’s the largest land transfer in Canadian history ... two million square kilometres of land and water.”² In reviewing the devolution agreement, CBC News highlighted how the “239 page document outlines how Canada will give control over Nunavut’s land resources to the government of Nunavut.”³

The devolution agreement for the Canadian state is historic and also for the Inuit of the territory of Nunavut. Nunavut is one of four Inuit regions of shared territory with the Canadian state. In relation to all four regions,⁴ modern land claims were sought and formulated following the patriation of the *Constitution Act, 1982* – in fact, it was negotiations with the Inuk MP for the area, in order to obtain their support for patriation, that led the Canadian state to even agree to an Inuit land claims process. The first step of the Inuit land claim process was to agree to the eventual creation of a new territory: Nunavut. Thus, one could argue that the process to the devolution agreement being celebrated on January 18 2024 began long before the creation of Nunavut and right back to a period of constitutional change in the 1980s. Furthermore, one could

¹ Emma Hunter, “It’s High Time: Nunavut Officially Takes Over Land Resource Responsibilities from Feds,” *CBC News* (January 18 2024), accessed: February 4, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-trudeau-sign-devolution-agreement-1.7086272>.

² Hunter, “It’s High Time.”

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Note: The four regions and Inuit/Canadian relations will be further discussed in Chapter Two of this Dissertation.

argue that the push for the recognition over land, in which the Inuit have called their homelands for centuries, has been ongoing since the start of European encroachment and the claims of sovereignty over the area by the Canadian state.

The lands and waterways upon which the territory of Nunavut is situated have been an area of importance and habitation for the Inuit long before the creation of the Canadian state – a state that has, with the support of interpretations by Crown representatives, claimed ownership over Inuit territories since 1867. Inuit lands, such as Nunavut, had never been surrendered and thus a land claim process with the Inuit became important for solidifying Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic and a way for bringing many Inuit into the Canadian confederation. Other parts of land that the Canadian state claims as its territory also face claims of improper surrender by Indigenous nations and peoples in which the Canadian state is built upon. In many cases, the unilateral imposition of the Canadian state on these nations has meant that the Canadian state’s relationship with said nations is lost; one of confusion, and a top-down approach. Furthermore, it becomes a relationship where Indigenous peoples find themselves pushing back in various ways – such as with forms of political engagement within and outside of the Canadian state as citizens of said state, their own nations, or both. Such consideration is an area I have been assessing both on a personal level and on a professional and academic level.

Thus, in the autumn of 2021, I was approached by *The Conversation Canada* to write an article in relation to Indigenous peoples and voting. More specifically, I had piqued interests of some in previous media interviews when highlighting that for many Indigenous peoples, Canadian citizenship was not something that brought equality and representation but was rather a tool of the Canadian state used for its own ambitions of legitimacy and sovereignty.⁵ This

⁵ Chadwick Cowie, “A Vote for Canada or a Vote for Indigenous Nationhoods? The Complexities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Participation in Canadian Politics,” *The Conversation Canada* (November 1 2021), accessed: June 8,

intrigued some who read the article, as well as those with whom I have talked about this because, for the majority of the existing body of research on the topic of Indigenous *political participation*⁶ and inclusion in Canada's institutions has, for decades, been dominated by discussions surrounding the administration of Indigenous peoples, and their citizenship in the Canadian state.⁷ As an *Anishinaabe-inini*⁸ and as a political scientist, topics such as Indigenous representation, governance, nationhood, and the colonial relationship that continues to exist in the state of Canada towards Indigenous nations and peoples are especially pertinent to me, as they should be for others in Canadian politics. This has led me to write and research on Indigenous perspectives regarding healthcare, provincial relations with Indigenous nations, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), as well as in relation to citizenship, and participation in Canada's state institutions.⁹

2022, <https://theconversation.com/a-vote-for-canada-or-indigenous-nationhood-the-complexities-of-first-nations-metis-and-inuit-participation-in-canadian-politics-169312>

⁶ Note: "Political participation focuses in particular on activities affecting politics. The meaning includes four specific commonly agreed characteristics: 1) Active action like casting a vote or addressing a political representative in contrast to passive behavior as watching political debates on TV; 2) Comprises activities by private citizens as opposed to politicians or lobbyists, for example; 3) Is not enforced or required by law but voluntary action; and 4) Aims at the political system by influencing either the selection of (governmental) personnel or their actions and decisions. In sum, political participation refers to voluntary activities by private citizens that aim directly or indirectly at the political system or processes" (Nissen, "Political Participation," pps. 665-675). Furthermore, when utilizing this with Indigenous peoples, this also includes impact on policy development as well as diplomatic and international relations due to the nature of colonization and continued pushback against the imposition of Settler-Colonial states such as Canada.

⁷ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 1996); Alan Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, (Vancouver: UBC Press 2000); John Borrows, "Measuring a Work in Progress: Constitutionalism, Citizenship, and Aboriginal Peoples," in *Box of Treasures or Empty Box? Twenty Years of Section 35*, Eds. Ardith Walkem and Halie Bruce, (Vancouver Theytus Books Ltd, 2003); Kiera Ladner, "Treaty Federalism: An Indigenous Vision of Canadian Federalism," In *New Trends in Canadian Federalism 2nd Ed*, Eds. Miriam Smith and Francois Rocher, (Peterborough: Broadview Press 2003); Peter Russell, *Canada's Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People*, 3rd Ed, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Kiera Ladner, "'Take 35: Reconciling Constitutional Orders.'" In *First Nations First Thoughts*, ed. Annis May Timpson, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009); Kiera Ladner, "Ayaska'paykinit: Contesting the Rope Around the Nations' Neck," In *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada*, Ed. Mariam Smith, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Kiera Ladner, "Taking the Field: 50 Years of Indigenous Politics in the CJPS," In *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (2017), 163-179.

⁸ Note: The term 'Anishinaabe-inini,' when translated into English, means Anishinaabe Man.

⁹ Chadwick Cowie, "Validity and Potential: Dual-Citizenship and the Indigenous Vote in Canada's Federal Electoral Process." Master of Arts Thesis, Political Studies, University of Manitoba, 2013.

An example of my past research on citizenship and participation within Canada's federal political institutions is my Master of Arts (M.A.) thesis, which focused on the validity and potential of the Indigenous vote in Canada. This work concluded that through the recognition of joint sovereignty and dual citizenship, Indigenous peoples could vote in Canada's federal electoral process without undermining their own Indigenous nations. In particular, by voting as a dual citizen, Indigenous-inclusive change could be implemented in Canada.¹⁰ However, I also concluded that more research was required to further detail to what extent the Indigenous vote could have impact, and whether it had impacted outcomes within Canada's institutional structures. I also highlighted the potential impact of the Idle No More movement, which was still in its early stages of development as I was writing my M.A. thesis and pondered whether or not it would impact Indigenous turnout in the upcoming federal election in 2015. Additionally, I also approached this research as an Indigenous person who was an active and steadfast volunteer for the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) between September 2005 to May 2018. My involvement started as a member of the Western Liberals as an undergraduate student and ended with my completion of a second term as Co-Chair (Male) of the Indigenous wing of the party: The Indigenous Peoples' Commission. While involved, the ability to situate myself in both the Indigenous and Canadian worlds, at the same time, was a difficult balance – a balance that became more important and difficult during and after the #IdleNoMore movement.¹¹

The impacts of the Idle No More movement did indeed showcase the feelings of discontent with the Harper government and the direction it was taking when it came to Indigenous/Canadian relations, legislation, and policies. The reenergizing, or reawakening, of Indigenous peoples through Idle No More became more apparent throughout 2014 and 2015 as

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Note: For further information on my positionality please see Chapter Six.

the LPC, the New Democratic Party (NDP), and the Green Party of Canada (GPC), began courting Indigenous people for their support in the federal election of 2015. Indigenous organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and various other grassroots organization also, for the first time, advocated for Indigenous peoples to vote in order to oust the Harper government.¹² In addition, the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) released its findings in June 2015 in advance of the election, which in turn further influenced the LPC, NDP, GPC, as well as the Canadian media in discussing subject matter such as Canadian/Indigenous relations, reconciliation, government policy, and how Indigenous issues were covered in the platforms of the major federal political parties for the 2015 election. The TRC, in its report, defined two key terms that will be of importance for this work, and for assessing political responses in 2015 and during the 2015 to 2019 period: 1) Reconciliation, and 2) Nation-to-Nation relations.

According to the TRC, “reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between [Indigenous] and [non-Indigenous] peoples in [Canada]. In order for this to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.”¹³ In addition to its explanation and recommendation on how reconciliation should be established in Canada, it also highlighted Call to Action 45. Call to Action 45 specifically discusses the need to re-establish and formulate a new proclamation that would renew nation-to-nation relations and thus mean “that Indigenous nations and the Crown would be understood as two nations of the land and would each have rights to self-governance [and that] Indigenous peoples were already living here

¹² Emma McIntosh, “Why Did so Many Indigenous Voters Take Part in the 2015 Election?” *The Calgary Herald*, (June 3, 2016).

¹³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2016.

on Turtle Island when Europeans settled here.”¹⁴ Both terms, reconciliation and nation-to-nation relations, were being utilized by the majority of Canada’s major federal political parties leading up to, and during the 2015 Canadian federal election.

Additionally, for the first time in the history of Canadian politics, not only did the Green Party of Canada (GPC), Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), and New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) begin to discuss the potential of Indigenous voters but so did the Canadian media.

Articles were released with titles such as: “The Aboriginal Vote: Can Indigenous Canadians Swing the Election,”¹⁵ and “Mulcair, Trudeau Vie for Votes as Aboriginal Voters Told to Make a Difference in Federal Election.”¹⁶ Despite this historic first, the reigning orthodoxy in the Canadian mainstream media, as well as Canadian political science itself, takes the view that Indigenous peoples are no more than a special interest group within the confines of Canadian citizenry. As a consequence, we have yet to have a fulsome discussion assessing Indigenous participation in the federal election of 2015 from the vantage point of key issues of concern to Indigenous peoples.

Due to my own personal experiences with grassroots Indigenous communities and various Indigenous activists, I was dismayed to see such limited attention to this momentous election. There had been no research that further delved into Indigenous voting (and non-voting) behaviour or that more thoroughly included Indigenous perspectives on the Canadian/Indigenous relationship, the Canadian state, its institutions, and their own rationales for participation or non-participation. My own experiences during the Idle No More movement and what followed in the

¹⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report*, 2016.

¹⁵ Lee Bethiaume, “The Aboriginal Vote: Can Indigenous Canadians Swing the Election?” *The Ottawa Citizen*, (June 28, 2015).

¹⁶ Graeme Hamilton, “Mulcair, Trudeau Vie for Votes as Aboriginal Voters Told to Make a Difference in Federal Election,” *The National Post*, (July 7, 2015).

lead-up to, and throughout the 2015 election, led me to hypothesize that the high turnout amongst Indigenous peoples¹⁷ was a result of two key drivers: 1) The Harper government was viewed as a common enemy to Indigenous peoples and nations; and 2) The potential of true reconciliation through resurrecting the nation-to-nation relationship understanding was put forth by the LPC, NDP, and GPC, making the electoral process uniquely attractive to engage with. Thus, a core interest of this dissertation relates to participation of Indigenous peoples in formal electoral and parliamentary politics – such as mainstream matters of voting, volunteering, running for office, and serving in Parliament and cabinet.

Therefore, the approach taken in this dissertation on political participation considers Indigenous resurgence alongside a pragmatic engagement with the settler colonial state – an engagement where many Indigenous peoples have, and are, engaging strategically. In turn, such an approach and theoretical framework highlights how Indigenous peoples understand their motivations and goals for political engagement as centred in their aspirations for their nations within and in relation to the Canadian state. This, influences my overall research question: *Does Indigenous activism, engagement, and involvement in the Canadian federal electoral system drive change?* In reflecting on this research question, additional questions must also be considered to properly assess and consider Indigenous activism and involvement:

1. What is the history of Indigenous engagement and how has engagement involved for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.
2. How has the development of the Canadian state, settler-colonial responsible government, and the concept of Canadian citizenship impacted Indigenous engagement since Canada's creation in 1867?
3. Additionally does Indigenous activism and involvement contribute to progress on reconciliation and change, especially in relation to the promises made by the Trudeau government between 2015 to 2019?
4. Furthermore, does Indigenous activism and involvement actually entail that it is they who must reconcile with not only the slow pace the Canadian state takes but also with it having to be based on what Canada lists as options for doing so?

¹⁷ McIntosh, "Why Did so Many Indigenous Voters Take Part in the 2015 Election?"

To fully assess and seek answers to the aforementioned primary and secondary questions, this dissertation will analyse the complex relationship between Indigenous peoples, and their nations, and Canada. It will utilize a historically rooted analytical perspective in relation to consideration of multiple forms of participation including inside Canadian institutions like political parties, as well within nations (a process I have elsewhere described as dual citizenship).¹⁸ In doing so, I will argue that traditional components of citizenship and civic duty do not account for Indigenous experiences and agency when looking at participation in Canada's federal electoral institutions. Additionally, I will examine the question of whether or not change and reconciliation can be achieved by turning out in high numbers at the polls through a specific focus on the results of the 2015 Canadian federal election and the first term (2015 to 2019) of the Trudeau government. Furthermore, in discussing and assessing Indigenous participation between 2015 to 2019, the use of interviews with ten Indigenous peoples who were active participants (whether as volunteers, candidates, or elected MPs) will be included, as their responses assist with offering understanding from first-hand accounts of involvement at a time when reconciliation and change were a cornerstone in electoral promises made to Indigenous peoples. Despite the promises made, and the initial hope of many of those Indigenous peoples who participated in Canada's electoral process, especially during the first term of the Trudeau government, this dissertation concludes that the form of reconciliation that is truly being utilized comes specifically from Indigenous participants as they seek to reconcile not only with the approach taken by the Canadian state but also with the Canadian state's slow pace of progress.

¹⁸ Chadwick Cowie, "Questioning Canadian/First Nations Relations: An Argument for Dual Citizenship," in *Transnational Perspective: Australia, Canada, and Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Jatinder Man, pps. 179-202 (London: Palgrave MacMillan 2023).

This dissertation research will be developed in the following manner. The first chapter will argue, and highlight, that while the standard focus of Canadian Political Science (CPS) starts its story with the formation of the Dominion of Canada, as well as key constitutional documents such as the Royal Proclamation, it is traditionally an approach that erases Indigenous histories as well as Indigenous legal, social, and political structures. Thus, in order to fully conceptualize Indigenous participation, chapter one reviews the legal, social, and political structures of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabeg, and Siiksikaawa confederacies. Following this review, Chapter One then considers the nation-to-nation relationship with European powers, as well as the emergence of Settler-Responsible Government and its impact on the nation-to-nation relationship. Chapter One concludes that during the period prior to the formation of the Dominion of Canada, Indigenous societies and political structures were, and continue to be, carefully constructed, thought-out, and detailed in relation to law, citizenship, as well as diplomacy. Such notions, although not fully understood by Europeans, were of importance to the formation of the Canadian state. As time passed, the relationship turned from one of nation-to-nation relations to one of subjugation – where participation was no longer viewed by the *Settler-Colonial*¹⁹ structure as one of equal nations, but of one of being in the way of progress and civilization.

¹⁹ Note: When utilizing the term settler-colonial, this dissertation is referencing the definition provided by Mahmood Mamdani in “Settler Colonialism: Then and Now.” According to Mamdani, Settler-Colonialism is “a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of Indigenous peoples with a settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and concept of their sovereignty. Settler colonialism can be distinguished from other forms of colonialism in the following ways: 1) Settler colonizers come to stay; 2) Settler colonial invasion is a structure, not an event; 3) Settler colonialism seeks its own end ... unlike other types of colonialism in which the goal is to maintain colonial structures and imbalances in power between colonizer and colonized settler colonization trends towards the ending of colonial difference in the form of a supreme and unchallenged settler state and people.”

The second chapter delves further into this change in relationship and participation, and does so by giving an understanding of the diversity in relations with the Canadian state from 1867 to 1991. More specifically, Chapter Two argues, by examining the evolution of Indigenous engagement, that the different experiences of Indigenous nations and peoples, in relation to the evolution of the Dominion of Canada and its push for further legitimacy, sovereignty, assimilation, and control over the participation of Indigenous peoples, was to serve the interest of the Canadian state and its process of nation building. In relation to First Nations, the period between 1867 to 1991 highlights a focus of relegating them to being wards of the state and then utilizing citizenship as a way for further absorb them into the Canadian state – leading to a consistent and ongoing internal conflict amongst First Nations about whether participation furthers the deconstruction of their own nations and confederacies. In relation to the Métis, the concept of participation is, at least at the beginning, one that quickly goes from partners in Confederation to one of subjugation by the Canadian-English majority and then eventually to an expansion of recognition. The Inuit, on the other hand, are ignored until the 1920s and then are given a ‘fast track’ of colonization. That said, by the 1950s the need for the Inuit to assist with Canadian sovereignty claims to the north led to citizenship being granted more in order to treat them as human flagpoles. Despite such use of Inuit as human flagpoles, by 1991 they were self-represented in the House of Commons. Overall, by 1991 Indigenous peoples were seeking multiple ways of participation in order to further protect themselves, their peoples, and their rights.

Chapter Three seeks to analyse such growth and change in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit participation between 1991 and 2015. In doing so, Chapter Three argues that the 1990s and early 20th century, in relation to Indigenous engagement, demonstrates a renewed interest in

meaningful ‘reconciliation’ that is to be based on nation-to-nation relations. Thus, the first section of Chapter Three examines changes that occurred between the start of consultation sessions of the *Charlottetown Accord* and up to the introduction of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP), and its findings, to the House of Commons in the Autumn of 1996. Then, focus and assessment in relation to Indigenous participation will be given to the Chretien and Martin years, before turning to the impacts of the Harper government from 2006 up to the emergence of the #IdleNoMore movement. Such analysis of this period, especially between 1991 to 2013, is imperative to comprehending the actions taken by Indigenous peoples leading up to and during the 2015 Canadian federal election. Chapter Three concludes that over the twenty-year period from the 1992 *Charlottetown Accord* to the early days of #IdleNoMore in 2012, Indigenous participation and political power were growing with the utilization of multiple methods to push for change and to protect their rights and nationhoods. The multiple methods utilized would be important, and line up, with the Opposition parties in not only their policy making and party platform development, but also for the recruitment of candidates and getting Indigenous voters to cast a ballot.

Upon understanding the period from the *Charlottetown Accord* to the rise of #IdleNoMore, one is able to fully consider not only the impacts of Harper legislation but also the sleeping dragon that was awoken, and which would influence the 2015 Canadian federal election. Thus, Chapter Four allows the reader to follow along as the #IdleNoMore movement grows, leading to teach-ins and mass protests, using social media to mobilize. Such mobilization contributed to the Harper government’s loss, and the election win of Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party of Canada. In order to show this impact, Chapter Four first assesses the Canadian/Indigenous political climate from the introduction of the *Jobs and Growth Act*, Omnibus Bill C-45, as well

as Indigenous reaction to said legislation. Additionally, Chapter Four looks at the level of engagement taken by Canada's major political parties in relation to the impact of #IdleNoMore and Indigenous mobilization. In doing so the ability to delve into, and consider, recruitment of Indigenous candidates and responses of Indigenous peoples to the 2015 Canadian federal election. What becomes clear is that #IdleNoMore was key to assisting in formulating grassroots organizations to push for higher Indigenous voter turnout, and to increasing the number of Indigenous candidates running for election, while simultaneously seeking to oust the Harper government from power – more so than in support of the Canadian state. In doing so, Chapter Four introduces, and showcases to, the reader to the unique realities of Indigenous partisan activists being both enfranchised Canadian citizens and citizens of Indigenous nations and sets such understanding for Chapters Five and Six.

The 2015 Canadian federal election not only triggered a change in the government for Canada and also witnessed historic turnout for Indigenous voters, as well as twelve Indigenous MPs elected to the House of Commons – with ten elected to the LPC caucus and thus to the governing benches. The number of Indigenous MPs elected, and Indigenous relations, are therefore the focus of Chapter Five. The purpose of Chapter Five is to assess the first term of the Justin Trudeau government regarding Indigenous relations, rights, and reconciliation – arguing that the Trudeau government's approach was more Canadian-centric than nation-to-nation. The first section of Chapter Five reviews and assesses the formation of the Trudeau government's first Cabinet as well as the budget introduced in 2016. Chapter Five then considers and reviews the policy decisions and movements utilized that impact and relate to Indigenous peoples, rights, consultations, and concepts of reconciliation. Lastly, Chapter Five assesses how such Canadian-centric approaches by the Trudeau government led to a decline in Indigenous support and

volunteerism, a decline which was further impacted due to the treatment towards Hunter Tootoo and Jody Wilson-Raybould. As such developments occurred, and policies that focused more on administration and services were pursued rather than focusing on nation-to-nation relations, Indigenous support waned – but little to no attention has been given specifically to those directly involved, and some of whom are still involved. Thus, consideration of those Indigenous peoples directly involved at this time is of utmost importance to showing a more robust understanding of Indigenous participation.

While the previous chapter highlights the first term of the Trudeau government as one that continues a *Canadian centric*²⁰ approach in relation to Indigenous peoples and relations, Chapter Six seeks to bring in voices and experiences of those who were not only involved as volunteers, but also as candidates and sitting MPs between 2015 to 2019. Chapter Six first introduces the author's experience as a long-time volunteer and how such involvement influenced not only their interest in electoral participation by Indigenous peoples, but also the questions put to potential Indigenous interviewees. Additionally, Chapter Six examines the questions, methodology, and details in regard to those contacted and those who responded. In doing so, the personal experiences of Indigenous volunteers, candidates and MPs will showcase and offer insight from those directly involved and what their experience entailed and whether Indigenous involvement mattered.

Based on the interviewees and my analysis, Chapter Six addresses the key research questions posed in this study. For many Indigenous peoples who become involved, what is being reconciled is not the Canadian state to Indigenous peoples but rather Indigenous peoples having

²⁰ Note: When utilizing the term Canadian-centric, this dissertation is referencing forms of settler-colonialism that gives precedent of power, control, jurisdiction, and decision-making that further assists with legitimizing the Canadian state and requiring Indigenous nations to agree to policy and decision-making procedures that require them to view Canada as such.

to accommodate the Canadian state's slow pace of progress, as well as an approach that focuses on solidifying its own legitimacy, since its inception, in its relationship with Indigenous Nations. In turn, while Indigenous involvement does have an impact, there is a constant struggle and ongoing questions Indigenous participants encounter throughout their involvement – whether as a volunteer, candidate, or MP. What Indigenous peoples seem to straddle is the fine line between being involved with the operation of the Canadian state while also having responsibility to their own nations. Such responsibility is passed down through the generations of a nation – especially due to the impacts of colonialism that has permeated over the centuries and decades since European encroachment on Turtle Island. As Jody Wilson-Raybould states:

What have I learned in my short time in regional and national politics and working in my open community is that before there can be any significant social change on the ground in implementing our Aboriginal Title and Rights, our people have to support it, not just verbally and politically through elected leaders that share the same vision, but they actually have to exercise their franchise and vote in favour of change. They have to vote for social change. The twisted reality of our postcolonial transition is that our people have to vote the colonizer out. As you are all aware, this is because the colonizer – in our case, Canada – has a fiduciary relationship to our people and cannot simply legislate the Indian Act away until our people tell them it is ok to do so. Perverse but true.²¹

In order to fully comprehend Wilson-Raybould's point, it is important to not only understand Indigenous structures, such as government and diplomacy, but also the development and evolving relations with European powers and the eventual development of the Dominion of Canada which Chapter One addresses.

²¹ Jody Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd), pp. 20.

Chapter One:
Forms of Indigenous Political ‘Participation’ Before the Dominion’s Encroachment

1.0: Introduction:

Indigenous political participation within, alongside, and outside of settler-states such as Canada has taken various forms since the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples on the shores of the Americas/Turtle Island. Over the last fifty years, the lens through which questions regarding Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state has generally been centred on Canadian citizenship, special interest groups, public policy, as well as through legal interpretations. Such aforementioned interpretations are especially common in CPS and Canadian politics in general. Although the research ethos and the mentality underpinning it is changing in many fields of study, CPS and Political Science in general have been slow to bring in Indigenous perspectives.²² By not doing so, CPS and Political Science are limiting themselves to a narrow discussion in relation to such diverse areas as federalism, diplomacy, international relations, as well as representation and participation in political structures. Further inclusion of Indigenous histories and understanding on societal, legal, and political structures will only grow CPS and bring further understanding to the full potential of Political Science in relation to Turtle Island.

In this chapter I argue that while the common focus of CPS starts with 1867 and the formation of the Dominion of Canada, it is an approach that erases not only Indigenous histories but also Indigenous legal, social, and political structures. Additionally, this chapter also sets the stage for understanding a common thread of Indigenous/Settler history – one that reflects a

²² See: Joyce Green, “The Difference Debate: Reducing Rights to Cultural Flavour,” in *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 33, Iss. 1 (2000): pps. 133-144; Kiera Ladner, “Taking the Field: 50 Years of Indigenous Political Science in CJPS,” in *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 50, Iss. 1 (2017): pps. 163-179; Chadwick Cowie, “Reconciling Canadian Political Science: Including Indigeneity in the Discipline,” In *Learning the Truth, Seeking Reconciliation: Understanding the Historical Relationship Between Canada and the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island*, edited by Ian Peach, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, (Forthcoming).

history of Indigenous engagement that expects a positive nation-to-nation relationship. In order to fully and properly assess and conceptualize Indigenous participation, this chapter will first review the legal, social, and political structures of three Indigenous Confederacies: the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabeg, and the Siiksikaawa. Following a review of these three Indigenous Confederacies, this chapter will then look at relationship building with European powers and the emergence of Settler-Responsible Government²³ - especially the impact that this evolving nation-to-nation relationship had on Indigenous nations and Confederacies from the 1840s and up to the Dominion of Canada's formation in 1867. Understanding Indigenous legal, social, and political structures is imperative when assessing both nation-to-nation diplomacy and relations between not only Indigenous nations but also between Indigenous and Europeans following contact.

1.1: Confederacies, Representation, & Belonging: Indigenous Political Constructs Pre-1492

Indigenous political, legal, economic, and societal structures have been intricate and highly developed, long before European encroachment and colonization. If one looks at a map of the Canadian state, the territory within the settler-constructed boundaries of Canada also reflects almost sixty (60) different Indigenous nations whose history and existence predate the Canadian

²³ Note: What is meant by Settler-Responsible government relates to the definition of responsible government used in western political structures, and highlighted by Peter H. Russell in *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People? Third Edition*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. More specifically, Russell explains that "although responsible government is the essential democratic principle in parliamentary/cabinet government, it lends itself to a highly centralized, executive-dominated form of democracy. By requiring that the executive be directed by leaders of the majority in the legislature, it fuses executive and legislative power." (pp. 16).

state.²⁴ Additionally, some of these nations represent the first confederations formed on earth.²⁵ Within these confederacies were forms of representation and laws that not only governed those within them but also membership qualifications within these confederations. In order to show that Indigenous governance structures were very complex and intricate, examples from eastern, central, and western Turtle Island will be highlighted.

1.1.1: Je Me Souviens: The St. Lawrence Valley & The Haudenosaunee Confederacy:

One of the most well-known confederacies, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy,²⁶ was already in place for at least a century prior to Christopher Columbus' infamous travel to what is today referred to as the Bahamas.²⁷ Haudenosaunee history states that the Confederacy was formed out of the efforts of a prophet named Peacemaker as a way to bring an end to war and distrust between the five founding nations: the *Kanien'kéha:ka*,²⁸ *Onayota'a:ka*,²⁹

²⁴ Chadwick Cowie, "Validity and Potential: Dual-Citizenship and the Indigenous Vote in Canada's Federal Electoral Process," A Masters of Arts Thesis Submitted to the Department of Political Studies and Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Manitoba, 2013; NOTE: For the purpose of this paper, my focus is on three specific confederacies as volumes could be written on each nation and confederacy that have existed prior to, and in many cases continues to exist since, non-Indigenous settlement occurred. I specifically focus not only on my own Confederacy but also one each from the eastern and western parts of present-day Canada in order to show that complex political structures are not fixed to just one region of Turtle Island.

²⁵ According to Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay, André Lecours, Csaba Nikolényi, Bassel Salloukh, and Francesca Scalla, *Confederation* is "a set of sovereign states [which] decide to create a union for the realization of specific goals (e.g., economic, military, etc.). The sovereign states delegate a certain number of powers to the government of the union. The states reserve the power to secede from the confederal system" (pp. 480). In relation to *Federalism*, Chowdhari Tremblay et al. state that it is "a principle of government that seeks to reconcile unity and diversity through the exercise of political power along multiple autonomous levels" (pp. 481).

²⁶ As highlighted by Wahéshon Shiann Whitebean, the term Haudenosaunee translates to: 'Peoples of the Longhouse' (Guest Lecture, January 19, 2022).

²⁷ Whitebean, *The Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, 2022.

²⁸ Note: Kanien'kéha:ka is what the Mohawk call themselves in their language (Whitebean, *The Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, 2022).

²⁹ Note: Onayota'a:ka is what the Oneida call themselves in their language (Whitebean, *The Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, 2022).

Ononda'gegà,³⁰ *Gayogohó:no*,³¹ and *Onöndowaga*.³² The Haudenosaunee Confederacy was viewed as a way to both unite the original five nations and to allow for their peoples to live in harmony and make decisions peacefully. The political structure of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy reflected, and continues to reflect, one of equal representation, balance of law and tradition, as well as consensus.³³ Each nation had a role within the governing structure of the confederacy. For instance, the Ononda'gegà were the 'keepers of the fire' and their nation was where the political representatives of the Haudenosaunee would meet, and still do.³⁴ The Kanien'kéha:ka were, and are, the warriors and guardians of the eastern side of the confederacy while the Onöndowaga were, and are, of the western side.³⁵

Until recent times each of the nations within the confederacy had a role. They also had their own Council and Chief. The Clan Mothers, as a check and balance, would approve who would be Chief and sat on said council.³⁶ In other words, although many Indigenous nations had a hereditary system in place for who would be Chief, the nations within the system had means to remove individuals who were not deemed appropriate, of sound mind, or not representing their peoples via the Clan Mothers. In addition, each nation had a delegation of representatives,

³⁰ Note: Ononda'gegà is what the Onondaga call themselves in their language (Whitebean, *The Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, 2022).

³¹ Note: Gayogohó:no is what the Cayuga call themselves in their language (Whitebean, *The Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, 2022).

³² Ibid; John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), pp. 72; Kayanesenh Paul Williams, *Kayanerenkó:wa: The Great Law of Peace* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018), pp. 60-61 & 78-82; Note: Onöndowaga is what the Seneca call themselves in their language (Whitebean, *The Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, 2022).

³³ Ibid; J.R Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pps. 37-38.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Susan Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), pps. 65, 69, & 226-227; Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, pps. 42 & 72-77; Williams, *Kayanerenkó:wa*, pps. 303-308; Whitebean, *The Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, 2022.

alongside each nation's Chief, that would attend central meetings of the confederacy.³⁷ The Confederacy Council's function was, and remains, to discuss and come to a consensus on all matters that impact the harmony, peace, and external relations with other nations and confederations. Meanwhile the individual councils focused on all items relating to each nation internally.³⁸ All decisions reflected the laws of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy which fell under the 'Great Law of Peace.'³⁹

The Great Law of Peace not only assisted with governing but also in making decisions for all members that were within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's 'boundaries.' In looking at a present-day map, these boundaries included much of present-day New York state as well as parts of the St. Lawrence Valley in present-day Quebec. Thus, when reflecting on Haudenosaunee territory it is important to note that the settler-cities of Quebec City, Trois-Rivieres, Montreal, Sherbrooke, Albany, and Rochester were built, and exist, on Haudenosaunee Confederacy territory.

1.1.2: Friendly Manitoba & A Place to Grow: Central Turtle Island & the Anishinaabeg:

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy also shared territory and boundaries with another, confederacy: the Anishinaabeg. The Anishinaabeg is comprised of nations including the Bodewadami, Algonquin, Odawa Nishnaabeg, Chippewa'ag Nishnaabeg, and the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg.⁴⁰ When looking at a present-day map of North America, the traditional territories of

³⁷ Williams, *Kayanerenkó:wa*, pps. 294-296; Whitebean, *The Haudenosaunee Confederacy*, 2022; Miller, *Compact, Covenant, Contract*, pps. 37-38.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ According to Susan Hill, the *Great Law of Peace* is what governs the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and its member nations. It was brought forth in order to have member nations return to the right path that the Creator had produced for for them and thus establish a form of Haudneosaunee Peace, Order, and Good Governance for those nations who came together to form the Confederacy (Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, pp.27-29); Also see Williams' *Kayanerenkó:wa* for a full assessment and understanding of the Great Law of Peace.

⁴⁰ Doug Williams, *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg: This is Our Territory* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press, 2018), pps. 119-124; Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, pps. 77-78; Donald Smith, *Mississauga Portraits: Ojibwe Voices*

the Anishinaabeg Confederacy include portions of Western Quebec, much of Ontario, Southern Manitoba, as well as sections of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. Thus, including Ottawa, Toronto, Detroit, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Winnipeg are situated on the traditional territories of the member nations of the Anishinaabeg confederacy.

Like the Haudenosaunee, the utilization of clans, or *dotems*, were/are significant and important to the political, legal, and sociological constructs within the nations of the Anishinaabeg. Each dotem reflected an animal which inhabited territory or waters that the Anishinaabeg call home. The type of animal tended to be categorized into those with ‘hooves’, ‘sea creatures’, ‘paws’, and those that fly. Each dotem had important duties within the nations of the confederacy, such as these can be compared with Ministries or Departments we see existing within many settler states like Canada. For instance, Lawrence Henry Sitting Eagle, in a document prepared for the Anishinaabeg community of Roseau River, explains that dotems that are named after animals that fly, such as the Crane and Loon clans, reflect leadership roles. Those in the Crane and Loon dotems, as Sitting Eagle specifies, “should know everything about everything, [hold] knowledge of statesmanship ... [and] must be knowledgeable in negotiations, plan[ning], [as well as] strateg[izing].”⁴¹ More specifically, Sitting Eagle explains that the Crane dotem is a combination of the Canada’s Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) and Department of Foreign Affairs, while the Loon dotem connects with Intergovernmental affairs.⁴² Other dotems that reflect those that can fly, such as the Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle and Hawk, focused on

from Nineteenth-Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 33); Donald Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pps. 1 & 17; Also See: George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of The Ojibway Nation* (Toronto: Propsero Canadian Collection, 2001).

⁴¹ Lawrence Henry Sitting Eagle, *Clan Responsibilities: Ojibway Clan Systems: The Seven Original Clans* (Prepared for Roseau River/Roseau Rapids Anishinabe Nations, 2011), pps. 1, 27-28.

⁴² *Ibid*, 27-28.

understanding the natural landscape, the flora and fauna that grow on it, harvesting, spirituality as well as knowledge.⁴³ Clans such as the Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, and Hawk thus can be linked with spirituality, agriculture, and education.

Sitting Eagle continues his explanations, highlighting that dotems which reflect those with paws, such as the Marten, Muskrat, Beaver, and Wolf, are responsible for not only strategizing but also for providing sustenance, peacekeeping, policing, as well as the adoption of newcomers and the enforcement of rules and laws.⁴⁴ Thus, in a comparative sense, Sitting Eagle's explanation of dotems reflecting paws are more similar to Canada's Ministries of Justice and Defence. Additionally, Bear dotems, although also assisting with policing and peacekeeping, are considered to be the healers and those with knowledge of medicine.⁴⁵ According to Sitting Eagle's explanation, the Bear dotems are most similar to a Ministry of Health.⁴⁶

In relation to dotems that represent sea creatures, such as fish, turtle, and snake, Sitting Eagle describes their duties as caretakers of water, assessing changes in the seasons, and stargazing.⁴⁷ When comparing sea creature dotems to a ministry, they would encompass what is referred to as science and technology. Lastly, the dotems that fall into the category of 'hooves,' such as elk, moose, and deer, tend to not only have the gift of visual and performing arts but also the gift of sound.⁴⁸ Furthermore, hoof dotems assist with settling disputes and the social welfare of the community.⁴⁹ The most comparable ministries to the hoof dotems would thus be social services and heritage. Sitting Eagle summarizes that the dotem system creates the ability for

⁴³ Ibid, 32.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 31.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 33.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 29.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 30.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

“every person to belong with a role and status ... [where] we [are] collectively promulgated and taught so that particular talents might radiate among our people, yet at the same time maintaining personal identity of the individual.”⁵⁰

In addition to being giving tasks and responsibilities, the dotem system, like the clan system of the Haudenosaunee, were/are consensus based and represented in the governance structure of the Anishinaabeg. Furthermore, those representing the clans and nations could also remove Chiefs from their positions if the latter were deemed unfit to govern.⁵¹ Thus, although a person could become Chief because they were a descendent of the previous Chief, it was not an absolute right and a person could be easily replaced. Preventing an ‘absolutist’ form of power and control was key, allowing all Anishinaabeg to have a say, and the right to belong within the confederacy and the member nation of which they were a part.

The Anishinaabeg understanding of belonging to a community, nation, and within the confederacy has never been simply based on a birthright. As Leanne Simpson points out in her book *Dancing on our Turtles Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence*, systems of adoption and immigration were just as important for belonging within the social, political, and legal order of nations within the Anishinaabeg confederacy. Simpson points out that the system for immigration was a lengthy process because of what needed to be achieved to prove one’s ability to live up to the standards of Anishinaabeg belonging.⁵² An individual, whether adopted, married in, or a descendent of Anishinaabeg parents, proved their belonging by their commitment to the values and philosophies of *mino bimaadiziwan*.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid, 20.

⁵¹ Ibid; Also see Borrows, *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution*, pps. 77-84.

⁵² Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press, 2011), pp. 90.

⁵³ Ibid; Borrows, *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution*, pp. 81; Cowie, “Validity and Potential,” pp. 14; John Borrows, *Seven Generations, Seven Teachings: Ending the Indian Act* (Research Paper for the Nation Centre for First Nations

In explaining *mino bimaadiziwan*, John Borrows highlights that it represents “principles that respect and facilitate stewardship, such as loyalty, patience, and bravery.”⁵⁴ These are the Seven Grandfather teachings,⁵⁵ important tenets to establishing fairness, respect, and order amongst Anishinaabeg people. In doing so, as Borrows further explains, the process, and the rules relating to belonging, are a way not only for people to prove themselves but also to show they truly mean no harm to the Anishinaabeg people and their existence.⁵⁶ Additionally, if one did not agree to the required standards of what it meant to be Anishinaabeg, they also had the opportunity to leave and remove themselves from the system and could therefore freely leave their clan, nation, and by extension the confederacy. In other words, like many modern Liberal states today, the Anishinaabeg allowed for immigration to, and emigration from, their confederacy. Thus to be Anishinaabeg required an agreement to fulfill the duties of what modern states and political scientists define as citizenship.

1.1.3: Wild Rose Country: The Siiksikaawa Confederacy:

Confederations, such as the Anishinaabeg and the Haudenosaunee, were not just a political construct in the eastern part of Turtle Island. Indigenous nations in the west also came together, such as under the *Siiksikaawa*⁵⁷ Confederacy. The Siiksikaawa Confederacy includes

Governance, 2008), pp. 1; Note: *Mino bimaadiziwan*, when translated from Anishinaabemowin to English, means: “following the right path/good path.” (Simpson 2011, pp. 90)

⁵⁴ Borrows, *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution*, pp. 81.

⁵⁵ Note: The Seven Grandfather teachings are key to Anishinaabeg belonging because it taught Anishinaabeg important aspects of citizenship and how to live together with the concepts of *nbwakaawin* (wisdom), *zaagidwin* (love), *mnaadendimowin* (respect), *aakwadeewin* (bravery), *dbaandendiziwin* (humility), *gwejwaadiziwan* (honest), and *debwein* (truth). In many of Borrows’ writings, he discusses how the Seven Grandfathers are a key part of citizenship because it not only dictates how citizens relate to one another but also key to foundations of Anishinaabeg law, governance, and the interdependence ideals of the nations within the Confederacy. (See: Borrows’ *Seven Generations, Seven Teachings*, 2008).

⁵⁶ Borrows, *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution*, pp. 81.

⁵⁷ Note: The term *Siiksikaawa*, when translated into English, refers to the Blackfoot (Ladner 2003, pp. 125)

the Siksika, Kainai, and Peigan nations.⁵⁸ The traditional territories of the nations which form the Siiksikaawa, if one looks at a present-day map, include much of Southern Alberta and Northwestern Montana. Thus, present day cities such as Calgary and Lethbridge are situated within the Siiksikaawa Confederacy's territory.

In examining the legal, political, and socio-economic order of the Blackfoot, Kiera Ladner points out that their governance structure should be seen as “an expression of and as a relationship to the local ecosystem.” Furthermore, Ladner explains that the Siiksikaawa “lived freely as individuals without a coercive system of governance but had a collective system with an elected internal structure that engaged all members of their society.”⁵⁹ In living freely, each individual within the Siiksikaawa Confederacy could control and seek out their own paths. In other words, as Ladner explains, there was no definitive form of hierarchy in the political structure, allowing all people to share in the institutionalization and operationalization of the Confederacy and territory they shared.⁶⁰ In short there was not a single leader but many who worked together in order to make the best decisions.

Similar to the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg, the Siiksikaawa also utilized a clan system. The Siiksikaawa clan system helped with forming consensus and making sure everyone was heard equally. In explaining the duties of the Siiksikaawa clans, Ladner highlights that it was ta clan's responsibility to ensure decisions within the nations and confederacy as well as the day-to-day needs of their communities.⁶¹ Such decisions, as Ladner also points out, would be impacted by ecological and seasonal factors and thus showing that the Siiksikaawa also governed

⁵⁸ Kiera Ladner, “Governing Within an Ecological Context: Creating an AlterNative Understanding of Blackfoot Governance,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 70 (2003): pp. 142.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pps. 132-134.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 139.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 143.

within an ecological and sustainable context. Therefore, as Ladner concludes, the Siiksikaawa structure of governance has been in a “relationship with the circle of life [and] all beings within [their] territory, and ... about people establishing a relationship with a territory and learning about that relationship.”⁶² In other words, cohesion and respect between the Siiksikaawa and their surroundings were, and continue to be, key to the existence of those within the confederacy.

1.1.4: Understanding Indigenous Governance Structures:

Understanding governance structures in Turtle Island, such as those of the Siiksikaawa, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee, is important when discussing Indigenous political participation and when discussing Canadian political science because it highlights that Indigenous governance structures are far more complex than they are ordinarily assumed to be. By highlighting the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabeg, and Siiksikaawa confederacies, one is able to get a glimpse into governing bodies that included structure, consensus, representation, and citizenship. Additionally, by understanding Indigenous governance structures, especially in relation to their forms of citizenship, representation, and the importance of consensus, one is able to better assess the relationships and ways of participation that Indigenous peoples utilized when the British and French began to colonize Turtle Island specifically. Such participation by Indigenous peoples was never as subjects of a European crown or western structures of governance, as is often asserted in Settler cultures, but rather nation-to-nation - whether as allies or as enemies.

⁶² Ibid, pp. 125.

1.2: From Allies and Enemies to Settler ‘Responsible’ Government

As we are taught in rhymes and history classes during our childhood, we are reminded that in 1492 Christopher Columbus made a journey across the (blue) Atlantic Ocean that would lead to numerous societies and nations, coming in contact with each other – whether as trading partners and allies or as competitors and enemies. As Kiera Ladner reminds us, “the Indigenous inhabitants of Turtle Island discovered in 1492 a very lost and starving Christopher Columbus searching for a new route to India.”⁶³ Following Columbus’ accidental arrival to the Americas, the next two hundred years saw a diversity of approaches by European monarchs as they sought to reap the benefits of territory in which they had yet to have a permanent presence. For Europeans, there was shock in coming to learn of lands and peoples that the bible had never mentioned as already existing. Thus, during the last years of the 15th century, how to approach and obtain the Americas dominated discussion not only amongst European merchants and nobility, but also the Catholic Church.

1.2.1: The Word of God: Papal Bulls and Indigenous Nations in the Americas:

The Catholic Church eventually came to be the major arbiter in the debates and discussions surrounding how to approach the Americas, having already been an important voice in European encroachment into Africa through the *Papal Bull Romanus Pontifex (1455)*. Feuding between Portugal and Castile was rampant as they each claimed possession of colonial territories along the African coast. Both Castile and Portugal argued their actions were to spread Christianity and thus were granted approval by the Church.⁶⁴ The *Papal Bull Romanus Pontifex*

⁶³ Kiera Ladner, “Rethinking Aboriginal Governments” in *Reinventing Canada: Politics of the 21st Century*. Edited by Janine Brodie and Linda Trimble, pps. 43-60 (Toronto: Pearson Education Inc, 2003), pp. 44.

⁶⁴ Ladner, “Rethinking Aboriginal Governments,” pp. 45; Francisco de Vitoria, in *Political Writings*. Edited by Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 277-292; Note: Due to the Papacy’s claim to spiritual lordship of the whole world and of its role in regulating relations amongst Christian

is important, for Portugal utilized it to bolster its point that Castile could not have sole claim over the Americas.⁶⁵ Thus, in 1493 the Catholic Church established the *Papal Bull Inter Caetera*, also known also as the *Doctrine of Discovery*. The *Doctrine of Discovery* divided the Americas originally between Portugal and Castile, more specifically Portugal and Spain once the union of Castile and Aragon was completed. The *Doctrine of Discovery* established that any land not inhabited by Christians are thus available to be "discovered," claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers.⁶⁶ Additionally, the *Doctrine of Discovery* declared that "the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself."⁶⁷ In other words, as pointed out by Sheryl Lightfoot:

The Doctrine of Discovery is the theory that guided colonial practice and state making in colonial and settler colonial contexts [and] provided the newly arrived Europeans immediately and automatically acquired property rights in native lands and gained governmental, political, and commercial rights over the inhabitants without the knowledge nor the consent of Indigenous peoples.⁶⁸

Thus, the *Doctrine of Discovery* became the basis of European claims and land grabs in the Americas.

As the Spanish and Portuguese began colonizing and invading Indigenous nations and their territories throughout the Caribbean, as well as South and Central America, first-hand recording of atrocities was also documented. Such documentation of atrocities added to the

nations and between Christians and non-believers, such a claim of spreading Christianity in order to encroach upon territories of non-believers was welcomed.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Pope Alexander VI, "Inter Caetera: Division of the Undiscovered World Between Spain and Portugal," *Papal Encyclicals Online: Your Guide to Online Papal and Other Official Documents of the Catholic Church*, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/doctrine-discovery-1493>.

⁶⁸ Sheryl Lightfoot, *Global Indigenous Politics: A Subtle Revolution* (London: Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), pp. 7.

debate over the humanity of Indigenous peoples. Priest Antonio Montesinos, who was situated in the now colonized and Spanish controlled island of Hispanola, brought his concerns directly to Pope Paul III.⁶⁹ In turn, the Catholic Church outlined how Christian nations were to approach Indigenous peoples within the *Papal Bull Sublimas Dei* (1537). The *Papal Bull Sublimas Dei* stipulated that the Indigenous peoples of the Americas were indeed human but not civilized to the extent of Christian nations in Europe.⁷⁰ Therefore, in order to continue obtaining land in the Americas, Christian nations of Europe must declare war and conquer Indigenous nations or formulate treaties with said nations.⁷¹ Furthermore, an Indigenous nation, and its peoples, were to be given the opportunity to convert prior to being invaded in order to receive additional protection under the eyes of God, and thus the Catholic Church.⁷² For Indigenous nations and peoples, the debates, *Doctrine of Discovery*, and the Papal Bulls were unknown. Instead their own laws that dictate nation-to-nation relations were the basis for their relations with those representing European nations whom they met on their shores and territories.

1.2.2: Nation-to-Nation Relations: The French and British Encroachment on Turtle Island:

For Indigenous nations of Turtle Island, nation-to-nation relations were constantly being modified and formed through alliances, trade, war, and peace. Participation in establishing relationships, negotiations, or terms of peace, when considering territories of Turtle Island specifically, came in many forms of covenants and treaties, one being *Wampum*, or *Wampum Belt*. For many Indigenous nations and confederacies in the Northeast areas of Turtle Island, such

⁶⁹ Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pps. 16-17.

⁷⁰ Pope Paul III, "Sublimus Dei: On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians," *Papal Encyclicals Online: Your Guide to Online Papal and Other Official Documents of the Catholic Church*, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul03/p3subli.htm>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

as the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg, *Wampum* symbolized participation in international relations. As John Borrows, Lynn Gehl, and Alan Corbiere have discussed and outlined in research, *Wampum* traditionally was utilized for sharing resources on territories nations shared, outlining the peace agreements of warring nations, and as a way to govern relations between different nations.⁷³

One important example of a treaty between Indigenous nations and confederacies is the *Dish with One Spoon*. The *Dish with One Spoon*, to this day, governs territory shared between both the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg confederacies. Oral references to *Dish with One Spoon* date back to the 12th century and tells of an agreement for shared territory in relation to hunting and resources.⁷⁴ The one spoon, as Leanne Simpson explains, signifies that all peoples sharing the territory between both confederacies are expected to limit the game and resources they take to leave enough not only for others, but also for continued abundance and vitality of the territories into the future.⁷⁵ Such understanding and participation only expanded with the arrival of the English and French.

As the 17th century came, relations between the French and British were extended and established with Indigenous nations in the Americas. With the French arrival to Turtle Island,

⁷³ Ibid; Lynn Gehl, *The Truth the Wampum Tells: My Debwewin on the Algonquin Land Claims Process* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2014), pps. 72-74; Alan Corbiere, "Naadowek: An Anishinaabe Perspective," in *On The Trails of the Iroquois*, ed. Sylvia S. Kasprzycki, pps. 34-38 (Bonn: Kunst-und Ausstwuellungshalle der Bundersrepublik Deutschland GmbH, 2013), pp. 36.

⁷⁴ Dean M. Jacobs and Victor P. Lytwyn, "Naagan ge Bezhig Emkwaan: A Dish with One Spoon Reconsidered," in *The Ontario Historical Society*, vol. CXII, iss. 2 (2020): pps. 191-210; Leanne Simpson, "Looking After Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Rights," in *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 23, iss. 2 (Fall 2003): pps. 29-42; Victor P. Lytwyn, "A Dish with One Spoon: The Shared Hunting Grounds Agreement in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Valley Region," in *Papers of the Twenty-Eight Algonquin Conference*, ed. David Pentland, pps. 210-227 (Acton:1997); Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, pps.34, 42-43; Williams, *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg*, pps. 44-48.

⁷⁵ Simpson, "Looking After Gdoo-naaganinaa," pps. 37-38; Note: The *Dish with One Spoon* treaty would be renewed, and recorded in French and English documents, in 1701 at Montreal.

trade and good relations were forged with the Anishinaabeg and the Wabanaki Confederacy,⁷⁶ the Huron, and other nations along the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes lowlands. Relations between the French and the Haudenosaunee, however, were not positive. At the time of French movement into the upper part of Turtle Island, the decision to build settlements within Haudenosaunee territory was not welcomed. Although the French did seek approval for the establishment of settlements such as Quebec City, Trois-Rivieres, and Montreal, the approval was granted from the wrong nations.⁷⁷ In fact, the approval of these first French settlements came from nations at odds with the Haudenosaunee and thus this brought the French and Haudenosaunee into direct conflict and war.⁷⁸ Although the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg had treaties such as the *Dish with One Spoon*, the two were not allies and had a history of conflict with one another. Thus, the Anishinaabeg, and other nations such as the Huron, formed alliances with the French not only as nations who were friendly with one another, but also to protect trade routes and trade agreements established between themselves and the French.⁷⁹

The French and British were already foes back on the European continent and this only escalated in the Americas. Since the French were not friends of the Haudenosaunee, a natural alliance formed between the Haudenosaunee and the British. While the French and British fought for resources, dominance and land, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg would join their allies due to their nation-to-nation relationship. Therefore, it is important to understand that in the

⁷⁶ Note: The Wabanaki Confederacy included the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Abenaki, Passamaquoddies, and Penobscot Nations. The territory of the Confederacy includes present-day Maine, the present-day provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. The territory of the Wabanaki Confederacy also included the Gaspésie region of the present-day province of Quebec, as well as portions of New Hampshire (Henderson, *Wabanaki Compact*, pps. 2-5).

⁷⁷ Chadwick Cowie, "Quebec Sovereignty and Indigenous Nationhoods: Critiquing the Quebec Secessionist Movement from an Indigenous Lens," in *Journal of Australian, Canadian, and Aotearoa New Zealand Studies*, vol. 1, iss. 1 (June 2021), pps. 18-19.

⁷⁸ Cowie, "Quebec Sovereignty and Indigenous Nationhoods," pps. 18-19.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*; Williams, *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg*, pps. 36-48

feuding between the British and French, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg, like other Indigenous nations, would discuss, debate, and come to their own conclusions, within their own nations and confederacies, on whether or not to join their European allies in times of war. Thus, Indigenous political participation at this time continued to be as citizens and members of their own self-governing nations.

The formation of nation-to-nation relations continued throughout the 18th century as well. As the British grew in dominance and power in the Americas, Indigenous nations with which they were in contact also took different forms. As the power and territorial claims of the French dwindled in present-day North America, its Indigenous allies also faced consequences. Members of the Wabanaki Confederacy, such as the Mi'kmaq nation, sought ways to protect themselves from European encroachment. For instance, to avoid further encroachment by the French the Mi'kmaq converted to Catholicism.⁸⁰ Conversion allowed the Mi'kmaq to garner additional protection from other Catholic nations appropriating its territory.⁸¹ Due to the *Treaty of Westphalia*, Catholic nations could not encroach upon the sovereignty of other Catholic nations without the approval of the Church.⁸² The English, however, were not bound by the sanctioning of the Catholic Church as Protestantism was now their state religion.⁸³ Thus, relations with the British continued to also rely on separate agreements and treaties. The separate relations with the British only grew in importance within Indigenous politics as the power of the French in North America lessened from war.

Although war and rivalry between the French and British continuously flared up, the Seven Years War (1756-1763) highlighted that political participation by Indigenous nations

⁸⁰ Henderson, *Wabanaki Compact*, pps. 353-373.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, pps. 224-229.

⁸³ Ibid.

continued to be one reflecting nation-to-nation relations, alliances, and diplomacy. With all-out war occurring between France and England, various Indigenous nations kept their agreements with their respective European allies. The Seven Years War only increased tension amongst Indigenous nations who were at war with one another. Haudenosaunee, Huron, and Anishinaabeg settlements, alongside French and British settlements, were attacked, destroyed, and many of their respective inhabitants killed. Although the Seven Years War concluded with the British being victorious and the French effectively losing any form of power and control in North America, a realignment of nation-to-nation relations was also going to be formulated in not only a proclamation, but also in treaty and other legal forms that would impact future British/Indigenous relations and governance.

1.2.3: From the Treaty of Niagara to the Gradual Civilizations Act:

The Seven Years War was brought to an end with the *Treaty of Paris*, which effectively pushed the French out of North America and surrendered New France to the British. In addition to the *Treaty of Paris*, the British advanced *The Royal Proclamation of 1763* as a way to establish rules and laws over New France but also to rectify and re-establish relations with Indigenous nations who fought with and against the British. *The Royal Proclamation of 1763* outlined in detail the British/Indigenous relationship and rules relating to interaction and territory – reflecting mutual respect, peace, friendship, and not to interfere with each other’s governance and laws. As Jody Wilson-Raybould, the former Minister of Justice and Attorney General, explained in a speech relating to *The Royal Proclamation of 1763*:

In Canada, the relationship with the settler government was somewhat different by the time the British arrived. The Crown, rather than simply dismissing our presence out of hand through theological and other arguments, recognized our existence and

required that before its subjects could settle our land, the lands would need to be acquired lawfully from us by an official representative of the crown. Through this process of treaty-making, lands were identified as ours, based upon historical occupation of our peoples' Traditional Territories, with the balance of the lands continuing to have certain ongoing rights attached to them – the right to hunt, fish and so on. I am, of course, talking about the process of treaty making as set out in King George III's Royal Proclamation of 1763.⁸⁴

In other words, land surrender by Indigenous nations could only be done to representatives of the British Crown and not to individual subjects. In turn, the process as highlighted by Wilson-Raybould establishes not only the continued use of Peace and Friendship Treaties but also the British legal terminology that would eventually lead to land surrender treaties.

Wilson-Raybould's assessment of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 is important when discussing whether Indigenous nations and peoples considered themselves under the realm of the British or alongside the British in a nation-to-nation understanding. When first reviewing *The Royal Proclamation of 1763*, one would assume, as John Borrows highlights, that the proclamation reflected Britain's unilateral control. However, in order to fully unpack and highlight how Indigenous participation at this time reflected nation-to-nation understandings of peace and friendship, it is important to review another important document: The 1764 *Treaty of Niagara*. John Borrows compares the significance of the *Treaty of Niagara* alongside that of *The Royal Proclamation of 1763*. Borrows explains that "The Royal Proclamation is part of a treaty between First Nations and the Crown which stands as a positive guarantee of First Nation self-government and determination... the other part of the treaty is contained in an agreement ratified

⁸⁴ Jody Wilson-Raybould, *From Where I Stand: Rebuilding Indigenous Nations for a Stronger Canada* (Vancouver: Purich Books, 2019), pp. 30.

in 1764: Treaty of Niagara.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, without understanding the Treaty of Niagara, clauses and wording⁸⁶ within the Royal Proclamation remain misunderstood and not implemented to their full intent.

The *Treaty of Niagara* is considered a covenant of a chain of friendship, a peace and friendship treaty, alongside a *Wampum Belt* that did not subjugate either side to the other’s dominance. As Gehl and Borrows both elaborate, the *Treaty of Niagara* was a treaty of offensive and defensive alliance that would include British promises to assure them of a free, fair, and open trade alongside free intercourse and passage into ‘Indigenous territories.’⁸⁷ Furthermore, it further explained that no settlements or encroachments by British subjects were allowed without permission or treaty.⁸⁸ Such understanding of the *Treaty of Niagara* is noticeable when assessing the *Wampum Belts* that accompany the treaty and further highlights who was included.

The *Treaty of Niagara*, as Lynn Gehl highlights, was facilitated by the Algonquin and included representatives from twenty-four other nations, such as the Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee, as well as the British.⁸⁹ On one of the *Wampum Belts*, the twenty-four nations are represented by a figure. The figures in this belt are holding a rope. This rope connects the

⁸⁵ John Borrows “Wampum of Niagara: They Royal Proclamation, Canadian Legal History, and Self-Government.” In *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference*, ed. Michael Asch, pps. 152-172 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), pp. 152.

⁸⁶ Note: Borrows highlights that although the Royal Proclamation implies that no lands would be taken from First Nation peoples without consent – in order to consolidate the Crown’s position in North America, according to Borrows, there were additional words added like ‘dominion’ and ‘sovereignty’ over the territories that First Nations occupied. Additionally, the implication of British and Criminal jurisdiction furthered the muddling of items as the British began to impose their control and want in North America by the 1840s.

⁸⁷ Borrows “Wampum of Niagara,” pps. 152-172; Lynn Gehl, *The Truth the Wampum Tells*, pp. 72.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Gehl, *The Truth the Wampum Tells*, pps. 18 & 60; Also see: Borrows, *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution*, pp. 262; Paul Williams, “Over 10,000 Beads Sealed Ojibway-British Covenant.” *Anishinabek News*, March 8, 2006; Cole Kirkby, “Reconstituting Canada: The Enfranchisement and Disenfranchisement of ‘Indians’ Circa 1837-1900,” in *University of Toronto Law Journal*, (Fall 2019): pp. 515.

ship at one end of the belt to the land at the other end of the belt.⁹⁰ In the event that the British forget their responsibilities of providing gifts, Indigenous nations were to tug on the rope thus guiding the ship in their direction. Additionally, as Borrows explains, “representatives of the nations assembled at Niagara in 1764 touched this ‘belt of peace’ as a symbol of friendship and a pledge to become united.”⁹¹

Thus, the spirit and intent of autonomy and jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples is best viewed through the *Treaty of Niagara* as it is not only the treaty that goes alongside of the *Royal Proclamation* but also defines the relationship between Indigenous nations and England. Wilson-Raybould also adds:

The principles embodied in the belt are a set of rules governing the behaviour of the two groups. The Wampum Belt tells us that neither group will force their laws, traditions, customs, or language on each other but will coexist peacefully.⁹²

Therefore, Indigenous nations who committed to the Royal Proclamation and Treaty of Niagara regarded both as an agreement that affirmed their powers of self-determination, governance, law, as well as land allocation – continuing the view of Indigenous participation as separate nations establishing, or further entrenching, relations with the British.

Although understandings from Indigenous nations were ones that reflected nation-to-nation relations when considering Indigenous participation, such understanding was quickly eclipsed as British power continued to spread in North America and particularly with the

⁹⁰ Gehl, *The Truth the Wampum Tells*, pp. 16; Kirkby, “Reconstituting Canada,” pp. 515. Note: As Borrows Describes it: “a ship woven into one end of the belt with its bow facing towards Quebec. At the other end of the belt is an image of Michilimackinac, a place in the centre of the Great Lakes regarded as the heart of the Chippewa-Anishinaabe homelands. Between the two objects were woven twenty-four Indians holding one another’s hands, with the person furthest to the right holding the cable of the ship, while the one on the extreme left has his foot resting on the land at Quebec (“Wampum at Niagara,” pp. 264).

⁹¹ Borrows, “Landed Citizenship” pp. 335.

⁹² Wilson-Raybould, *From Where I Stand*, pp. 30.

formation of the United States of America. The American Revolution led thirteen British colonies to revolt. The thirteen colonies sought representation and pushed back on the British Crown for imposing taxation upon them. The slogan espoused by those in the colonies who supported revolution was no taxation without representation, even if the taxation was to pay for the thirteen years war which the colonies had requested to occur in order to protect them from the French. The resulting formation of the United States birthed a competing force to British dominance in North America. For Americans, the belief in ‘manifest destiny’ became a calling for the right of the United States to expand from sea to sea. For Indigenous nations, the formation of the United States and manifest destiny created additional constraints and issues of participation. These impacts varied depending on the Indigenous nation in question.

For instance, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy could not form a consensus in their deliberations over whether to support those settlers revolting against the British Crown or to support the British Crown as their ally. Thus, internal disagreement led to the Confederacy splintering, with some supporting the British and others supporting the settlers who were revolting.⁹³ Those who supported the British Crown were forced from their territories and given the ability to settle on territory the British believed to be theirs – such as the Six Nations of the Grand River. Other nations faced forced relocation. Some were considered threats to British and American interest. This included trade, treaties, and other agreements with either or both the British and the Americans. As a result, the view of Indigenous nations as allies from separate nations began to lessen as both the United States and the British were in a battle for influence and control over resources and expanding further into the territories of North America. The competition between the United States and Great Britain would further the need for more treaties

⁹³ Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of*, pps. 129-131.

that not only strengthened their place as power in North America but also western understanding of control and sovereignty over Indigenous lands. Additionally, such expansion was expected due to the growing belief that Indigenous peoples had limited time left in their existence – whether by assimilation, forceful subjugation, or extinction.

Following the formation and recognition of the United States, both Great Britain and the United States sought further control and influence over territories in North America. Thus, new laws and legislation tended to reflect western dominance and legitimacy of North American territories, resources, and peoples. Great Britain’s focus on governing subjects tended to focus on questions relating to its French subjects. The focus on French subjects existed prior to the American revolution with the implementation of the *Quebec Act of 1774*. The *Quebec Act* specifically acknowledged the difficulty of assimilating its newly acquired French subjects and thus countered the assimilationist points of the Royal Proclamation by acknowledging the importance of the Catholic faith and Civil Law for its French subjects.⁹⁴ Following the American Revolution, the *Constitution Act of 1791* separated the former French colony into two separate colonies that would each be given representative institutions. Following the Upper and Lower Canada rebellions of 1837 and 1838, further adjustments and amendments to the laws and structures of the British North American colonies in the formation of the *Lord Durham Report of 1839* were made. In response, Lord Durham recommended that both Upper and Lower Canada be reunited and that the colonial government reflect representative and elected institutions, as well as carry responsibility for all local matters.⁹⁵ Thus, much of Great Britain’s focus on

⁹⁴ Cowie, “Quebec Sovereignty and Indigenous Nationhoods,” pp. 2021; Alain Beaulieu, “An Equitable Right to Be Compensated: The Dispossession of Aboriginal Peoples of Quebec and the Emergence of a New Legal Rationale (1760-1860),” in *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 94, iss. 1 (2013): pp. 8; Peter Gossage and J.I Little, *An Illustrated History of Quebec: Tradition and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 60.

⁹⁵ Peter Russell, *Canada’s Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 14; Jennifer Smith, “The Constitutional Debate and Beyond,” in *New Trends in*

institutional development and participation in its colonies during this time was focused on trying to navigate and find a way to govern what they considered to be to classes of civilized groups of people: French and English subjects. At first glance, political participation, consideration, and inclusion of Indigenous peoples during this time would seem to be non-existent. However, Indigenous participation can be easily observed as, again, being nation-to-nation by assessing the *Jay Treaty*, *War of 1812*, as well as new treaties, such as the *Robinson-Huron* and *Robinson-Superior* treaties, formulated from the 1790s to the 1850s.

The *Jay Treaty of 1794* is an important document that yet again symbolizes not only nation-to-nation relations but also a recognition of Indigenous rights and territories. The *Jay Treaty* established agreed-upon boundaries of British North America and the United States at the time of its formation.⁹⁶ Additionally, it recognized the right of Indigenous peoples to be able to pass freely between these boundaries without reprisal, especially for those from nations whose traditional territories were now located on both sides of the British North American and United States borders.⁹⁷ Both the British and the Americans followed the *Jay Treaty* until the War of 1812. The War of 1812 witnessed hostilities renewed between not only Great Britain and the United States, but also Indigenous allies. Although popular understanding of the War of 1812 tends to focus on a feud between Great Britain and the United States, the participation and impact of Indigenous nations as allies is of similar importance. Indigenous peoples tend to be viewed in much commentary on the War of 1812 as subjects of either the British or Americans. In fact, Indigenous peoples participated in the war as separate nations defending their own

Canadian Federalism, eds. Mariam Smith and Francois Rocher, pps. 45-63 (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003): pps. 46-49,

⁹⁶ Marcia Yablon-Zug, "Gone But Not Forgotten: The Strange Afterlife of the Jay Treaty's Indian Free Passage Right," in *Queen's Law Journal*, vo. 33, iss. 2 (Spring, 2008): 565-617.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

interests as well as defending their allies. The fact that Indigenous nations participated as allies is most noticeable when looking at the end of the War in 1814. Although hostilities ended between Great Britain and the United States, some Indigenous nations continued with hostilities – requiring separate agreements throughout 1814 and 1815.⁹⁸

Additionally, treaty making between Great Britain and Indigenous nations continued to be an ongoing process prior to and after the War of 1812. For instance, the spirit of the Royal Proclamation and the Treaty of Niagara are front and centre throughout the treaty making process of the 1836 Manitoulin Island Treaty. The Manitoulin Island Treaty continued the view of separate nations who were equal.⁹⁹ This understanding shifted following the Durham Report and the Act of Union – neither of which acknowledged Indigenous peoples. Instead of recognizing Indigenous peoples and European peoples as two different peoples, the report of Lord Durham focused on the differences between the English and French. Furthermore, the participation of Indigenous peoples was assumed to be that of colonized subjects of the British Crown that must live according to the structures of the British Empire. Indigenous peoples were no longer considered nation-to-nation allies, per se, but rather uncivilized and unChristian peoples who were in the way of the inevitable dominance of European/Western ways of existence. Thus, Treaties began to shift in focus to ones of land surrender and presumed control by the British.

The Robinson-Huron and Robinson-Superior Treaties of the early 1850s became the first treaties that reflect this move towards land-surrender and supposed agreement to being controlled and subjected to the British. This shift in mentality can be attributed to the increase in a

⁹⁸ Williams, *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg*, pps. 55-57.

⁹⁹ Borrows, "Wampum at Niagara," pp. 165-166.

Eurocentric-mindset¹⁰⁰ as well as the shift in numbers of British subjects and military personnel that now existed within British North America. Such shift would be the beginning of a shift of Indigenous peoples being inferior and in the way of progress. Additionally, due to the impacts of disease from Europe, Africa, and Asia, it was assumed what was left of Indigenous societies were on borrowed time – that it was only a matter of time before all Indigenous peoples would become extinct in the Americas.

Although it was assumed Indigenous peoples would no longer exist, there became a push to further assimilate those deemed to now be civilized - those who met the criteria for what was considered to equate being civilized by British elites. The introduction of the *Enfranchisement Act of 1857* by the Canada colony offered a chance for Indigenous peoples who met the criteria of being civilized to apply for enfranchisement. Many British elite thought that Indigenous peoples who met the criteria would jump at the opportunity to enfranchise and that many others would thus strive to achieve the criteria needed. In turn, the *Enfranchisement Act of 1857* was an option that was elective. In other words, it was not mandatory. To the shock and dismay of those who believed in the Enfranchisement Act, only one single Indigenous person utilized it.¹⁰¹

1.3: Conclusion:

The change relating to Indigenous participation from within their own nations and between each other as nations to that of assumptions that they are inferior is glaring when a review is taken of not only Indigenous social, economic, legal, and political structures, but also the European/Indigenous relationships from period leading to 1867. Indigenous societies and political structures were, and continue to be, carefully built, thought out, and detailed in relation

¹⁰⁰ Such mindset includes the concept of Darwinian Theory, such as ‘survival of the fittest,’ and thus the view that Indigenous peoples were of weaker DNA and thus bound to die off.

¹⁰¹ Kirkby, “Reconstituting Canada,” pps. 502-503.

to law, citizenship, as well as diplomacy between themselves and other nations. Such notions of diplomacy, although not fully understood by European arrivals, were of importance for not only beginning relationships with Europeans but also entrenching longstanding feuds in both continents. As time passed, the nation-to-nation relationships that Indigenous nations believed to have with European nations, specifically with the French and British, turned to one of subjugation, and settler-colonialism. Such mindset change would continue through the *Enfranchisement Act of 1857* as Settlers sought further control and rights over the territories that they had moved on to and encroached upon.

Negotiations had begun in relation to formulating a dominion of British colonies in North America. Those meeting to formulate a dominion of such colonies, John A. MacDonald being one, believed in the formation of a dominion that would also stretch from coast-to-coast. Additionally, such dominion would need to deal with Indigenous peoples and their place on lands treated and yet to be treated. The approach that would be taken by the newly formed Dominion of Canada would vary by region and treaty, but in the end would focus on subjugation, control, cultural genocide, death, and forced enfranchisement – rather than political participation.

Chapter Two: **The Evolution of the Dominion and the ‘Indigenous Voice’ (1867-1991)**

2.0: Introduction:

July 1st, 1867 represents the coming together of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Lower Canada (Quebec), and Upper Canada (Ontario) to form the Dominion of Canada. Although for most non-Indigenous Canadians Confederation is perceived positively as the founding date of their state, for Indigenous peoples, especially First Nations,¹⁰² it represents further colonialism and a transformation of their relationship with the Crown to one of unilateral control by the Canadian state. The Constitution Act, 1867, also known as the British North America (BNA) Act, was agreed to by the Colonies and the Crown, stipulating that the Dominion of Canada would have provincial and federal jurisdictions. For instance, Municipal institutions, resources, health, and education are listed as being under provincial jurisdiction.¹⁰³ Regulation of trade and commerce, postal service, currency and coinage, as well as defence were delegated to the newly formed federal government of the Dominion.¹⁰⁴ Foreign affairs were under the Crown until the *Statute of Westminster*. Additionally, Section 91(24) stipulated that the Federal government, on behalf of the Crown has jurisdiction over “Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians.”¹⁰⁵

Although Section 91(24) ‘gave jurisdiction’ to the Federal Government of Canada, it is important to highlight that no Indigenous representatives were part of the Confederation discussions or planning of the Constitution Act, 1867. Thus, section 91(24) can be viewed as a

¹⁰² Note: First Nation, for the purpose of this thesis, reflects those who are listed, under Canadian Law as ‘Status-Indian’ under Section 27 of the *Indian Act*, those who are listed as ‘non-Status Indian,’ as well as those termed ‘Indian’ in literature that historically discusses those who come from nations and communities that come to be referenced as ‘Indian’ under Section 27 of the *Indian Act*, 1876.

¹⁰³ Adam Dodek, *The Canadian Constitution*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013), pp. 63.

¹⁰⁴ Dodek, *The Canadian Constitution*, pp. 61.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 62.

unilateral imposition upon Indigenous peoples, especially First Nations. Additionally, Section 91(24) gave the Federal Government of Canada the unilateral right to negotiate additional treaties with Indigenous peoples on behalf of the Crown. This was important for the Founding Fathers, and especially Canada's first Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, who wanted to build a confederation that went from coast-to-coast-to-coast. As Canada grew in size, negotiations and colonization of both the Métis and Inuit occurred alongside that of First Nations peoples – leading to three different experiences. This chapter not only continues to show that the not only was the Indigenous approach one of seeking a positive nation-to-nation relationships, but also examines how the evolution of Indigenous engagement is impacted by the restrictive nature and evolution of settler citizenship rights. Such restriction is apparent due to the policies utilized by settler society in what is the present-day Canadian state in order to control and assimilate Indigenous peoples. Thus, this chapter will argue that the differing experiences of Indigenous nations and peoples, in relation to Canada's push for sovereignty, assimilation, as well as limiting, and then allowing, influence and participation, was to serve the interest of the Canadian state and its process of nation-building. In making this argument, this chapter is organized in relation to three sections covering the 'political participation' of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit – providing evidence that although the experience of Canadian settler-colonialism sought the same end-result, the process and experiences of each group was unique.

2.1: First Nations 'Political Participation:' From Wards of the State to Conflict Over Involvement

The majority of the literature and research that exists regarding First Nations political participation from the formation of the Dominion of Canada up to the present reflects the idea that First Nations could only participate when the settler majority considered them 'civilized' or

post 1960 when the right to vote federally was granted to all First Nations on reservations without having to give up their identity. Although the aforementioned points are important caveats when reflecting on First Nations participation within the federal electoral process of Canada, the period between 1867 and 1900 is also worth reviewing. Cole Kirkby's article, "Reconstituting Canada: The Enfranchisement and Disenfranchisement of 'Indians,' Circa 1837-1900" reviews a period when First Nations peoples, specifically First Nations men with land, were able to vote, not lose their identity, and also impact the outcome of some of Canada's earliest federal elections.

As Kirkby highlights, "the full story of the Indian franchise remains untold because most historians assume there is no story to tell."¹⁰⁶ Kirkby focuses specifically on the 1887, 1891, and 1896 federal elections and how the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg impacted the outcome of at least twelve (12) electoral races.¹⁰⁷ Kirkby highlights that the ability of First Nations men to participate in the three elections was purely by coincidence and due to a loophole that would quickly disappear by 1900.¹⁰⁸ Following the formation of the Dominion of Canada, the British North America (BNA) Act outlined the requirements for voting to reflect what had already been in place for each of the four colonies that joined confederation. Thus, as Kirkby highlights, "Indian men at first remained disenfranchised due to their inability to meet the various provincial property tests while living on reserves."¹⁰⁹ This, alongside the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 deterred other First Nations men from participating as a man would have to renounce his identity and "become severed from his nation."¹¹⁰ The MacDonald government sought to hasten the

¹⁰⁶ Kirkby, "Reconstituting Canada," pp. 498.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 503.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

process of assimilation that MacDonald had encouraged in 1857 by introducing the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* (GEA) in 1869. In the MacDonald government's haste, the GEA inadvertently allowed for the enfranchisement of some First Nations men without having to renounce their identity and, Kirkby argues, this was the catalyst for a renewal of Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee politics within Upper (Ontario) and Lower (Quebec) Canada.¹¹¹

Prior to Confederation, there were a some of examples of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg seeking to be heard within Upper and Lower Canada. For instance, an important figure within the Kanien'kéha:ka community of Tyendinaga was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada in 1831 – only to have his election overturned with claims that many of the men who voted for him were not property holders.¹¹² This type of interaction and participation was sporadic from Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg peoples but was noticeably increased with the creation of The Confederacy Council. The Confederacy Council brought together representatives from not only the Nations within the Haudenosaunee but also the Anishinaabeg.¹¹³ The opening of the Confederacy Council reminded those participating, and the British who were watching, that a nation-to-nation relationship continued to exist.¹¹⁴ This nation-to-nation relationship was again highlighted when the MacDonald Government enacted the GEA of 1869 as it also granted the Governor General, and thus the federal government of Canada, sweeping new powers over First Nations peoples and their lands. Those within the Confederacy Council rejected these reforms but the Council itself remained divided on the ability to vote.

The division within the Confederacy Council was noticeable between Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg representatives, partially connected to their long history of competing interests

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 504.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 505.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

and war as well as their view on the relationship with the Canadian state and Crown,¹¹⁵ leading to its splintering. The Haudenosaunee continued to utilize approaches that showed a complete nation-to-nation approach to the Crown. The Anishinaabeg also tried to show its nation-to-nation relationship with the Crown by utilizing participation within the Canadian structure at the beginning of the confederation period. That said, it was the introduction of the Indian Act that led to the influence that both Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg men would have in the 1887, 1891, and 1896 elections according to Kirkby.

The introduction of the *Indian Act* in 1876 by the Mackenzie Liberals was considered approval of the MacDonald government's approach to First Nations, and also a way to lump all decisions and treaties under one document. The document also furthered the aims of the GEA of 1869 and extended control of the Canadian government over the lives of First Nations peoples. As previously mentioned, the BNA Act, under section 91(24) gave control of First Nations (Indians) to the newly formulated Federal Government. Jody Wilson-Raybould, in a speech to the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association Conference, reminds those listening that this was a key cornerstone that not only paved the way for the *Indian Act* but also the harsh assimilation and colonial laws that would be used against First Nations peoples. Wilson-Raybould stated:

“[T]he most insidious of tools used to propagate this policy was the 1876 Indian Act – a law that applied to all Indians who under Section 91(24) of Canada's Constitution are the responsibility of the federal government. Rather than being citizens or members of a Nation, or Tribes of Indians ... under the Indian Act all 'Indians' were made wards of the state with the [Canadian] government being our trustee.”¹¹⁶

As wards of the state, Canada unilaterally obtained control over those who not only had already treated, but others considered within territory in its sphere of influence that had yet to be

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Wilson-Raybould, *From Where I Stand*, pp. 32.

treated. The imposition of the Indian Act would be utilized to continue tightening Canada's grip over First Nations peoples, their ability to exist, and who is defined as First Nations. Although unilateral control and stricter monitoring was sought by the Canadian state, when the Indian Act was first introduced there was an ability to vote for those First Nations men who had property.

Kirkby explains that the newly included representatives from the new additions to the Dominion of Canada (British Columbia and Manitoba, to be specific) were the main opponents of allowing First Nations, even those with property, to vote.¹¹⁷ Representatives from rural areas of Ontario were the key supporters of First Nations voting, and this support very much relates to the fact that First Nations' support benefited them specifically.¹¹⁸ Kirkby analyzed three elections following 1884, when the MacDonald government tightened the rules that required First Nations men who intended to vote to prove the territory under their name was indeed theirs – this required a three year probation under the *Elections Act*. Thus, the first election First Nations men could directly impact in Canada was the federal election of 1887. By the 1887 election, a number of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe men had requested the ability to vote and were granted the ability to do so once it was verified that they owned land and had done so for the last three years.¹¹⁹

The 1887 Federal Canadian election saw a slim win for the Conservative Party. Although they did not have majority status in any district at this time, the slim win and tight races in a number of districts for the Conservatives, as Kirkby highlights, were due to Anishinaabeg men

¹¹⁷ Note: The reasons why representatives from Manitoba and British Columbia were against First Nations men with property being allowed to vote will be further explained in section 2.2: Métis Participation: From Tyranny of the English Majority to Ongoing Recognition.

¹¹⁸ Kirkby, "Reconstituting Canada," pp. 512.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 516. Note: Although the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabeg had diverged in their tactics on how to deal with the Canadian state (with the Haudenosaunee opposing any use of voting), some Haudenosaunee did opt to utilize the vote to influence who was elected in the region that Six Nations of the Grand River was situated.

who cast ballots. The Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) incumbents in Algoma, Muskoka and Parry Sound, Northumberland West, and Peterborough West each won their races.¹²⁰ Kirkby further explains that had those Anishinaabeg voters been prevented from voting, the Conservative incumbents would not have won re-election. For instance, in Algoma, the vote margin was 18 votes and 719 Anishinaabeg men were estimated to have cast a ballot, with almost all going to the Conservative incumbent.¹²¹ The riding of Peterborough West¹²² had a vote margin of 16 votes and 16 Anishinaabeg men had cast ballots – all in favour of the Conservative incumbent.¹²³ Another notable riding was Haldimand where the margin of victory was one vote. Kirkby lists Haldimand as a district that the Haudenosaunee swayed.¹²⁴ However, due to the actual location of the district and the Anishinaabeg community of New Credit falling within its boundaries, I would argue that it is another district that the Anishinaabeg influenced to allow for another Conservative incumbent to be returned to the House of Commons.

Kirkby lists 356 First Nations men as being registered to vote for both the districts of Brant South and Haldimand.¹²⁵ In 1887, Peter E. Jones, a member of New Credit was one of the few men from the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg community of New Credit who had the ability to vote and who was an ardent supporter of the Conservative candidate.¹²⁶ Thus, it is likely the men from New Credit who voted would have voted with Peter Jones for the Conservative Candidate. In turn, the support from Anishinaabeg men who had property were the reason for a

¹²⁰ Kirkby, "Reconstituting Canada," pp. 520.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Note: The district of Peterborough West includes the Michi Saagiig Nishinaabeg communities of Hiawatha and Curve Lake First Nations

¹²³ Kirkby, "Reconstituting Canada," pp. 520.

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Alan Sherwin, *Chief Peter E Jones, 1843-1909: Bridging Two Peoples*, (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press ,2012), pps. 121-140. Note: Peter Jones was both a former Chief of New Credit and was a friend of John A. MacDonald's.

Conservative victory in the district of Haldimand. The Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) candidate in Brampton South benefited from Haudenosaunee support, as did the Liberal candidate in the district of Hastings East from Haudenosaunee voters in the community of Tyendinaga.¹²⁷ It is important to note, that although it seems that party support was different between Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg men in relation to federal districts in Ontario, Kirkby notes that it was not partisan politics that led to their voting behaviour but who the local representative was and their relationship with the communities in their districts.¹²⁸ In fact, Kirkby stresses that the Liberal candidate in Hastings East, Samuel Burdett, claimed to have Kanien'kéha:ka lineage and hypothesizes that such claim may have further influenced those from Tyendinaga who could vote in his favour.¹²⁹

The 1891 and 1896 elections saw little difference and almost the exact same influence on the same candidates in each district highlighted from 1887. However, there are six notable changes. The first change relates to the district of Peterborough East which was no longer a district influenced by Anishinaabeg voters. The second change from 1887 was the decrease of influence in Northumberland West of Anishinaabeg voters. In both districts there had been a large increase in non-First Nations peoples relocating to the area. This undercut Anishinaabeg voter influence. The third change reflects the riding of Parry Sound and Muskoka, which was redrawn into more than one riding. The riding that contained the majority of Anishinaabeg voters following redistricting became Bruce North. The fourth and fifth changes relate to the district of Renfrew North, which included the Anishinaabeg community of Golden Lake.

¹²⁷ Kirkby, "Reconstituting Canada," pp. 520; Note: 102 men from Tyendinaga had registered to vote and the margin of victory was 64.

¹²⁸ Kirkby, "Reconstituting Canada," pp. 522.

¹²⁹ Ibid. Note: I concur with Kirkby's hypothesis due to the influence that future Indigenous candidates have had on Indigenous turnout when they are the only Indigenous candidate in a district with a high percentage of Indigenous voters.

In the 1891 federal Canadian election, the Conservative incumbent for Renfrew North, had a victory margin of 79, which was also the number of Anishinaabeg men from Golden Lake who were granted the right to vote.¹³⁰ However, by the 1896 election, Anishinaabeg voters from Golden Lake no longer had the numbers to influence the electoral outcome in the district of which they were a part. Lastly, the sixth noticeable change was the outcome in the district of Brant South. The former mayor of Brantford, Robert Henry was well known to the Haudenosaunee at Six Nations, and as the Conservative candidate also took their influence and vote seriously. In turn, Henry won over the Liberal incumbent with the support of Haudenosaunee voters at Six Nations.¹³¹ The results for Brant South are even more intriguing as the LPC under Wilfrid Laurier won the 1896 election and would go on to form government. The Haudenosaunee voter turnout and influence in turfing a Liberal incumbent in an election that gave the Liberals government highlights the importance of not only relationship-building but treating First Nations voters as equally important as non-First Nation voters.

Following the election of the Laurier government in 1896, the support for much of Canada's 'Indian' policy continued to be similar between both of Canada's main governing parties – one that focused on assimilation of First Nations and one that further gave the Canadian state stricter control. As Canada grew with the implementation of the Numbered Treaties between 1871 and 1921 (Treaties 1 through 11), Canada also continued to strengthen its imposition and control of Status First Nations peoples and, at the same time, legislated them towards non-existence. In 1898, the Laurier government fulfilled one of its promises that related to amending the *Elections Act*.¹³² Included in the amendments made in 1898 was the removal of

¹³⁰ Kirkby, "Reconstituting Canada," pp. 524.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 525-526.

¹³² *Ibid*, pp. 535

any and all Status First Nations men with property from having the franchise unless they were also deemed civilized and gave up their identity (or status).¹³³ In doing so, status First Nations people were now denied the right to cast a ballot and unable to do so for the next sixty-two years.¹³⁴

Over the next sixty-two years Canada further outlawed First Nations ways of existing and sought control over every aspect of First Nations lives. For example, to be civilized meant being educated in the English language and exist within English speaking institutions or businesses. If a status First Nations man went on to become a Priest, or obtain any form of a professional degree, the *Indian Act* dictated that they were no longer First Nations in the eyes of Canadian law.¹³⁵ If status First Nations people had served in the World Wars, they also had to give up their identity in order to obtain Veterans' benefits.¹³⁶ Eventually, First Nations women who married non-First Nations men also were forced to give up not only their identity but also that of their descendants.¹³⁷ Canada also made it illegal for status First Nations people to seek legal counsel, outlawed cultural practices, and imposed a system of governance that must be accountable to not only the *Indian Act* but the Department of Indian Affairs.¹³⁸ Furthermore, Indian Affairs also now had the authority to remove anyone from the Chief and Council system who was deemed to be unfit to be in such a role. What constituted a status First Nations person as being unfit varied and usually reflected if they were considered a threat to Canada's Indian policy of forced

¹³³ Ibid; Note: It is important to highlight that some status-First Nation women were able to vote when women obtained the right to vote federal in 1917. This was a result of serving in World War 1. However, little to no information currently exists on this aspect of First Nations participation and further in-depth research is required.

¹³⁴ Note: An exception was granted to First Nations Veterans from WWI who also lived on reserve in 1924 (this concession did not extend to veteran benefits however).

¹³⁵ Bob Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality* (Port Coquitlam: Indigenous Relations Press, 2018), pp. 29-30.

¹³⁶ Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*, pp. 29.

¹³⁷ Ibid, pps. 19-21; Note: This would change in 1985 but with other forms of limitations that continue to isolate and remove descendants from being recognised by the Canadian state in relation to their First Nations identity.

¹³⁸ Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*, pps, 15-19, 70, & 73-74.

assimilation or what I term ‘legislative genocide’.¹³⁹ In addition to the actions taken by Canada through the *Indian Act*, if any First Nations person wanted to leave their community boundaries, they had to be given permission and First Nations women required a male escort.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, participation for First Nations peoples within Canada and the electoral system was not a matter of choice let alone a process respectful of nation-to-nation relationships following 1896.

The debate concerning First Nations men and women in relation to enfranchisement and potentially altering the laws would not return to the forefront of discussions until after the 1957 federal general election. Following twenty-two years of LPC governance, the Progressive Conservative Party (PC), under the leadership of John Diefenbaker, obtained the most seats in the House of Commons, forming a minority government. Diefenbaker, as an MP for Prince Albert, was first elected during the federal general election of 1940. While serving as MP, Diefenbaker worked with and interacted with many First Nations and Métis.¹⁴¹ Diefenbaker believed a path to success for First Nations peoples was the need for enfranchisement without losing their identity and pushed heavily for this once he became Prime Minister.¹⁴² By the late 1950s many changes in relation to identity, society and politics were evolving – including in relation to Indigenous peoples. For instance, many Canadian citizens did not previously see enfranchisement and citizenship for status First Nations people as an issue and the eventual change in mindset in part came from the interaction of Canadians and First Nations during World War II (WWII), and new provisions made for veterans thereafter.

¹³⁹ Note: I use legislative genocide myself and define it as reference to legislation being used to lead to the extinction of a group of people through means considered legal by a settler-colonial state rather than murdering them.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pps. 36-37.

¹⁴¹ The Canadian Encyclopedia. “Status Indians Gain the Federal Vote (1960),” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed June 20, 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indigenous-suffrage>; Joseph, 21 *Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*, pps. 81-82; Cowie, “Validity and Potential,” pp. 26.

¹⁴² Ibid.

During WWII, First Nations women and men signed up in record numbers to assist with the war effort, whether within the military or on the home front.¹⁴³ In fact, the right to vote for First Nations Serviceman, and their spouses, was granted for their support of the war effort in 1944 by the Mackenzie-King government.¹⁴⁴ The interaction between First Nations people and Canadian men and women during WWII not only helped to educate Canadians on First Nations peoples but also allowed them to intermingle outside of the strict rules and laws put in place by the Canadian state that effectively had prevented both from doing previously. Thus, following the landslide victory of the Diefenbaker PCs in 1958 to the biggest majority government in Canadian history, Diefenbaker moved on a new form of First Nations participation within Canada's federal representative and elective processes.

For instance, following the 1958 Canadian federal election, Diefenbaker nominated John Gladstone to the Canadian Senate. Following approval by the Governor General on behalf of the Crown, on January 31 1958, Senator Gladstone became the first First Nations senator to not have to give up his identity but also the first member of the Kanai nation and Siiksikaawa Confederacy to be sent into Canada's parliament.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, due to a push for a Bill of Rights by the Diefenbaker government, it was even more important for Diefenbaker to allow for enfranchisement to status First Nations men and women whether on-reserve or not.

Enfranchisement without a loss of identity was enacted by the Diefenbaker government on July 1

¹⁴³ Government of Canada, "Indigenous People and the Second World War," *Veteran Affairs Canada*, accessed June 20, 2020, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/classroom/fact-sheets/aborigin>.

¹⁴⁴ The Canadian Encyclopedia.

¹⁴⁵ Marie Burke, "James Gladstone was "the Gentle Persuader" in the Senate," *Windspeaker.com* (April 7, 2017), accessed June 21, 2020 <https://windspeaker.com/news/footprints/james-gladstone-was-the-gentle-persuader-in-the-senate>; Gar Lunney Newton, "Photostory #199: Prairie Farmer James Gladstone: Leaves Alberta Ranch for Senate Chamber," *National Gallery of Canada* (March 3, 1959), accessed June 21, 2020, <https://photostories.ca/explore/photostory-199-prairie-farmer-james-gladstone-leaves-alberta-ranch-senate-chamber>.

1960, granting First Nations men and women the right to vote without having to give up their identity.¹⁴⁶

Almost a full four months after the Diefenbaker government granted enfranchisement, the *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg*¹⁴⁷ communities of Curve Lake and Hiawatha, located in the district of Peterborough, were the first to be able to cast ballots on-reserve – both men and women; whether owning property or not. A by-election had been called for October 31st, 1960 and both Curve Lake and Hiawatha had ballot boxes situated within their boundaries.¹⁴⁸ The Peterborough byelection results were significant as the district handed a defeat to the PCP candidate, and thus the Diefenbaker government. Instead of returning a representative to the government benches, voters elected Walter Pitman and the New Democratic Party (NDP).¹⁴⁹ Although both Curve Lake and Hiawatha became the first two communities to participate in the federal electoral process, little to no data exists as to how high the voter turnout was and who carried both communities. Thus, the impact or level of participation from both communities is unknown.

The issue of data pertaining to Indigenous voters has not been an issue only for the 1960 by-election in Peterborough. The federal elections of 1962 and 1963, saw the Diefenbaker PCs

¹⁴⁶ The Canadian Encyclopedia. "Status Indians Gain the Federal Vote (1960)"; Chadwick Cowie, "A Vote for Canada or Indigenous Nationhood? The Complexities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Participation in Canadian Politics," *The Conversation Canada* (November 1 2021), accessed June 8, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/a-vote-for-canada-or-indigenous-nationhood-the-complexities-of-first-nations-metis-and-inuit-participation-in-canadian-politics-169312>; Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pps. 26-27; NOTE: While Nova Scotia allowed for status-First Nations men, and then women, to vote provincially from 1885 on, Quebec would be the last province to grant Indigenous peoples voting rights in 1969.

¹⁴⁷ Michi Saagiig, in English, translates to Mississauga peoples. The Mississauga nation was a member of the Anishinaabeg Confederacy.

¹⁴⁸ Rhiannon Johnson, "The 1st First Nations to Participate in a Federal Election Reflect on the Politics of Voting," *CBC Indigenous* (September 23, 2019), accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/hiawatha-curve-lake-federal-byelection-1.5290370>; Cowie, "Validity and Potential," footnote 58

¹⁴⁹ Pauline Jewitt, "Voting in the 1960 Federal By-Elections at Peterborough and Niagara Falls: Who Voted New Party and Why?," *Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol.28, iss. 1 (February 1962): pps. 35-53; Johnson, "The 1st First Nations to Participate in a Federal Election Reflect on the Politics of Voting."

reduced first to a minority government and then to the official opposition.¹⁵⁰ However, the turnout and impact of Indigenous voters in their first two general elections is incapable of being fully studied. Additionally, data regarding Indigenous participation in the 1965 federal general election is also difficult to come by. Although both 1963 and 1965 produced minority governments that were led by Lester B. Pearson, the LPC as the governing party during this time set out to study what issues First Nations peoples faced. The study, named the Hawthorne Report, was completed in 1966 and detailed socio-economic issues as the major impediment to First Nations peoples.¹⁵¹ The findings of the Hawthorne Report would play a major role in policy regarding First Nations peoples in the decades to come, and also helped influence the election of the first status First Nations individual to the House of Commons: Leonard Marchand.

Marchand's 1968 victory in the district of Kamloops-Cariboo not only reflected the first status First Nations person to be elected into the House of Commons but also the first Indigenous person to become a parliamentary secretary.¹⁵² Marchand, as a member of the Liberal Caucus headed by Prime Minister Pierre E. Trudeau following the 1968 election, also pushed the government on issues of land settlements between First Nations and the Canadian state. Marchand's focus on land settlements only gained traction following two specific events: the *1969 White Paper* and the *1973 Calder Decision*.

¹⁵⁰ Note: The data may exist and would need to be very carefully and meticulously studied poll by poll in relation to Inuit communities, Métis settlements, and First Nations communities to consider potential understanding of participation by Indigenous peoples. It is important to also note that said data would not only reflect Indigenous voters as some polls would also allow and have non-Indigenous voters casting their ballots at the same poll.

¹⁵¹ Government of Canada. "A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies." Edited by H.B. Hawthorn. Government Report. Ottawa, October 1966; Note: A main contributor and researcher for the Hawthorne Report was Alan Cairns, who would utilize the research from the Hawthorne Report to put forth an argument for recognizing First Nations as "Citizens Plus."

¹⁵² Len Marchand and Matt Hughes, *Breaking Trail* (Prince George: Caitlin Press Inc, 2000), pps. 60-79; The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Len Marchand," The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed: June 21 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/leonard-stephen-marchand>; Note: Marchand become the Parliamentary Secretary to Jean Chrétien, who was the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development between 1968-1974.

Following the 1968 election, and a majority government being elected under Pierre Trudeau, the government sought input on what to do regarding Canada's 'Indian' policy and the socio-economic issues that were outlined by the Hawthorne Report. Jean Chrétien, then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, held consultation meetings in many different First Nations communities. Such consultations, although a form of participation, ignored the nation-to-nation relationship and considered status First Nations as only citizens of Canada. When Chrétien announced his findings and the government presented the White Paper in 1969, the Trudeau Sr. government looked to implement the full assimilation of First Nations peoples.¹⁵³ The White Paper sought to abolish the *Indian Act*, treaties, as well as to absorb First Nations into the Canadian populace as if they were no different than those who immigrated post-1867 or those who were the descendants of settlers.¹⁵⁴

Although introduced in the House of Commons in 1969, the *1969 White Paper* had come into existence as a policy idea six years earlier. During the 1963 New Democratic Party (NDP) Convention, attendees advanced a similar policy that was debated and approved by attendees and members of the NDP.¹⁵⁵ The NDP, the successor to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), had a policy that specifically advocated for:

“[T]he repeal[ing] of the Indian Act and the elimination of all government activities which place Indian people in separate groups; introducing self-government to reserves; the transfer of responsibility from Indian Affairs to provincial governments [and] launching an aggressive program for educational integration.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ John Tobias, “Protection, Civilization, and Assimilation,” in *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations*, ed. J.R. Miller, pps. 127-144 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp 141; Ladner, “Rethinking Aboriginal Governance,” pp. 50; Cowie, “Validity and Potential,” pps. 27-28.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Frank James Tester, Paule McNicol, and Jessie Forsyth, “With an Ear to the Ground: The CCG/NDP and Aboriginal Policy in Canada, 1926-1993,” in *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 34, iss. 1 (Spring 1999): pp. 59.

¹⁵⁶ Tester et al, “With an Ear to the Ground,” pp. 59.

In turn, the Trudeau Sr. government, following the consultations done by Jean Chrétien, retitled the NDP policy and added additional points and clarification to the policy. When introduced as legislation in the House of Commons The NDP Indian Affairs Critic, following the White Paper's introduction, boasted about what it presented and proposed:

The Honourable Member for Peace River and I had the opportunity in 1959, 1960, and 1961 of participating in the joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on Indian Affairs ... the report of which committee contained the same ideas and concepts that the Minister has now outlined. Even though it has taken some period of time to get a cabinet minister to agree with those concepts, it is still welcomed.¹⁵⁷

Opposition to the 1969 White Paper was strong from First Nations peoples and this came as a surprise to those who advocated and supported it. The opposition from First Nations peoples should have been expected as the policy introduced did not actually reflect what was heard during the consultation process.¹⁵⁸ The pushback led the NDP to abandon its support of the policy and to call on the government of Trudeau Sr. to do the same.

Originally, Trudeau Sr., Chrétien, and the government sought to continue with the plans of the White Paper. During a meeting, Chrétien was asked by a protestor of the 1969 White Paper “when did we lose our identity?,” referencing the planned assimilationist components of the white paper.¹⁵⁹ Chrétien responded, “when you signed the treaties.”¹⁶⁰ Chrétien’s comments went uneasily alongside Trudeau Sr.’s push for ‘a just society’, based as they were on ignoring the historic and contemporary actions of colonialism as well as the fact that participation for First Nations peoples was one of nation-to-nation relations.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 60.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Lawrence Martin, *Chrétien: The Will to Win*, (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1995), pp. 195.

¹⁶⁰ Martin, *Chrétien*, pp. 195.

Two major responses emerged from First Nations in response to the 1969 White Paper. One response was Harold Cardinal's book very tellingly titled: *The Unjust Society*. At the time of the White Paper, Cardinal was the elected leader of the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA) and had participated in the consultations held by Chrétien when in his region. Cardinal's writing reflected much of what had been forgotten by the settler population and its representatives, and it assisted in educating many Canadians at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁶¹ Additionally, Cardinal's work contributed to the second response: various policy papers by First Nations organizations. For instance, both the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and the IAA developed powerful counter-proposals calling for the confirmation of treaty rights, protections of First Nations rights, and to deal with issues of land.¹⁶² The UBCIC's *Brown Paper* and the IAA's *Red Paper* were instrumental in how the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB)¹⁶³ also pushed back on the Trudeau Sr. government, with the NIB adopting the IAA's Red Paper as its official response. The organized counter-response and opposition by First Nations eventually led to the Trudeau Sr. government shelving the White Paper in the early 1970s.¹⁶⁴

At the same general time of the White Paper's shelving, the Calder Case was also winding its way through to Canada's Supreme Court. In 1969, Frank Calder, a citizen of the Nisga'a Nation, and the Nisga'a Nation's Tribal Council sued the province of British Columbia and the Canadian state over its usurpation of Nisga'a land because the Nisga'a had never entered

¹⁶¹ Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969).

¹⁶² The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, "A Declaration of Indian Rights: The B.C. Indian Position Paper, Report, Vancouver, November 17, 1970; Sally M. Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda 19768-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981): pps. 183-185.

¹⁶³ NOTE: The NIB is the predecessor to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

¹⁶⁴ Pamela D. Palmater, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2011), pp. 68.

into a treaty with the Crown or its representatives.¹⁶⁵ The 1973 ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) recognized that Indigenous title did exist at the time of European contact, and in the case of the Nisga'a that the Royal Proclamation of 1763, with its emphasis on "nations within," showed this.¹⁶⁶ The division by the SCC was regarding whether or not such title still existed. Despite such a division by the SCC on whether or not Nisga'a title still existed, the Calder Case led the Canadian state to begin taking issues of land and improper seizure of land more seriously. With the persistence of Liberal MP Marchand at this time, the Trudeau Sr. government began the process of dealing with land claims made by First Nations.¹⁶⁷ Thus, it was following the Calder Case, that the Canadian state began to look more deeply at its assumed territorial integrity and began to settle issues of Indigenous lands, specifically in areas that had not been surrendered with the use of a treaty as had been expected by the Royal Proclamation of 1763.¹⁶⁸

Unfortunately, the 1764 Gus Wen Tahs of Niagara were not included or read into the Calder Case, nor considered by the Canadian state at this time. In turn, participation and negotiations were approached from a Eurocentric approach which continued to view First Nations people as no more than citizens within the Canadian state whom Canada could infringe upon rather than as citizens of distinct and separate nation that had not agreed to a federation. Despite the way of approaching the issues of land claims stemming from Calder, one must wonder if MP Marchand had not been in the House of Commons, and a member of the Trudeau

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Isaac, *Aboriginal Law: Commentary, Cases and Materials* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. 7; John Borrows and Leonard I. Rotman, *Aboriginal Legal Issues: Cases, Materials & Commentary* (Markham: LexusNexus Canada Inc., 2007), pps. 221-241.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Borrows and Rotman, *Aboriginal Legal Issues: Cases, Materials & Commentary*, pps. 241-242; Cowie, "Quebec Sovereignty vs. Indigenous Nationhoods," pp. 28.

Sr. government, at this time if such a process would have even been considered by the Canadian state. Thus, it is possible that without the participation of Marchand, one of two Indigenous MPs¹⁶⁹ in the House of Commons following the 1972 and 1974 elections, that little to no movement and understanding would have occurred regarding the improper usurpation of land that had not been treated.¹⁷⁰

Throughout the rest of the 1970s little consideration for First Nations were given outside of the land claim process. The focus of the Trudeau Sr. government turned to questions and plans of Constitutional amendment to make way for “patriating” the constitution from the UK by allowing for amendments to be done in Canada. The focus on Constitutional politics grew with the election of the Parti Québécois to government within the province of Quebec as one of their promises was to have a referendum on separating from Canada and becoming an independent state. Although questions of Quebec’s place in Canada is an important and significant component of discussion and research in Canadian political science, and Canadian politics in general, little to no consideration was given regarding First Nations who share territory with Quebec. The assumption from both Canada and the provinces, such as Quebec, was that elected officials in each jurisdiction were representing First Nations and thus did not need additional consultation. This general attitude would continue through the 1979, 1980, 1984, and 1988 elections.

In relation to participation, the 1979 election, which brought in a short-lived minority government under Joe Clarke and the Progressive Conservative Party (PC), concluded with Marchand not returning to the House of Commons. The lack of First Nation representation

¹⁶⁹ Note: Wally Firth, a Métis individual, was elected to Canada’s House of Commons in 1972 as an NDP Member for the district of Northwest Territories (English Encyclopedia, “Wally Firth,” *English Encyclopedia*, accessed June 24 2020, https://www.encyclo.co.uk/meaning-of-Wally_Firth).

¹⁷⁰ Note: This was an important movement forward that would lead to the Modern Treaty Process as witnessed with not only the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) but also the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, to name but two.

continued through the 1980 and 1984 federal elections as well. The lack of First Nation representation, alongside the federal Canadian and provincial government's mindset that they were the top-tier of elected representatives of First Nations peoples between 1979-1988. This was especially problematic as this period was one that related heavily to constitutional patriation and what Peter Russell has called mega-constitutional discussions.¹⁷¹

During the 1980 federal election, the concern of the Trudeau Sr. Liberals was on promising Quebec that if Quebecers voted for them, it would not be for the status quo.¹⁷² Trudeau Sr.'s plan to show Quebec had not voted for the status quo was to look at Constitutional changes as well as the patriation of the constitution to Canada. In turn, during their first referendum on separating, Quebecers voted close to sixty percent against it.¹⁷³ Following Quebec's first referendum on separation from Canada held in 1981, a set of federal-provincial meetings were held in Ottawa to discuss constitutional matters.¹⁷⁴ Leading up to these discussions, First Nations pushed back against the planned meetings. The pushback from First Nations reflected concern and frustration over the lack of Canada, and the Crown, following its obligations to treaties formulated as well as nation-to-nation relations.¹⁷⁵ It was during the early plans of these meetings that it was expressed to First Nations who were frustrated and angry to take it to their Premiers in each province. This led to further anger and frustration.

In channelling that anger and frustration, the President of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), George Manuel, led a protest to Ottawa in 1980. Manuel and the UBCIC secured two separate Via Rail trains to bring First Nations peoples to Ottawa. Both trains began

¹⁷¹ Russell, "Canada's Constitutional Odyssey, pps. 74-76.

¹⁷² Ibid, pp. 76; Cowie, "Quebec Sovereignty vs. Indigenous Nationhoods," pp. 29.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Note: The first meeting was held September 8-13, 1980. A second meeting was held November 2-5, 1981.

¹⁷⁵ John Borrows, *Freedom & Indigenous Constitutionalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), pps. 115 & 118-119.

in Vancouver and picked up people along their routes and is referenced as ‘the Constitutional Express.’¹⁷⁶ Those joining Manuel and other organizers arrived in Ottawa and held a peaceful protest that was largely ignored by the Premiers and Prime Minister Trudeau Sr.¹⁷⁷ The lack of response and consideration of First Nations frustration led to a second round of the Constitutional Express and brought First Nations directly to London, England to bring their grievances directly to the British Government and the Crown (as represented by Queen Elizabeth II).¹⁷⁸ Although the Government of the United Kingdom and the Crown responded that First Nations relations were a jurisdiction under Canada’s federal government, the UK did express the need to include protections of the rights of Indigenous peoples if Canada were to introduce a revamped constitutional document.¹⁷⁹

With a gentle nudge from the UK, what was to become Section 35 of the *Constitution Act* and Section 25 of the *Charter of Rights* were now up for negotiation. One would expect First Nations participation to be a cornerstone of Section 35 and Section 25. However, discussion and decision over what Section 35 and Section 25 spelled out did not include them at the decision-making table.¹⁸⁰ Instead that table was to include representatives from provincial governments, the Premiers of the provinces, members of the federal government, as well as key ministers in the Federal government, including Prime Minister Trudeau Sr.¹⁸¹ NDP MP representatives listening to First Nations concerns, put forth an alternative form of Section 35 and Section 25 that they

¹⁷⁶ Borrows, *Freedom & Indigenous Constitutionalism*, pps. 118-119; Note: Although both trains left from Vancouver, one train followed a southern rail route while the other followed the current route of ‘The Canadian.’ Both trains came back together in Winnipeg before continuing on to Toronto and then to Ottawa.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Note: In relation to First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) was given observer status.

¹⁸¹ Russell, *Canada’s Constitutional Odyssey*, pp. 117

believed would better support and represent Indigenous rights.¹⁸² The NDP version of Section 35 and Section 25 was not acceptable for many Premiers and debate over how to recognize Indigenous rights within a patriated Constitution continued.

Peter Lougheed, then Premier of the province of Alberta, pushed for the term ‘existing’ to be included in references to “Aboriginal rights” in the 1982 *Constitution Act*.¹⁸³ The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), AFN Regional structures, First Nations Political Territorial Organizations (PTO), Tribal Councils, as well as many Indian Act imposed governments and hereditary Chiefs spoke out against the lack of inclusion that First Nations were given. Despite disapproval by the majority of First Nations political and community representatives, the wording decided upon by the Premiers and the Trudeau Sr. government was finalized as this:

Aboriginal rights and freedoms not affected by Charter:

25. The guarantee in this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada including
- (a) any rights or freedoms that have been recognized by the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763; and
 - (b) any rights or freedoms that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.¹⁸⁴

Recognition of existing aboriginal and treaty rights:

35. (1) The existing aboriginal treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.¹⁸⁵

With the endorsement of representatives within the House of Commons, the *Constitution Act* (1982) and the *Charter of Rights* received royal assent in April of 1982 – without any official support from First Nations.

¹⁸² Ardith Walkem and Halie Bruce, “Forward,” in *Box of Treasures or Empty Box? Twenty Years of Section 35*, eds. Ardith Walkem and Halie Bruce (Penticton: Theytus Books, 2003).

¹⁸³ Ibid; Ladner, “Rethinking Aboriginal Governance,” pps. 51-52.

¹⁸⁴ Dodek, *The Canadian Constitution*, pp. 101; Ladner, “Rethinking Aboriginal Governance,” pp. 51.

¹⁸⁵ Dodek, *The Canadian Constitution*, pp. 103.

The Trudeau Sr. government, in response to the clear lack of endorsement from First Nations, as well as the Inuit and all but one of the Métis organizations, agreed to hold a set of First Ministers meetings with Indigenous leaders in relation to Constitutional matters. The first meeting, held March 15-16 1983, took place in Ottawa and focused on Indigenous concerns and rights in relation to the Charter of Rights as well as self-government.¹⁸⁶ This meeting was the only one held with Prime Minister Trudeau Sr, who would resign and leave federal politics soon after. It is also important to note that these meetings focused on the leaders of National organizations, such as the AFN and representatives of Band Council Chiefs and Councils, with many First Nations thus not feeling properly represented or having their traditional and non-Indian Act leaders at the decision table.¹⁸⁷ Additionally, the meeting was the only one held by a Liberal government, who would be returned to the opposition benches in the wake of the September 1984 federal election.

Although the 1984 Federal Canadian election witnessed a landslide victory for Brian Mulroney and the Progressive Conservatives, the win can be attested to Mulroney's courting of dissatisfaction from Quebec and Western Canada. Indigenous perspectives and concerns, as had been witnessed with previous governments and Crown representatives, were of little focus. The 1984 election saw little change in Indigenous representation. Although an additional two First Ministers conference with Indigenous leaders was held in Ottawa between April 2-3 1985 and March 26-27 1987, the focus specifically related to Quebec and how to gain Quebec's signature

¹⁸⁶ Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, "First Ministers' Conferences 1906-2004," a Report prepared by the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat (Ottawa, July 2004), pps. 76-78; Robert A. Milen, "Aboriginal Constitutional and Electoral Reform," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Electoral Reform in Canada*, edited by Robert A. Milen, Volume 9 of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, pps. 3-65 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991), pp. 13.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

to the *Constitution Act* (1982) - an Act the province still has not formally signed on to.¹⁸⁸ The focus on Quebec's acceptance of the *Constitution Act* (1982) would be referenced in Canadian politics as the Quebec Round, which led eventually to the negotiation of the *Meech Lake Accord*. Many First Nations leaders and peoples objected to the sole focus on Quebec, especially as they were left out of the process that led to the changes in 1982. Additionally, frustration was expressed by First Nations, and Canadians alike, over the process being debated and decided upon by over a dozen white men.¹⁸⁹ Opposition from First Nations peoples was met with the promise that once Quebec was brought into the *Constitution Act* (1982) then focus could turn to an Indigenous Round.¹⁹⁰ Such a promise from the Mulroney government was not convincing and First Nations continued to express anger, frustration, and opposition to the focus on Quebec.

Pushback against the *Meech Lake Accord*, in its early form, as well as the *North America Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) led to a decline in support for the Mulroney government in the 1988 Federal Canadian election. Although there was a decline in support, and thus the number of elected PC MPs, there was a number of firsts for First Nations participation in the Canadian electoral process. Not only did the 1988 election see, for the first time in Canada's federal electoral process the election of three (3) Indigenous MPs, but more specifically two (2) First Nations MPs. Both Willie Littlechild, elected as the PC MP for the riding of Wetaskiwin, and Ethel Blondin-Andrew, elected as the Liberal MP for the Western Arctic, entered the House of Commons for the first time. Blondin-Andrew also symbolized the first time a First Nations

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, pps. 78-80, 81-83, & 85-87; Milen, "Aboriginal Constitutional and Electoral Reform," pps. 25-29

¹⁸⁹ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pp. 134.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, pps. 87-100; Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pp. 127; Peter C. Newman, *The Secret Mulroney Tapes: Unguarded Confessions of a Prime Minister* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2005), pp. 121; Rand Dyck, *Canadian Politics: Critical Approaches*, 4th Edition (Toronto: Thomson Nelson, 2004), pp. 103.

woman was elected to the House of Commons.¹⁹¹ Although Littlechild's election brought a First Nations voice to the Mulroney government, Blondin-Andrew's election also brought a First Nation voice to the opposition benches in relation to the *Meech Lake Accord*. In addition to Blondin-Andrew's vocal opposition, Elijah Harper, an Indigenous member of the Manitoba Legislature's opposition also used his place to oppose the *Meech Lake Accord* on behalf of Indigenous peoples across the territory they shared with the Canadian state.

In order for the *Meech Lake Accord* to be approved and implemented each of the ten provinces of Canada needed to pass it within their legislatures by the end of June 1990. Elijah Harper, who was Oji-Cree, was member of the Manitoba NDP, who were the official opposition in the Manitoba legislature at this time, continued to be vocal against the *Meech Lake Accord* due to its lack of consideration of First Nations peoples.¹⁹² In reflecting on the *Meech Lake Accord*, Harper stated:

Well I was opposed to the Meech Lake Accord because we weren't included in the Constitution. We were to recognize Quebec as a distinct society, whereas we as Aboriginal people were completely left out. We were the First Peoples here ... we were the ones that made treaties with the settlers that came from Europe. These settler people and their governments didn't recognize us as a Nation, as a government, and that is why we opposed the Meech Lake Accord.¹⁹³

Harper pushed for the ability for Indigenous leaders, experts, and every-day individuals to come testify to the Manitoba legislature. The requests being denied by the Manitoba government.¹⁹⁴ In

¹⁹¹ The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Ethel Blondin-Andrew," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed June 23, 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ethel-blondin-andrews>; Indspire, "Dr. Wilton Littlechild," *Indspire*, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://indspire.ca/laureate/dr-wilton-littlechild/>.

¹⁹² Note: Elijah Harper represented the northern Manitoba district of Rupertsland in the Manitoba legislature from 1981-1982.

¹⁹³ CBC Archives, "All Our Relations," *CBC*, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/25-years-since-elijah-harper-said-no-to-the-meech-lake-accord-1.3110439>.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

response Harper, twelve days prior to the ratification deadline, with eagle feather in hand, began a filibuster in Manitoba's legislature.¹⁹⁵ Harper's filibuster, in the end, prevented the Manitoba legislature from being able to have enough time to vote on the Meech Lake Accord, which in 1990 required unanimous consent of all those sitting in its legislature.¹⁹⁶ Following this, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Clyde Wells, cancelled their legislature's planned vote and this brought an end to the *Meech Lake Accord*.¹⁹⁷ Harper's participation in the Manitoba legislature was significant for raising awareness of issues pertaining to Indigenous rights amongst settlers. But it should be considered a critically important moment for Indigenous peoples who had become increasingly frustrated with the lack of consideration and lack of nation-to-nation relationship with the settler-state of Canada because it suggested an alternative avenue to advance claims.

The tension between First Nations and the Canadian state was not only noticeable in relation to First Nations opposition to the *Meech Lake Accord*. Tension and frustrations were highlighted by former AFN National Chief Georges Erasmus following the 1988 election as well. Erasmus stated:

Canada if you do not deal with this generation of leaders and seek peaceful solutions, then we cannot promise that you are going to like the kind of violent political action that we can just about guarantee the next generation is going to bring to you.¹⁹⁸

Erasmus' point came to fruition in July of 1990 due to the planned expansion of a golf course by the town of Oka, Quebec, on unceded territory considered sacred to the Kanien'kéha:ka of Kanehsatà:ke.. On July 11th, Kanien'kéha:ka from Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawá:ke, along with

¹⁹⁵ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pps. 151-152; Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pp. 30-31.

¹⁹⁶ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pp. 152.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ CBC Archives, "Georges Erasmus: Deal With Us Now!," *CBC*, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1687814085>.

First Nations across Turtle Island in support, pushed back against the continued encroachment of provinces and the federal Canadian government on their territories, their broken promises, and their lack of nation-to-nation understanding. *The Kanien'kéha:ka Resistance at Kanehsatà:ke* was a major turning point.¹⁹⁹

In addition to the Kanien'kéha:ka resistance at Kanehsatà:ke, Siiksikaawa resistance to the development of a Dam on the Old Man River, territory shared with the province of Alberta, had also come to a head. Like the anger over Oka's encroachment on Kanien'kéha:ka sacred territory, the Siiksikaawa were frustrated with the province of Alberta's movement on a dam that would not only flood Siiksikaawa territory but also sacred sites.²⁰⁰ In solidarity, protests and blockades went up in many parts of the territory shared with Canada. In relation to the Kanien'kéha:ka resistance at Kanehsatà:ke, the Sûreté du Québec was called in to counter the blockades put up by some Kanien'kéha:ka and their allies around the territory that had led to the resistance. When the Sûreté du Québec moved forward to remove the blockade, fighting broke out and a Sûreté du Québec Officer was killed.²⁰¹ In wake of the death of the Sûreté du Québec Officer, the Canadian Military was called in by Prime Minister Mulroney and negotiations were held to end the resistance. On September 26, 1990, the barricades came down following the cancelling of the expansion of the golf course by the town of Oka. The Federal Government of

¹⁹⁹ NOTE: Canada refers to this as the Oka Crisis.

²⁰⁰ Yale D. Belanger, "The Oldman River Dam and the Loners' Response to Environmental Incursion," in *Blockades or Breakthroughs? Aboriginal Peoples Confront the Canadian State*, eds: Yale D. Belanger and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, 222-252 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

²⁰¹ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pp. 155; Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), pps. 152-153; Michael Murphy, "Civilization, Self-Determination, and Reconciliation," in *First Nations, First Thoughts: The Impact of Indigenous Thought in Canada*, ed: Annis May Timpson, pps. 251-278 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), pp. 268; Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson, "This is an Honour Song," in *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, eds: Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson, pps. 1-9 (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), pp. 7; Note: The Sûreté du Québec Officer killed was Corporal Marcel Lemay.

Canada, in turn, purchased the territory in question to assist the town of Oka.²⁰² Both examples of resistance highlight frustration and a form of participation that expressed an unwillingness to accept the status quo of Canada moving forward without consideration of nation-to-nation relations – that the newest generation of First Nations in 1990 would no longer wait or be considered in an after-thought.

The Kanien'kéha:ka resistance at Kanehsatà:ke was a shock for Canadians as it marked the first time that such a clear confrontation between the Canadian state and Indigenous nations was presented to them live on their television screens and in newspaper images. Such action by First Nations peoples, alongside the failure of the *Meech Lake Accord* led the Mulroney government to agree to a more inclusive approach to a new Constitutional accord as well as a plan for a Royal Commission into Indigenous/Canadian relations – an inclusive approach that also considered more thoroughly the Métis and Inuit. In relation to the Métis, when considering their inclusion, it is also important to understand not only their formation but also their relationship with the Canadian state following its creation in 1867.

2.2: Métis 'Participation:' From Tyranny of the English Majority to Ongoing Recognition

The existence of the Métis people predates the Canadian state's birth and tends to be linked to the Red River Valley area – territory that the Anishinaabeg and Cree are the traditional stewards of. Both Chris Anderson and Jacqueline Peterson explain what the term Métis

²⁰² Ellen Gabriel, "Epilogue: Fraudulent Theft of Mohawk Land by the Municipality of Oka," in *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, eds: Kiera L. Ladner and Leanne Simpson, pps. 345-348 (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010); Note: The territory in question is still held by the Federal Government of Canada and has not been handed over to the Kanien'kéha:ka of Kanehsatà:ke. Additionally, the Siiksikaawa Resistance at the Old Man River Dam had also been brought to an end.

references in their respective research.²⁰³ The Métis people, as Anderson, explains are not simply a mix of Indigenous and European background. Anderson further explains that the Métis are not:

“[M]erely biracial, multilinguistic and bicultural, but proud owners of a new language; of a syncretic cosmology and religious repertoire; of distinctive modes of dress, cuisine, architecture, vehicles of transport, music and dance; and after 1815 of a quasi-military political organization, a flag, a bardic tradition, a rich folklore, and a national history – sprang only metaphorically from the soil.”²⁰⁴

Peterson adds to the aforementioned point and emphasizes “self-consciousness as Métis as an essential element of Métis identity,” leading her to agree that the Métis homelands can be found around the Red River settlement area and thus a key component of Métis self-identification.²⁰⁵

The Métis connection to the Red River settlement area is crucial in understanding their ‘participation’ within Canada.

The importance of Métis peoples in the region was especially noticeable as the Canadian state looked to expand westward into not only the territory of Prairie nations but also the homelands of the Metis. In 1869, the Hudson Bay Company transferred to Canada the territory known as Rupert’s Land. Rupert’s Land, if looking at a present-day map of Canada, comprised much of Northern Quebec, Northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, as well as segments of British Columbia and the Yukon.²⁰⁶ The transfer of Rupert’s Land to the Canadian state was met with resentment and opposition from Métis.

²⁰³ Note: For the purpose of focusing on participation within Canada’s federal electoral process, my focus on ‘Métis will relate to the definition of Métis that is recognized by the Métis National Council (MNC)

²⁰⁴ Chris Anderson, *“Métis:” Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), pp. 46; Also see Jaqueline Peterson, “Many Roads to Red River: Métis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815,” in *The New People: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, eds: Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown, pps. 37-72 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), pp. 64.

²⁰⁵ Anderson, *“Métis,”* pp. 46.

²⁰⁶ Jean Teillet, *The Northwest is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel’s People, The Métis Nation* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd, 2019), pp. 161.

The Métis opposition specifically related to them not being included in the negotiations and further anger only grew when Canadian land surveyors were sent out to divide up the land for settlement. In turn, the Métis pushed back on Canadian encroachment, leading to the Métis-led Red River Resistance.²⁰⁷ In turn, a provisional government, led by Louis Riel, was formed. The provisional government reflected equal representation of Protestant and Catholics as well as English and French speaking settlers of the area.²⁰⁸ As Jean Teillet expresses, such representation highlights that “Riel ... had democratic notions that were well in advance of the politicians of his day.”²⁰⁹ Such inclusion of the different factions of the Red River settlement area can be considered an early form of Metis participation in relation to the Canadian state. The Riel-led provisional government not only tried to counter Eastern Canadian encroachment but also was recognized by the Macdonald government – paving the way for negotiations to recognize Manitoba not only as Canada’s fifth province but also a Metis province.

The Riel provisional government had drafted a ‘List of Rights’ that included recognition and protection of the French language, religious rights for both Catholic and Protestant, recognition of Metis homesteads, as well as pushed the Canadian state to formulate treaties with First Nations²¹⁰ The List of Rights were central to negotiations between the Riel provisional government and the Canadian state. The representatives of the Riel provisional government were able to secure much of their List of Rights, leading the MacDonald government and the Canadian

²⁰⁷ Note: This is also referred to in Canada as the Red River Rebellion.

²⁰⁸ Teillet, “The Northwest is Our Mother,” pp. 160-161; Barry Ferguson, “The Formation of Manitoba,” *Canadian Issues: Thèmes Canadiens* (Spring/Summer 2021), pp. 19; Nathalie Kermaal, “Métis Lands in Western Canada: An Unresolved Issue,” *Canadian Issues: Thèmes Canadiens* (Spring/Summer 2021), pg. 45; Jean Teillet, “Louis Riel and Canada: A New Relationship, 150 Years in the Making,” *Canadian Issues: Thèmes Canadiens* (Spring/Summer 2021), pp. 59.

²⁰⁹ Teillet, “Louis Riel and Canada,” pp. 58

²¹⁰ David Chartrand, “The Métis People: An Inconvenient Nation,” *Canadian Issues: Thèmes Canadiens* (Spring/Summer 2021), pp. 34; Ferguson, “The Formation of Manitoba in 1870,” pp. 19; Kermaal, “Métis Lands in Western Canada,” pp. 46

House of Commons to pass the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, leading to the creation of Manitoba on July 15, 1870.²¹¹ Manitoba's creation was originally welcomed by the Metis as a way to protect their territorial claims as well as their unique culture. Additionally, Manitoba's creation granted voting rights to Metis men, who thus were able to participate in future federal Canadian elections.

Metis voices came to the House of Commons on March 3, 1871 when Pierre Delorme and Angus McKay were elected as Conservative MPs from Manitoba.²¹² Although the elections of Delorme and McKay are significant for Indigenous representation in Canada's federal electoral process, their involvement and time in the House was short as neither sought re-election in the federal election of 1872.²¹³ Although other Metis men did run in districts that represented Manitoba, no Metis men were elected and thus there was no Metis representation until the following year when Louis Riel, as an Independent, won a byelection in the district of Provencher.²¹⁴ Despite Riel's win, he was unable to take his seat.

Riel's inability to take his seat in the House of Commons as the representative for Provencher was a result of the repercussions and changes that were taking place in Manitoba towards Metis peoples as additional English-speaking settlers migrated from central parts of Canada. Not long after the creation of Manitoba, Riel and others were forced to flee. Riel and his

²¹¹ Robert Wardaugh, "Lament to Manitoba," *Canadian Issues: Thèmes Canadiens* (Spring/Summer 2021), pp. 4; Ferguson, "The Formation of Manitoba in 1870," pp. 20-21; Chartrand, "The Métis People," pp. 34; Kermaal, "Métis Lands in Western Canada," pp. 45; Teillet, "Louis Riel and Canada," pp. 59.

²¹² Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "McKAY, ANGUS," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed June 24, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mckay_angus_12E.html; Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Delorme, Pierre," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed June 24, 2021, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/delorme_p.shtml; Note: Pierre Delorme was elected to represent the district of Provencher and Angus McKay to represent the district of Marquette.

²¹³ Note: The impact both Delorme and McKay may have had on policy and legislation not only within the House of Commons but also the Progressive Conservative Party is limited to non-existent and thus I am unable to assess their involvement at the time of writing this chapter.

²¹⁴ Teillet, "Louis Riel and Canada," pps. 59-60.

family, fearing for their safety and the warrant for his capture fled to the Montana territory.²¹⁵

Many Metis faced persecution and attacks, which were emboldened by John A. MacDonald himself. As Jean Teillet points out:

Sir John A. Macdonald sent troops and instigated a reign of terror in [Manitoba] that lasted for almost three years. He had already given notice of his intentions when he wrote that the Metis were wild people, miserable, and impulsive half-breeds that he wanted put down, kept down, and kept quiet ... Winnipeg, under Canada's new rule, disintegrated into a violent, racist turmoil. Metis, French, and Catholics were beaten, their daughters raped, their houses burned, and their lands stolen. Men were viciously assaulted, some left for dead. The troops burned opposition presses and held Metis women at gunpoint while they ransacked their homes. Metis leaders were exiled and nine men who had participated in good faith in the negotiations of Manitoba were murdered by the troops ... Sir John A. Macdonald, did nothing to reign in the troops or stop the violence. The men who initiated the violence then moved into positions of power and were appointed as the Chief of Police, the Mayor, and the Lieutenant Governor...²¹⁶

In order to avoid such state-sanctioned persecution, many Métis fled further west as well, resettling in areas that would eventually be divided into the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

As Canada continued to expand westward, frustration was reaching a boiling point from the Métis who had fled westward. Many Métis, fearing the continued westward expansion of Canada sought to force Canada into another round of negotiations to protect themselves by fighting back through force. In turn, many components of Métis leadership requested Riel's return to lead the Métis Nation.²¹⁷ Riel agreed to return and lead another provisional government and thus the push against Canada's lack of respecting the Métis nation, peoples, and rights. As

²¹⁵ Teillet, "The Northwest is Our Mother," pp. 326.

²¹⁶ Teillet, "Louis Riel and Canada," pp. 60.

²¹⁷ Chartrand, "The Métis People," pp. 35; Kermaal, "Métis Lands in Western Canada," pp. 47.

such, Métis participation in relation to Canada during the 1880s is best reflected specifically in relation to the Northwest Resistance of 1885.

The Métis Resistance of 1885 related to armed conflict and battles between the Métis nation and the Canadian state. The Métis looked at this resistance as no different than the Red River Resistance sixteen years earlier – that they would hold power and be able to force Canada to the negotiation table.²¹⁸ However, during the sixteen years since the Red River Resistance, much had changed. Not only had British Columbia and Prince Edward Island joined confederation, but Treaties 1-7 were completed, assisting the Canadian state to begin building its national railroad line from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast.²¹⁹ The near completion of the railroad line assisted with bringing soldiers to the Prairies in order to push back the Métis and bring them to subordination. The Canadian state did what it sought out to do and thus had the upper hand in dictating the terms to the Métis, which led to little recognition of their rights, longstanding persecution, and little recognition of the Métis as a distinct people.²²⁰ Additionally, despite the Métis fighting as their own nation, Riel and other Métis men were found guilty of treason and hung.²²¹ Following the Northwest Resistance, many Métis hid their identity in order to avoid attacks. As David Chartrand explained, “fearing persecution, those who could hide, did so. They hid their identity for fear of retaliation by the government of the day. Many either allowed or actively encouraged others to think of them as French-Canadians.”²²²

²¹⁸ Anderson, “Métis,” pp. 116; Teillet, *The Northwest is Our Mother*, pps. 160-161 & 174-175.

²¹⁹ Robert J. Talbot, *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties: An Intellectual & Political Biography of Alexander Morris* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2009), pps. 39-42; James Daschuk, *Clearing The Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), pps. 108-109.

²²⁰ Chartrand, “The Métis People,” pp. 36.

²²¹ Ibid; Kermoal, “Métis Lands in Western Canada,” pp. 47.

²²² Chartrand, “The Métis People,” pp. 35.

With many Métis hiding their identities, and a lack of willingness by the Canadian state to list and consider them as a distinct identity or peoples, little information relating to Métis political participation exists between the 1890s and 1991. Since Métis men were granted the right to vote in 1870, and no laws were put in place to prevent Métis people from participating, it can be assumed that Métis women obtained the right to vote in 1917, when other women with citizenship, were granted the right federally. How Métis voted or if they stood for office was not recorded or kept track of prior to 1948 as well.

A 1948 byelection in the former federal district of Rosthern,²²³ led to the official return of Métis representation in the House of Commons. William Boucher, the LPC candidate, not only won the 1948 byelection for Rosthern but also re-election in the 1949 Canadian federal election.²²⁴ Boucher did not seek re-election in 1953, but was appointed to the Senate in 1957 on the advice of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent.²²⁵ Métis representatives again returned to the House of Commons in 1962, when Roger Teillet was elected in the district of St. Boniface for the LPC, and in 1963, with the election of Eugène Rhéaume in the district of Northwest Territories for the PCs.²²⁶ Although Rhéaume was not re-elected in 1965, Teillet represented St. Boniface until losing the LPC nomination to Joseph-Phillipe Guay in the 1968 Canadian federal election.²²⁷ Although little information seems to be readily available regarding Boucher and

²²³ Note: The federal electoral district of Rosthern existed from 1935-1968 and was within the province of Saskatchewan.

²²⁴ Lawrence Barkwell, "William Albert Boucher, M.P., Senator. (1889-1976)," Report for the Louis Riel Institute, accessed June 24, 2021,

<https://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/13834.William%20Albert%20Boucher.pdf>.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Lawrence Barkwell, "Roger Teillet, M.L.A., M.P., P.C. (1912-2002), Report for the Louise Riel Institute, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewin1fGU-Lz4AhUFHs0KHXFqCIIQFnoECAQQAQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.metismuseum.ca%2Fmedia%2Fdb%2F12137&usg=AOvVaw101UHI7bgp89INP9NG7Xbv>

²²⁷ The Canadian Press, "Former Métis MP Eugene Rheaume Passes Away in British Columbia," *CTV News* (November 2, 2013), accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/former-metis-mp-eugene->

Rhéaume and their time in the House of Commons, there is more relating to Teillet. On April 22 1963, Teillet was appointed as Minister of Veterans Affairs by Lester B. Pearson.²²⁸ Teillet's appointment thus reflected not only the first elected Métis person in Cabinet, but also the first Indigenous person to serve as Minister of Veteran's Affairs.

After Teillet's nomination loss and decision not to run in the 1968 Canadian federal election, Métis participation and representation in the House of Commons would be non-existent until 1972. In the Canadian federal elections of 1972 and 1974, Wally Firth was elected and re-elected for the NDP in the electoral district of Northwest Territories.²²⁹ Firth opted to not seek re-election for the Canadian federal election of 1979.²³⁰ Like Boucher and Rhéaume, little is recorded regarding Firth's time in the House of Commons. Despite the lack of information of Firth's time in the House of Commons, his win in 1972, alongside Len Marchand's re-election that same year, was historic for Indigenous participation as it marked the first time in Canadian federal electoral politics that two (2) Indigenous peoples were elected to the House of Commons.

Métis MPs returned to the House of Commons in the 1980 Canadian federal election with Cyril Keeper's win as the NDP candidate in the electoral district of Winnipeg-St. James.²³¹ Keeper's win in 1980 is important as he was the only Métis individual in the House of Commons during the planning of the *Charter of Rights* and the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Between 1980 and 1982 the Métis Nation, and its provincial structures, consistently pushed the Trudeau Sr. government to say that the term 'Aboriginal' included Métis. Due to the erosion of Métis

rheaume-passes-away-in-british-columbia-1.1525221; Note: Rhéaume became to the first Indigenous person to be elected in the North.

²²⁸ Barkwell, "Roger Teillet."

²²⁹ DBpedia, "Wally Firth," *DBpedia.org*, accessed June 24, 2021, https://dbpedia.org/page/Wally_Firth.

²³⁰ Ibid; NOTE: Firth did seek the nomination for the NDP in 1980, within the electoral district of Western Arctic, and then again in 2004, within the electoral district of Yukon. Firth was unsuccessful in both nominations.

²³¹ Lawrence Barkwell, "Cyril Keeper, M.P. (b. 1943)," Report for the Louis Riel Institute, accessed June 24, 2021, <https://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/14224.Cyril%20Keeper.pdf>.

recognition and rights from the 1870s on, little to no recognition of the Métis had been legislated federally. The *Constitution Act, 1867*, only referenced ‘Indians’. Upon the patriation of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Charter of Rights*, the Métis were officially included under the term Aboriginal.²³² Despite such inclusion, it is important to note only the Metis Nation of Alberta endorsed the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the Charter of Rights – the other provincial sections of the Métis nation and the Métis National Council (MNC) did not.²³³ Despite a lack of full endorsement from the Métis and its political structures, the inclusion of Métis in Section 35 and 25 would contribute to positive advancement of Métis rights, recognition, and participation.

Keeper’s role and influence in relation to the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Charter of Rights* remains undiscussed and thus further research is needed when assessing his role. Despite the lack of information on Keeper’s role, Keeper was again returned to the House of Commons in the 1984 Canadian federal election; this time as the NDP MP for Winnipeg North Centre.²³⁴ Keeper’s 1984 win was important when looking at the population of Winnipeg North Centre, which had a sizeable urban Indigenous population. The above-average turnout of Indigenous voters in the district, according to Keeper, assisted his win.²³⁵ Although statistics relating to how Indigenous peoples voted in Winnipeg North Centre are not broken down and researched, Keeper believes that being Métis led to that increased turn in his favour.²³⁶

During Keeper’s second term, little is documented. However, an article by the *Globe and Mail* in October of 1987 highlights that Keeper supported the *Meech Lake Accord*.²³⁷ Although

²³² Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pp. 122; Chris Anderson and Maggie Walter, *Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), pps. 123-127.

²³³ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pp. 122.

²³⁴ Barkwell, “Cyril Keeper, M.P. (b. 1943).”

²³⁵ Cyril Keeper, Michael Mackenzie, and Jim Silver, “A Very Hostile System in Which to Live: Aboriginal Electoral Participation in Winnipeg’s Inner City,” Report, Winnipeg, May 2005.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Graham Fraser, “Waddell Decides to Vote Against Meech Lake Pact,” *Globe and Mail* (October 2 1987).

Keeper supported the *Meech Lake Accord*, general support from the Métis provincial organizations and the MNC was similar to that of First Nations. Keeper lost his re-election bid during the 1988 Canadian federal election; whether or not that was due to a decline in Indigenous support and for his support of the *Meech Lake Accord* is an item that requires further in-depth assessment. Keeper also sought the NDP nomination for Winnipeg North Centre prior to the 1993 Canadian federal election but was unsuccessful. Following Keeper's 1988 loss, Métis were again absent from the House of Commons.

Although Métis representation was non-existent in the House of Commons following the 1988 Canadian federal election, Métis made their voices heard in two other ways prior to 1991. One example of Métis participation continued through the utilization of their own political and governing organizations, such as the MNC and its provincial counterparts. Both the MNC and its provincial counterparts grew in importance and negotiating power with Métis recognition in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Charter of Rights*.²³⁸ The second example of participation relates to the 1991 Census, which was the first time Métis were included as a distinct identity and peoples. Métis inclusion in the findings of the 1991 Census further assisted Métis recognition and negotiating power for their inclusion provided quantitative results to be referenced and studied. Such recognition of Métis, and their growing influence is important as it no doubt assisted with making sure the Métis were a part of the inclusive approach taken by the Mulroney government when establishing the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1991. In order to delve further into RCAP and post-1991 Canadian electoral participation of Indigenous peoples, it is imperative that a separate assessment of Inuit participation is also reviewed.

²³⁸ Anderson and Walter, *Indigenous Statistics*, pps. 123-127.

2.3: Inuit ‘Participation:’ From Human Flagpoles to Self-Representation in the HoC

Inuit participation has taken many forms when we assess their relation to their territory, contact with settler societies, and the Canadian state. If looking at a present-day map of the Canadian state, Inuit territories are reflected as four regions: Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut, and Inuvialuit. The Inuit spanned these regions for centuries and participated in their own forms of legal, political, and socio-economic structures. Settler societies and the Canadian state have given little attention or understanding to Inuit structures of existence.

Despite Inuit relations with settler societies, in many ways, being similar to that of First Nations and Métis, there were differences. Unlike First Nations and Métis though, Inuit participation and interaction did not come to the forefront when relating to Canada until the 1920s. Prior to the 1920s, Inuit were ignored and avoided other than relating to the fur trade or the need of guides when exploring and charting the north. Although participating in the fur trade and assisting as guides were the primary interactions for Inuit with settler societies prior to the 1920s, it is relevant to consider three Acts by the Canadian state that impacted them: the *Rupert’s Land Purchase (1869)*, the *Quebec Boundary Extension Act (1898)*, and the *Quebec Boundaries Extension Act (1912)*.

Like First Nations and Métis, the *Rupert’s Land Purchase* of 1869 also related to territory the Inuit are the traditional stewards of. Additionally, like First Nations and Métis, the Inuit were not in the negotiations or decision-making tables when it came to the purchase – nor had the Inuit surrendered any relationship to the territory. The lack of inclusion and participation of Inuit also persisted as the Canadian state grew, not only as additional provinces joined but also as the province of Quebec expanded. Relating to Quebec, both the *Quebec Boundary Extension Act*

(1898) and the *Quebec Boundaries Extension Act (1912)* led to the current form of Quebec.²³⁹ Both Acts led to the inclusion of Nunavik into Quebec's jurisdiction and did so without treaties. Originally, both Acts required Quebec to formulate treaties with both the Inuit of Nunavik and the Cree of Eeyou Itschee, but the province of Quebec never fulfilled this obligation.²⁴⁰ Like the *Rupert's Land Purchase (1869)*, the *Quebec Boundary Extension Act (1898)* and the *Quebec Boundaries Extension Act (1912)* did not witness participation by Inuit.

By the 1920s, concerns over the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R), led the Canadian state to push further into Inuit territories and the beginning of forced re-settlements in order to further Canadian claims of sovereignty. Alongside the forced settlement of Inuit, many were given Dog Tags with a number on it – symbolically highlighting the Canadian state's view of the Inuit.²⁴¹ Such movement towards the idea of Canadian sovereignty was further bolstered by the *Statute of Westminster (1931)*, which allowed the Canadian state full control over its foreign affairs. As the Canadian state's autonomy increased, the question of what to do with the Inuit also grew more pertinent.

The Canadian state, under a Conservative government lead by R.B. Bennett, sought to further prevent any Inuit participation with the *Dominion Franchise Act* of 1934. The *Dominion Franchise Act* effectively barred, and made it illegal, for Inuit to vote in Canadian federal elections, leaving the power of who becomes the elected representative for the Inuit territories to

²³⁹ Government of Canada, "James Bay and Northern Quebec Native Claims Settlement Act," *Ministry of Justice Canada*, accessed September 23 2021, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/J-0.3/FullText.html>; Cowie, "Quebec Sovereignty and Indigenous Nationhoods," pp. 24.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Frank Tester, "Colonial Challenges and Recovery in the Eastern Arctic," in *Inuit Quajimajatuqangit: What Inuit Have Always Known to be True*, eds: Joe Kareteak, Frank Tester and Shirley Tagalik, pps. 20-40 (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017); Note: The numbered Dog Tags were in lieu of actual names.

that of non-Inuit citizens of Canada.²⁴² Additionally, during the 1930s, a jurisdictional feud over who was responsible for the Inuit came to a head between the province of Quebec and the Canadian state. In relation to the feud, neither the Canadian state nor the province of Quebec wanted jurisdiction over the Inuit in the Nunavik region, claiming that the other had jurisdiction instead.²⁴³ The jurisdictional feud between Quebec and Canada would lead to the 1939 Supreme Court of Canada ruling that all Inuit within the boundaries of the Canadian state were the responsibility of the Canadian federal government.²⁴⁴ Again, the Inuit did not participate in the decision making or discussion over who's jurisdiction they were under – nor was their own agency even considered.

Little action was taken by the Canadian state following the Supreme Court of Canada ruling due to WWII. Canada's interaction with Inuit territory, and the Inuit themselves, involved primarily sending military personnel to the north in order to protect Canadian interests and its claims of sovereignty from Germany, Japan, and their allies. Additionally, Canada allowed the development of American military bases in Inuit territory, such as the current location of Iqaluit.²⁴⁵ Following WWII, Canada sought to further defend its sovereignty and interests in the north against the U.S.S.R by establishing additional military personnel in Inuit territory as well as to further force the settlement of Inuit, utilizing them for the interest of Canadian. Claims of sovereignty over Inuit territories.

²⁴² Tester, "Colonial Challenges and Recovery in the Eastern Arctic;" Milen, "Aboriginal Constitutional and Electoral Reform," pp. 5.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ken Harper, *In Those Days: Collected Writings on Arctic History, Book 1: Inuit Lives* (Toronto: Inhabit Media Inc., 2013), pps. 149-155; Ken Harper, *In Those Days: Arctic Crime and Punishment, Book 2: Collected Writings on Arctic History* (Toronto: Inhabit Media Inc., 2013), pps. 111-117.

²⁴⁵ City of Iqaluit. "About Iqaluit: History and Milestones," *Iqaluit*, accessed September 23, 2021, <https://www.iqaluit.ca/visitors/explore-iqaluit/history>; Tester, "Colonial Challenges and Recovery in the Eastern Arctic," pp. 23.

To further extend Canadian sovereignty, the Canadian state under St. Laurent, extended citizenship and enfranchisement to Inuit in 1950.²⁴⁶ Granting citizenship to Inuit allowed for greater credibility to Canadian sovereignty, whether Inuit agreed with becoming Canadian citizens or not. Furthermore, the Canadian state continued to dictate and control much of everyday Inuit life, and the ability for Inuit to vote from the 1953 federal Canadian election until the late 1970s was limited due to the unwillingness of the Canadian state to send ballots and ballot boxes to Inuit territories.²⁴⁷ In other words, although citizenship was granted to Inuit by the Canadian state in 1950, the ability of Inuit to participate by casting a ballot was prevented well into the late 1970s.

The unwillingness to make sure ballots and ballot boxes were available in Inuit communities post-1950 highlights how the Inuit were used to continue Canadian territorial claims in the north rather than as equal citizens. Having already forced Inuit into permanent settlement, concerns of a lack of communities on islands such as Ellesmere Island, led to the St. Laurent government to recruit Inuit from Nunavik and the north shore of Baffin Island to relocate to further north, such as on the south shore of what is labelled today as Ellesmere Island.²⁴⁸ Originally, the recruitment of Inuit to relocate was voluntary and thus participation was up to the Inuit individuals and families who opted to relocate. Promises of supplies to build shelter, food, as well as stories of similar resources and climate that Inuit were used to was utilized to convince those Inuit who agreed to relocate to do so.²⁴⁹ Upon arriving in the new locations, it became clear that such promises and stories were untrue. Despite many of those who

²⁴⁶ Cowie, "A Vote for Canada or Indigenous Nationhoods?;" Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pp. 1; Milen, "Aboriginal and Constitutional Electoral Reform," pp. 5.

²⁴⁷ Cowie, "A Vote for Canada or Indigenous Nationhoods?;" Milen, "Aboriginal and Constitutional Electoral Reform," pp. 5.

²⁴⁸ Tester, "Colonial Challenges and Recovery in the Eastern Arctic," pp. 23-24.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

relocated wanting to return home, the Canadian state would ignore the requests.²⁵⁰ Thus, the relocation of those Inuit in 1953 and 1955 were actually forced relocations with false promises and stories utilized to convince them to move. Those Inuit who were prevented from returning home obtained the nickname of ‘human flagpoles’ as it became clear their relocation was to further Canadian sovereignty in the North while also establishing clear western lines during the Cold War.²⁵¹ Inuit pushback against Canadian actions came to head as Inuit organized in the 1970s.

Like the AFN and MNC, the Inuit also formulated their own political organization. In 1971, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)²⁵² was created. The ITK’s role is to serve “as a national voice protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit”²⁵³ who share territory with the Canadian state. In order to advance a national voice, the ITK includes representation and seeks participation from the four regions of Inuit territory. The development and growth of the ITK in the 1970s is an important form of Inuit political participation as it became a key organizer and voice on the Inuit land claims process that also develops following the 1973 *Calder Decision*. Like the Cree in Eeyou-Itschee, the Inuit of Nunavik were at the negotiation table relating to the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA)*.²⁵⁴ The inclusion of Inuit of Nunavik was a historical moment for Inuit participation for it recognized Inuit territory. Such inclusion only further increased forms of Inuit participation, especially as the 1970s drew to a close.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid; Cowie, “A Vote for Canada or Indigenous Nationhoods?”

²⁵² Note: The ITK went by the previous names of: Inuit Tapirisat in Canada and the Eskimo Brotherhood of Canada.

²⁵³ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, “Who We Are,” *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami*, accessed September 24, 2021, <https://www.itk.ca/national-voice-for-communities-in-the-canadian-arctic/>.

²⁵⁴ Cowie, “Quebec Sovereignty and Indigenous Nationhoods,” pps. 28-29; Government of Canada, “James Bay and Northern Quebec Native Claims Settlement Act.”

The 1979 Canadian federal election was also a historic election for Inuit participation as it marked the election of not only the first Inuk MP, but also the first Inuk MP for the district with a majority of Inuit people living within it: Nunatsiaq.²⁵⁵ The election of Peter Ittinuar, as an NDP MP was significant as it marked a changing attitude towards Inuit participation. The 1979 Canadian federal election also saw ballot boxes finally being distributed in many parts of Inuit territory.²⁵⁶ Ittinuar was re-elected as an NDP MP in the 1980 Canadian federal election and was a key voice for the Inuit during the discussions and patriation of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Charter of Rights*.²⁵⁷ Ittinuar utilized his position as an elected MP to push the Trudeau Sr. government on not only the rights of Inuit but also for a land claim agreement to be formulated for the area he represented. Ittinuar's persistence led the Trudeau Sr. government to agree.²⁵⁸ In turn, Ittinuar crossed the floor and joined the Liberal caucus in 1982²⁵⁹ – had Ittinuar not been an MP at the time of patriation, one must question whether or not the creation of Nunavut would have occurred. Although Ittinuar's work was a key component to the Nunavut Land Claims process, he was not re-elected in the 1984 Canadian federal election.

Alongside Ittinuar's lobbying for the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, the ITK and its regional sections were also key to the inclusion of Inuit voices in relation to the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Charter of Rights*. Discussions with the ITK and its regional structures were small but effective. Due to the rising political clout of the Nunavik region following the negotiations of

²⁵⁵ Note: The electoral district of Nunatsiaq is the former name of the current electoral district of Nunavut. Additionally it is important to note that 1979 marks the beginning of continuous Inuit representation of Nunatsiaq (Nunavut).

²⁵⁶ The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Peter Ittinuar," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed September 24, 2021, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/peter-ittinuar?gclid=Cj0KCCQjw2MWVBhCQARIsAljbwoM1zsrYeaHai0jNWE0cemW87ldPpq1seggwpgIIUBHyC4nclz7aKYMaAtUtEALw_wcB.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

the JBNQA, the inclusion and participation of Inuit may have been important not only for Canadian claims of sovereignty but also to keep the Inuit on side with the Canadian state during the 1980 Quebec Referendum. Unfortunately, there is virtually no research relating to the impact of the Inuit vote on the 1980 Quebec Referendum and needs to be further studied. The impact of the ITK is important, however, as it would use its power and status in the four regions of the Inuit territory to further pursue Inuit interests and rights as additional constitutional and policy decisions of the Canadian state were explored.

Inuit participation in the Canadian electoral process continued with the election of Thomas Suluk as the MP for Nunatsiak. Suluk was elected as a PC MP in the 1984 Canadian federal election and sat as a backbencher. Suluk's focus during his term was primarily on the continued movement of the Nunavut Land Claims process, Suluk opted to not seek re-election in the 1988 Canadian federal election.²⁶⁰ The reasoning for Suluk's choice not to run for re-election in 1988 is difficult to find in literature or other written accounts – therefore whether it is related to the *Meech Lake Accord*, and opposition from the ITK, or *NAFTA* is something that needs further exploration. Following Suluk, Jack Anawak was elected as a Liberal MP in the 1988 Canadian federal election.²⁶¹ Anawak's win, alongside that of First Nations MPs Blondin-Andrew and Littlechild, marked the first time three Indigenous MPs were elected to the House of Commons in the same Canadian federal election. Anawak, like the ITK, was opposed to the *Meech Lake Accord* due to its lack of Inuit inclusion and Anawak and the ITK found reason to

²⁶⁰ Nunavut Tunngavik, "NTI Expresses Condolences to the Family of Thomas Suluk," *Nunavut Tunngavik – Media Centre* (October 15, 2018), accessed September 24, 2021, <https://www.tunngavik.com/news/nti-expresses-condolences-to-the-family-of-thomas-suluk/>.

²⁶¹ Parliament of Canada, "Jack Iyerak Anawak, M.P., *Parliament of Canada: Parlinfo*, accessed September 24, 2021, https://lop.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/en_CA/People/Profile?personId=7084; Note: Anawak served as the Critique for Northern Affairs from 1988-1993. Anawak was re-elected in 1993 and opted to not seek re-election in 1997.

welcome the promise of a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples following the 1990 Kanien'kéha:ka resistance at Kanehsatà:ke.

2.4: Conclusion: Reflecting on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit 'Participation' (1867-1991)

Between 1867 to 1991 there were major changes, and potential changes, not only relating to the Canadian state but also in relation to Inuit, Métis, and First Nations interactions with Canada. Following the formation of the Canadian state in 1867, Canadian and provincial governments sought control of Indigenous nations and territories, but also their complete submission and inability to protect themselves. From First Nations and Inuit being legislated as wards of the state to settler society moving further west to outnumber the Métis, it is clear the Canadian state did not seek to make room for Indigenous peoples unless they assimilated. For First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, participation between 1867 to 1991 was through forms of violence, colonialism, and a settler-colonial mentality that dictated to them who they were, what they were allowed to do, who governed them, and who was allowed to represent them. That said, First Nations, Métis and Inuit political participation also was not completely controlled or defined by colonial structures despite the colonial violence – even if in response to said colonial violence and settler-colonial imposition.

Noticeable change began to occur following WWII as Métis are again elected to the House of Commons and both Inuit and First Nations are granted citizenship and the right to participate in federal elections without having to give up their identity. For First Nations, the election win of Len Marchand, their organization against the *1969 White Paper*, as well as the *1973 Calder Decision* would usher in forms of participation through First Nations organization, a land claims process, as well as First Nations participation in Canada's electoral process. Furthermore, Elijah Harper's actions in relation to the *Meech Lake Accord* was significant in

preventing its ratification. Furthermore, Harper presence is another key example of Indigenous participation, and representation having an ability to impact the end result of the Canadian state's colonial actions. Had Harper not been elected, one must wonder if the *Meech Lake Accord* would have been implemented.

In relation to the Métis, participation not only comes from their return as electoral representatives in the House of Commons, but also through their political and organizational structures. Such participation and representation in relation to the Métis assisted in their recognition in not only the *Constitution Act, 1982*, but also further recognition of their rights and the colonization they too have faced since 1869. Lastly, for Inuit, the changes in relation to their forms of participation are most noticeable during the 1970s due to their inclusion at the negotiation table for the JBNQA, the formation of the ITK, the inclusion of ballot boxes, and ballots, for the 1979 election, as well as Peter Ittinuar's 1979 election win. Ittinuar's place as an elected MP in the House of Commons was key for negotiations that would lead to the process of not only a land claim agreement for Inuit in the north, but specifically in relation to the territory that reflects the Territory of Nunavut.

Additionally, the mega-constitutional debates and negotiations of the 1980s only fueled the different forms of Indigenous political participation that had developed between the 1950s to the end of the 1970s. The anger by Indigenous peoples towards the *Meech Lake Accord* only added to frustration over the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Charter of Rights*. Despite Indigenous anger and frustration, the 1988 Canadian federal election was historic as not only did two First Nations MPs and an Inuk MP become elected to the House of Commons, but also the first female Indigenous MP: Ethel Blondin-Andrew. Although 1988 marked a historic election relating to Indigenous participation in Canada's federal electoral process, the focus on the

Canadian state's nation-building process continued to be evident. Furthermore, it did not subdue the frustration and anger which came to a head in 1990, despite promises by the Canadian state to establish a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples – ushering in the next period that will be assessed: 1991 to 2015.

Chapter Three: **From Charlottetown and Political Shock to Increased Presence (1991-2013)**

3.0: Introduction:

The election of Jack Anawak, Ethel Blondin-Andrew, and Willie Littlechild in the 1988 Canadian federal election reflected a historic moment for Indigenous participation in formal electoral and parliamentary politics. The election of Anawak, Blondin-Andrew, and Littlechild not only represented the first time three Indigenous MPs were elected in the same election, but also the first Indigenous woman in the House of Commons. The summer of 1990 was also a historic moment of Indigenous political participation beyond the confines of formal electoral politics, as it showcased strong resistance by Indigenous peoples for being treated as an afterthought as well as for the Canadian state's unilateral imposition on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.²⁶² Following the summer of 1990, an era of assessment and debate relating to Indigenous/Canadian relations began.

In addition to a new era of assessment and debate relating to Indigenous/Canadian relations following the summer of 1990, a period of amplifying the historic claims, power, and presence of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit began to grow. Such amplification must also be assessed and considered in order to understand the nuances of Indigenous participation. In turn, chapter three will seek to highlight a useful portrait of the varied nature and extent of Indigenous engagement, while highlighting in particular the increased participation in parties and parliament within the Canadian federal electoral process. Such movement in relation to Indigenous involvement is related to the continued desire for a positive nation-to-nation relationship while also seeking a interest and movement in relation to reconciliation based on such a relationship.

²⁶² Note: As highlighted in previous chapters of this dissertation, opposition, pushback, and resistance to Canadian and European imposition has long occurred.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to analyse the growth in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit participation between 1991 and 2015. In order to review such growth between 1991 and 2015, this chapter will first examine changes that occurred between the start of consultation sessions of the *Charlottetown Accord* to the introduction of *RCAP* and its findings to the House of Commons in the Autumn of 1996. Next, this chapter will assess not only the period of Jean Chretien's Prime Ministership, but also that of Paul Martin. Lastly, this chapter will assess the period from the 2006 Canadian federal election win of Stephen Harper and the CPC, to Indigenous rebuke of the Harper government with the emergence of #IdleNoMore. The analysis of the period from the *Charlottetown Accord* to 2013 is important for understanding not only how #IdleNoMore is significant for participation and mobilization by Indigenous peoples, but also how it, alongside the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC), assisted with Indigenous turnout in the 2015 Canadian federal election. If this is the main argument make it more explicit.

3.1: From 'Listening' to Looking the Other Way: Charlottetown to RCAP

A period of assessment and debate on the Indigenous/Canadian relationship, as well as how to increase Indigenous presence and participation in Canada's electoral process, was noticeable during the 1990s. The first assessment of participation and the Canadian/Indigenous relationship was that of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (RCERPF) in 1991. Scholarly studies by Valerie Alia, Augie Fleras, Roger Gibbins, and Robert Milen, in Volume Nine of the RCERPF, is especially pertinent to Indigenous representation and participation. While Alia assessed communication and advertising for elections in relation to Indigenous peoples,²⁶³ Milen's focus was looking at the potential changes to constitutional and electoral law

²⁶³ Valerie Alia, "Aboriginal Peoples and Campaign Coverage in the North," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Electoral Reform in Canada*, edited by Robert A. Milen, Volume 9 of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, pps. 105-152 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991).

that would be required to further cement Indigenous inclusion in Canada's federal electoral process.²⁶⁴ Fleras and Gibbins, on the other hand, debated between one another on whether Aboriginal Electoral Districts (AEDs) should be introduced in order to secure Indigenous representation in the House of Commons.²⁶⁵ It is important to note that although Volume Nine focused specifically on Indigenous peoples, no Indigenous scholars, or individuals assisted with the research and writing of Volume Nine of the RCERPF. Additionally, nothing suggested or advanced in Volume Nine would be implemented by the Canadian state, and additionally translation into Indigenous languages became the responsibility of a candidate or the federal political parties.

The findings and recommendations from the RCERPF were articulated while outreach and negotiations were occurring for the *Charlottetown Accord*, the successor to the failed *Meech Lake Accord*. The *Charlottetown Accord*, like the *Meech Lake Accord*, was the Mulroney Government's solution to not only bringing Quebec into the *Constitution Act, 1982*, but also a solution that included the input of every-day Canadian citizens, experts, and organizations, and eventually a nation-wide referendum. Rounds of consultation sessions also included Indigenous organizations, leaders, and communities – marking the first time First Nations, Métis, and Inuit were included in discussions of major Constitutional changes.²⁶⁶ Although included, it is important to note that the approach utilized for Indigenous input into the *Charlottetown Accord*

²⁶⁴ Milen, "Aboriginal Constitutional and Electoral Reform."

²⁶⁵ Augie Fleras, "Aboriginal Electoral Districts for Canada: Lessons from New Zealand," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Electoral Reform in Canada*, edited by Robert A. Milen, Volume 9 of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, pps. 67-103 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991); Roger Gibbins, "Electoral Reform and Canada's Aboriginal Population: An Assessment of Aboriginal Electoral Districts," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Electoral Reform in Canada*, edited by Robert A. Milen, Volume 9 of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, pps. 153-184 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991); Note: Fleras argued for A.E.Ds while Gibbins argued against A.E.Ds.

²⁶⁶ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pps. 193-199; Borrows and Rotman, *Aboriginal Legal Issues*, pp. 719; Newman, *The Secret Mulroney Tapes*, pps. 294-295; Wilson-Raybould, *From Where I Stand*, pp. 59.

was through the lens of Canadian Citizenship, Canadian national organizations, and as one of Canada's minority groups. In other words, Indigenous participation continued to be through a Canadian-centric and settler-colonial lens and did not include a nation-to-nation understanding.

Although Indigenous participation continued through a Canadian-centric lens, some of the agreements outlined in the *Charlottetown Accord* were significant. If approved, the *Charlottetown Accord* would have secured the right to self-government, and thus allowed Indigenous governments to be recognized as a third order of government in Canada.²⁶⁷ Indigenous legislation put forth by Indigenous governments would still have to follow Canada's peace, order, and good government customs and conventions.²⁶⁸ In addition to self-government and Indigenous governments becoming a third order of government in Canada, a more thorough definition of existing treaty rights would be entrenched in relation to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. How this would relate to unceded land, appropriated land, and treaty rights was not clearly defined. In turn, many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit were wary of the lack of clarity regarding their concerns and thus worried the *Charlottetown Accord* would limit their rights and recognition as nations. Indigenous wariness, alongside that of the general Canadian population, was shown when the *Charlottetown Accord* was put to a referendum, in June of 1992. The *Charlottetown Accord* failed to garner the needed approval from a majority of Canadians and a majority of the provinces. Indigenous peoples who participated by casting a ballot in the referendum, voted overwhelmingly against the accord, with over sixty per cent voting no.²⁶⁹ Indigenous distrust towards the Canadian state as well as the Canadian state's lack of nation-to-

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Borrows and Rotman, *Aboriginal Legal Issues*, pps. 719-726.

²⁶⁹ Christ Scholtz, "Aboriginal Communities and the Charlottetown Accord: A Preliminary Analysis of Voting Returns," a research paper presented to the *Canadian Political Science Association* Annual Meetings (Vancouver, June 2008), pp. 6; Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, pp. 194; Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pp. 31

nation approach likely played a major role in Indigenous peoples not trusting the process of the *Charlottetown Accord* or what it promised to implement.

In addition to the work and research done with the RCERPF and the *Charlottetown Accord*, the LPC established an Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPC) at their national convention in 1990. The IPC, formerly the Aboriginal People's Commission until May of 2016, was established to bring Indigenous voices into the LPC structure, to assist with building relationships between the party and Indigenous peoples and to develop policies.²⁷⁰ The I.P.C was the first Indigenous-led section of one of Canada's national federal parties. On the policy front, the IPC was key in assisting those (particularly Elijah Harper) in advancing the LPC's election manifesto Red Book, titled *Creating Opportunity*.²⁷¹ The first Red Book was the 1993 election platform for the LPC under Jean Chrétien. In total, the Red Book was a 112-page booklet that was considered the first form of a contract with the public through promises in a platform.²⁷² The Red Book's full details of consultation and inclusion of Indigenous peoples was limited. Thus, an understanding of the full impact of the IPC and the extent of the influence of LPC MPs who were Indigenous, in contributing to the Red Book was limited. Despite the aforementioned limitation on information regarding outreach and inclusion of Indigenous peoples by the LPC in the 1993 Canadian federal election, there was significant impacts following the election of October 25, 1993.

By the 1993 Canadian federal election, Brian Mulroney had stepped aside as Prime Minister and leader of the PCs. Kim Campbell, who served previously as the Minister of Justice

²⁷⁰ Indigenous Peoples' Commission, "About Us," *Liberal Party of Canada*, accessed January 19, 2022, <https://ipc-cpa.liberal.ca/about-us/>.

²⁷¹ Liberal Party of Canada, "Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada," *Liberal Party of Canada*, accessed January 19, 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/19961109135653/http://www.liberal.ca/english/policy/red_book/red_index.html.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

and Attorney General²⁷³ and then as Minister of National Defence and Veterans Affairs,²⁷⁴ succeeded Mulroney in June of 1993. Despite the change in leadership, there was significant anger towards the PCs and the 1993 Canadian federal election is generally considered a major ‘political earthquake’ in Canadian politics because of changes to the party system itself. Not only did the Chretien Liberals win a majority government on October 25, 1993, but the PCs were reduced to just two (2) seats, thus losing official party status.²⁷⁵ The PC loss can be attributed to the rise of both the Bloc Quebecois, who became the Official Opposition, and the Reform Party – leading to the dissolution of the political alliance Mulroney had built between Western Canada and Quebec.²⁷⁶ Additionally, the NDP were reduced to eight (8) seats – also losing official party status.²⁷⁷ The aforementioned points are well documented by political analysts, journalists, and Canadian political scientists.²⁷⁸ What is largely unexplored is the impact and role Indigenous voters and candidates played in the 1993 election.

What is noticeable for Indigenous participation and representation in the 1993 Canadian federal election is how many Indigenous MPs were elected and re-elected, and which party they represented. Both Jack Anawak and Ethel Blondin-Andrew were re-elected as LPC MPs, thus also sitting on the governing benches under Chretien.²⁷⁹ Alongside Anawak and Blondin-Andrew

²⁷³ Note: Kim Campbell served as Minister of Justice and Attorney General from February 23, 1990 to January 3, 1993.

²⁷⁴ Note: Campbell served as Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs from January 4, 1993 to June 25, 1993.

²⁷⁵ Alan Cairns, “An Election to Remember: Canada 1993,” *Canadian Public Policy*, Volume 20, Issue 3 (September, 1994), pp. 222.

²⁷⁶ Cairns, “An Election to Remember,” pps. 222 & 231-232.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 222.

²⁷⁸ Lisa Young, *Feminists and Party Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).

²⁷⁹ John Geddes, “From Residential School Runaway to Trailblazing MP: Ethel Blondin-Andrew, This Year’s Maclean’s Lifetime Achievement Award Winner,” *Maclean’s* (December 4, 2019), accessed January 19, 2022, <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/from-residential-school-runaway-to-trailblazing-mp/>; Jim Bell, “The Federal Election and Nunavut.” *Nunatsiaq News* (April 25, 1997), accessed January 19, 2022, https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674the_federal_election_and_nunavut/.

was a third Indigenous MP elected under the LPC as the MP for Churchill: Elijah Harper.²⁸⁰ Harper's election victory marked the first time a Cree person was elected to the House of Commons as well as the first time three Indigenous MPs had been elected under the banner of a single Canadian political party. Willie Littlechild, the other Indigenous incumbent from the 1988 election opted to not run for re-election.

Although three (3) Indigenous MPs were originally elected in 1993, a byelection on March 26, 1996 would mark the first time in Canadian politics that four (4) Indigenous peoples would not only sit in the House of Commons, but do so on the governing benches. The election victory of Lawrence O'Brien, who was Métis, in the electoral district of Labrador increased the number of LPC Indigenous MPs to four (4).²⁸¹ Notably for it was a historic moment that First Nations, Métis and Inuit were each represented in the House of Commons at the same time. In addition to Canada having four (4) Indigenous MPs in the House of Commons in 1996, RCAP's findings and recommendations were released that November.

The RCAP final report comprised over four thousand pages and set out a twenty-year plan for implementation of the recommendations it made.²⁸² Additionally, RCAP Commissioners were a mix of non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, including former AFN Chief George Erasmus, Bertha Wilson, and Paul Chartrand, marking the first time Indigenous peoples were involved in a commission or government report at such a level.²⁸³ The 440 recommendations contained in the RCAP called for many changes to the relationship between Indigenous peoples,

²⁸⁰ The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Elijah Harper," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed January 19, 2022, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/elijah-harper>.

²⁸¹ Bruce M. Hicks, "Liberals Sweep Canadian By-Elections," *UPI* (March 25, 1996), accessed January 20, 2022, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1996/03/25/Liberals-sweep-Canadian-by-elections/5252827730000/>

²⁸² Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Volumes 1-5 (Ottawa: Canadian Communications Group, 1996).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

non-Indigenous peoples, provincial governments, and the federal government of Canada. The most significant recommendations put forth included:

- 1) Establishing a new Royal Proclamation stating Canada's commitment to a new relationship;
- 2) Legislation setting out a treaty process and recognition of Indigenous nations and governments;
- 3) Recognition of an Indigenous, or third order of government;
- 4) Replacement of the Department of Indian Affairs with two separate departments: Crown-Indigenous Relations and Indigenous Services; and
- 5) The creation of an Indigenous parliament.²⁸⁴

Additionally, RCAP pushed back on the view that Indigenous peoples could simply be seen through the lenses of policy, administration, and Canadian citizenship. While RCAP's recommendations and summary were significant for bringing Indigenous experiences in Canadian history, and Canadian contemporary actions to the forefront of discussion, the report was put aside by the Chretien Liberals.

3.2: What RCAP? Fiscal Austerity, Court Cases, and Jean Chretien's Retirement

At the time of the tabling of RCAP's findings and recommendations, the Canadian state was also facing large financial deficits, a lowered credit rating, exhaustion from the mega-constitutional period of the 1980s and early 1990s, as well as secessionist woes with Quebec. In turn, the Chretien Liberal government was not keen on advancing RCAP's recommendations, citing concerns over the costs of implementing the recommendations.²⁸⁵ Rather than implement RCAP recommendations, such as those focused on bridging the socio-economic gap relating to funding for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, annual funding caps implemented in the 1996 federal

²⁸⁴ Ibid; Note: The suggestion of an Indigenous Parliament, also a third level of government/an Indigenous House of Commons, was a suggestion put forth that reflected Sami Parliaments in the Scandinavian Countries of Finland, Sweden, and Norway.

²⁸⁵ Kyle Muzyka, "How the Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Lives On, 25 Years Later," *CBC Radio* (November 19, 2021), accessed January 21, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples-25-1.6243545>; Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pp. 32.

Canadian budget, introduced in March of that year, were retained. It should be noted all federal departments and federal spending/transfers witnessed budget cuts at this time. Focus by the Chretien government, and Finance Minister Paul Martin, was on restoring a balanced budget at the federal level of the Canadian state. In relation to Indigenous peoples, specifically First Nations, this meant a two per cent (2%) cap in the growth of the funding for areas such as housing, education, and services.²⁸⁶ Although all areas of federal spending faced budget cuts, frustration from Indigenous peoples relating to a continued two per cent cap on annual funding increases of the growth despite RCAP's recommendation was apparent. That said, little to no pushback seems to have been recorded from Indigenous MPs Blondin-Andrews, Anawak, Harper, and O'Brien.²⁸⁷

Although there seems to have been little public pushback by those Indigenous MPs in the House of Commons at the time fiscal austerity was utilized in the 1996 and 1997 federal budgets, the Canadian federal election in June of 1997 advanced some minor changes relating to Indigenous participation and representation. The results of the 1997 Canadian federal election led to another majority for the Chretien Liberals and a continued representation of four (4) Indigenous MPs in the House of Commons. Both Blondin-Andrew and O'Brien were re-elected in their electoral districts²⁸⁸ Harper, although seeking a second term, was defeated by the NDP's

²⁸⁶ Don Drummond and Ellen Kachuk Rosenbluth, "Working Paper 49: The Debate on First Nations Education Funding: Mind the Gap," (Queen's University: School of Policy Studies, 2013), pp. 5; Assembly of First Nations, "Fact Sheet: First Nations Education Funding," *Assembly of First Nations*, accessed January 21, 2022, https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/fact_sheet_-_fn_education_funding_final.pdf.

²⁸⁷ Note: Further research on the negotiations and place of the four Indigenous MPs at the time fiscal austerity was introduced needs to be further assessed and studied, especially as Harper and Anawak did not return to parliament following the 1997 Canadian federal election.

²⁸⁸ Government of Canada, "Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997: Official Voting Results: Synopsis," *Elections Canada*, accessed January 21, 2022, https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/dec3097&document=res_table12&lang=e.

non-Indigenous candidate, Bev Desjarlais.²⁸⁹ Additionally, Anawak chose to retire from federal politics and thus left a vacancy for the renamed district of Nunavut. With Anawak's retirement, the Liberals kept their hold on the northern electoral district, which came to be represented by Nancy Karetak-Lindell.²⁹⁰ Karetak-Lindell's win in Nunavut was a historic moment for not only Inuit representation but specifically representation of Indigenous women. Karetak-Lindell's win not only marked the first time in Canadian political history that two Indigenous women had been elected to the House of Commons at the same time, but it also marked the first time an Inuk woman was elected to the House of Commons.

In addition to Karetak-Lindell, another new Indigenous MP was elected to the House of Commons in the 1997 Canadian federal election: Rick Laliberte. Laliberte, a member of the Métis nation, won in the northern Saskatchewan electoral district of Churchill River²⁹¹ under the NDP banner.²⁹² Although elected as an NDP MP for the district of Churchill River, Laliberte crossed the floor to join the Chretien Liberals in September of 2000 and was re-elected to the House of Commons in the 2000 Canadian federal election.²⁹³ In addition to Laliberte's re-election, Blondin-Andrew, O'Brien, and Karetak-Lindell were also returned to the House of Commons.²⁹⁴ The re-election of all four Indigenous MPs to the House of Commons not only marked a return to a governing party with four Indigenous representatives but also symbolized

²⁸⁹ Government of Canada, "Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997;" Note: Further research is needed specifically to Harper's time as a Liberal MP and whether him being associated with them following the cuts and caps of 1996 contributed to him losing in 1997.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Note: Churchill River is the former name of the current electoral district of Desenethé-Mississippi-Churchil River

²⁹² Government of Canada, "Thirty-Sixth General Election 1997."

²⁹³ CBC News, "NDP MP Defects to Liberal Party," *CBC News* (September 28, 2000), accessed January 21 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ndp-mp-defects-to-liberal-party-1.205152>; Note: Laliberte's reasoning for crossing the floor to join the Chretien Liberals is not detailed. CBC News highlighted that it was a point to make to the NDP that they will never be able to form government.

²⁹⁴ Government of Canada, "Thirty-Seventh General Election 2000: Official Voting Results: Synopsis," *Elections Canada*, accessed January 21, 2022, <https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/37g&document=index&lang=e>.

little change or any further increase in Indigenous representation. Indigenous participation in relation to voting or volunteering during the 1993, 1997, and 2000 Canadian federal elections was not assessed or, even tracked, and thus the impact of Indigenous turnout and influence in specific districts, based on satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the Canadian state, is unknown.

Although there is little understanding of the impact of Indigenous voters throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, legislation and policy plans by the Chretien Liberals following the 2000 Canadian federal election continued a Canadian centric and settler-colonial approach. The two per cent cap on annual funding increases towards Indigenous peoples continued into the new millennium, and additional paternalistic policies were introduced in the House of Commons. For instance, in 2003 the First Nations Governance Act (FNGA) was introduced and the Chretien government argued it was to assist with not only modernizing the Chief and Council system, but establishing more accountability and autonomy.²⁹⁵ The input and influence of the four Indigenous MPs, as well as the LPC's IPC, has yet to be explored and thus their involvement, and whether they supported the legislation in its entirety is not clear. A majority of First Nations peoples, communities, and organizations were opposed to the FNGA as it further entrenched a Canadian-centric.²⁹⁶ The Chretien government looked certain to implement the FNGA, but a shift in approach by the LPC came following Chretien's retirement in December of 2003.

²⁹⁵ John Borrows, "Stewardship and the First Nations Governance Act," *Queen's Law Journal*, volume 29 (2003), pp. 106.

²⁹⁶ Kim Lunman, "Martin Scraps Bill to Change Indian Act," *The Globe and Mail* (January 9, 2004), accessed January 21, 2022, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/martin-scraps-bill-to-change-indian-act/article1125291/>.

3.3: The Martin Blip: A Positive Change in Indigenous Relations and Participation?

Replacing Chretien as LPC Leader, and Prime Minister, was Paul Martin. Martin, as Prime Minister, sought a different approach to relations with Indigenous nations, organizations, communities, and peoples. Upon replacing Chretien, Martin scrapped the FNGA for more appropriate consultation and inclusion of First Nations leaders and communities.²⁹⁷ In relation to participation in the electoral process, Martin sought to not only expand the strength of the IPC but also to make it easier for Indigenous peoples to cast ballots.²⁹⁸ Furthermore, Martin actively pushed for the recruitment of Indigenous candidates to run for the LPC.²⁹⁹ Martin, in explaining why he was seeking input and inclusion of Indigenous peoples, often expressed that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit understood their needs and the issues facing them better than Non-Indigenous peoples and thus their voices, presence, and input was needed.³⁰⁰ In other words, Martin's approach shifted towards partnerships where Indigenous peoples were to be included and at the table as equals within the Canadian state. This was considered an important step in moving forward on social and economic disparities that were impacting Indigenous peoples and communities. Some Indigenous peoples felt Martin's approach did not go far enough, nor that it reflected a nation-to-nation approach. Despite the aforementioned points, Martin's approach was still considered the closest to nation-to-nation understandings and thus was a step in the right direction.

²⁹⁷ Lunman, "Martin Scraps Bill to Change Indian Act."

²⁹⁸ Kiera Ladner and Michael McCrossan, "The Electoral Participation of Aboriginal People," *Working Paper Series on Electoral Participation and Outreach Practices* (Ottawa, Elections Canada, 2007), pps. 31-32.

²⁹⁹ ICT Staff, "Former Prime Minister Paul Martin Honoured for Aboriginal Relations," *Indian Country Today* (September 15, 2011), accessed January 24, 2022, <https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/former-prime-minister-paul-martin-honored-for-aboriginal-relations>; Note: Martin's push for further inclusion and recruitment of Indigenous peoples will be further explored in the coming chapters of this dissertation.

³⁰⁰ ICT Staff, "Former Prime Minister Paul Martin Honoured for Aboriginal Relations."

Although the Martin government was reduced to minority status in the June 2004 Canadian federal election due to the emergence, and growing understanding, of the Sponsorship Scandal, its relationship with Indigenous peoples showed promise. Martin's commitment to nation-to-nation relations, as well as an increase in representation and participation of Indigenous peoples did produce results in the 2004 Canadian federal election. Although Elections Canada had already established an Aboriginal Community Relations Officer Program (ACROP) and an Aboriginal Elder and Youth Program (AEYP) in the 1990s, the focus for the 2004 election related to party outreach and relationship building. Such relationship building had a noticeable and positive affect for those parties that sought to build better relations and increase Indigenous representation and participation. For instance, the 2004 Canadian federal election had a total of 27 Indigenous candidates seeking election to the House of Commons.³⁰¹ Of the 27, 10 ran for the LPC, 3 of which were incumbents, and another 8 for the NDP.³⁰² In relation to the other 9 Indigenous candidates, 4 ran for the GPC, 3 for the CPC, 1 for the BQ, and former NDP turned LPC MP Rick Laliberte ran as an Independent.³⁰³ Of the 28 candidates, 23 were the sole Indigenous candidate in the electoral district they were seeking to represent.³⁰⁴ In the two remaining ridings, there were multiple Indigenous candidates competing against one another. In relation to the northern Alberta electoral district of Athabasca, the NDP and GPC each had an Indigenous candidate.³⁰⁵ In the electoral district of Churchill River, Laliberte, LPC candidate Al Ducharme, and NDP candidate Earl Cook competed with one another.³⁰⁶

³⁰¹ Loretta Smith, "Mending Fences: Increasing Aboriginal Representation in Canada," A Research Paper Presented to the *Canadian Political Science Association* Annual Meetings (Toronto, June 2006), pps. 3-5.

³⁰² Smith, "Mending Fences", pp. 4.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

In addition to the number of candidates, both the LPC and NDP led the way in the seeking better relations with Indigenous peoples and their inclusion leading up to, and during the 2004 Canadian federal election. Despite such outreach, the NDP did not see a gain in Indigenous representation within their caucus Unlike the NDP, the LPC, continued with four Indigenous MPs elected to its caucus. Blondin-Andrew, Karetak-Lindell, and O'Brien were re-elected, keeping their electoral districts as Liberal seats.³⁰⁷ Joining these three Liberal incumbents was David Smith, who self-identifies as Métis, as the MP for the electoral district of Pontiac.³⁰⁸ In addition to the 4 LPC Indigenous MPs, a fifth was elected to the BQ caucus: Bernard Cleary in the electoral district of Louis-Saint-Laurent.³⁰⁹

Although little looked to have changed following the 2004 Canadian federal election in relation to Indigenous representation and participation, this was not the case – 2004 also led to several important 'firsts.' Both the Cleary and Smith wins marked the first Indigenous candidates were elected to the House of Commons from electoral districts in Quebec, with Cleary also being the first Innu elected in Canadian electoral history.³¹⁰ Cleary's win in Louis-Saint-Laurent also marked the first time an Indigenous person was elected under the BQ banner and into the BQ caucus.³¹¹ In turn, the 2004 Canadian federal election marked the first time that 5 Indigenous people were elected to the House of Commons in an election. Lastly, the focus in relation to the number of Indigenous candidates running and being elected in a Canadian federal election also

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Bea Vongdouangchanh, "Meet Canada's First Innu MP, the Bloc's Bernard Cleary," *The Hill Times* (November 8, 2004), accessed January 24, 2022, <https://www.hilltimes.com/2004/11/08/meet-canadas-first-innu-mp-the-blocs-bernard-cleary/4273>.

³¹¹ Vongdouangchanh, "Meet Canada's First Innu MP."

came to be more thoroughly noted not only Canadian media but also by Elections Canada and Canadian Political Science.³¹²

Despite the Martin government being reduced to a minority government, much was pushed for in relation to Indigenous representation, participation, and nation-to-nation relations. In relation to nation-to-nation relations, Martin became the first Prime Minister in Canadian history to establish a Senior Indigenous Policy Advisor role within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Furthermore, Martin required the Senior Indigenous Policy Advisor to be filled by someone who was Indigenous³¹³ Such a position, and it being filled by an Indigenous person, was suggested and pushed for by Indigenous organizations, including the AFN, ITK, and MNC. The significance of the Senior Indigenous Policy Advisor was instrumental in the planning and negotiations of one of Martin's most noticeable pieces of policy that he sought to have implemented: *The Kelowna Accord*.

The Kelowna Accord, officially known as "First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders Strengthening Relationships and Closing the Gap," was announced in November 2005, following 18 months of negotiations and roundtable discussions between the Premiers of the provinces and territories, the Prime Minister and other key Federal Ministers of Canada, as well as the 5 national Indigenous organizations recognized during the negotiations.³¹⁴ The Kelowna Accord looked to bring an end to not only the funding gaps that existed in relation to Indigenous communities but also bring health care, education, and infrastructure funding within Indigenous communities to parity with non-Indigenous communities and Canadians. Furthermore, the Kelowna Accord also was unique for advancing a platform where all Premiers, the Federal

³¹² Cowie, *Validity and Potential*.

³¹³ Paul Martin, *Hell or High Water: My Life In and Out of Politics* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008), pp. 415.

³¹⁴ Martin, *Hell or High Water*, pps. 418-425; Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pp. 125; *Note*: The 5 national Indigenous organizations include: AFN, ITK, MNC, NWAC, and the Council of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP)

Government of Canada and the National Indigenous organizations agreed on a way to move forward. Thus, the Kelowna Accord was significant and also considered by many Indigenous leaders and peoples as a positive step forward not only in nation-to-nation relations, but also regarding consultation, and partnership.

While the Kelowna Accord was considered a step forward by many – there was criticism of it as well though. Some hereditary Chiefs, Indigenous academics, and grassroots leadership were quick to point out that there was no nation-to-nation representation at the negotiating table. Concern related to the fact the AFN represented the Indian Act Band Chief and Council system and each band specifically, rather than nations, confederacies, and hereditary governance structures was highlighted by some individuals.³¹⁵ Such concern related to the fact that because the AFN did not truly represent each nation, but rather the Indian Act communities, that the *Kelowna Accord* continued the process of ignoring the actual nation-to-nation relationship that First Nations believe exists due to the original treaty relationship. In the end, the Kelowna Accord failed to be passed in the House of Commons due to the Martin government losing the confidence of the House of Commons at the end of November 2005, triggering the 2006 Canadian federal election.

The Martin government's work to further increase representation and participation was noticeable during the 2006 Canadian federal election. Additional supports were put into place through Elections Canada to not only increase the number of Ballot Boxes available within Indigenous communities but also in areas of urban centres with a high number of Indigenous peoples. For instance, the 2006 Canadian federal election witnessed an increase in advanced

³¹⁵ Carey Hill, Trevor Lynn, and Jonathan MacFarlene, "Dangling Participants: Is the Kelowna Accord Constitutionally Binding as a Federal-Provincial Agreement?," A Research Paper Presented to the *Canadian Political Science Association* Annual Meetings (Victoria, 2013), pp. 2.

voting options for Indigenous communities as well as Ballot boxes at Indigenous Friendship Centres.³¹⁶ Furthermore, outreach sessions were further planned in order to increase Indigenous voter turnout and party outreach to increase Indigenous candidacies for the 2006 Canadian federal election also saw a small increase.

In relation to the number of Indigenous candidates, there was a small increase from the previous 27 in 2004 to a total of 20 in 2006. When looking at Indigenous candidates within the political parties, the LPC led again with 16, an increase of 5 from 2004.³¹⁷ The CPC and NDP, both with five candidates each – a decrease of 3 for the NDP and an increase of 2 for the CPC.³¹⁸ The GPC, had 3 Indigenous candidates while the BQ had 1.³¹⁹ Of the thirty Indigenous candidates, 16 were the sole Indigenous candidate in the electoral district they were seeking to represent in the House of Commons. In five electoral districts, there were two Indigenous candidates competing for the same seat³²⁰ while the electoral district of Nunavut had three Inuit candidates, representing the CPC, GPC, and CPC.³²¹ Of the 5 Indigenous incumbents,³²² 4 were challenged by another Indigenous candidate – David Smith did not face another Indigenous candidate in Pontiac.³²³

Despite the number of Indigenous candidates, the House of Commons continued to have only 5 Indigenous MPs following the 2006 Canadian federal election. Karetak-Lindell and Todd Russell were the only Indigenous incumbents re-elected in their electoral districts. Cleary, Smith,

³¹⁶ Ladner and McCrossan, "The Electoral Participation of Aboriginal People," pps. 31-32.

³¹⁷ Smith, "Mending Fences," pp. 7.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid; Note: The five electoral districts include: Fort MacMurray-Athabasca, Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, Louis-Saint-Laurent, Labrador, and Western Arctic

³²¹ Smith, "Mending Fences," pp. 7.

³²² Note: LPC MP Lawrence O'Brien passed away from cancer in December of 2004. LPC candidate Todd Russell, who is also Métis, won in the electoral district of Labrador in a byelection on May 1, 2005.

³²³ Smith, "Mending Fences," pp. 7.

and Blondin-Andrew each lost their seats. Blondin-Andrew's loss brought an end to her 17 years as MP, holding the title of longest serving Indigenous MP in Canadian electoral history. Joining Karetak-Lindell and Russell in the LPC caucus were Cree MPs Gary Merasty, Desnethé-Mississippi-Churchill River, and Tina Keeper, Churchill. Alongside the aforementioned LPC MPs, CPC candidate Rod Bruinooge, a member of the Métis Nation, was also elected in the electoral district of Winnipeg South. Bruinooge's win meant he became the sole Indigenous MP in a minority-government led by the CPC's Stephen Harper.

3.4: From Partners to Idle No More: The Harper Years

The change in government in January 2006, and the start of the Harper Conservative minority government led to changes in policy and outlook not only between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state, but also Indigenous/Canadian relations. Harper specifically sought to 'redo' Canada and much of how the Canadian state worked – federally, internationally, and ideologically. Indigenous/Canadian relations and policy was once such plank within the overall plan of change put forth by Harper.

The Harper government quickly shelved the Kelowna Accord and expressed that although the goals set out in relation to the Kelowna Accord were supported by the Harper government, the methods put forth in the Accord for obtaining them were not.³²⁴ Many Indigenous political organizations, Band Councils, communities, and individuals expressed anger over the change in direction, due to the fact the Kelowna Accord was such a historic agreement.

³²⁴ Brian Laghi, "Harper Not Bound By Liberal Initiatives," *The Globe and Mail* (January 13, 2006), accessed January 24 2022, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/harper-not-bound-by-liberal-initiatives/article964946/>; Lori Curtis and Terry Mitchell, "Canada, First Nations Have a Road Map, it Was the Kelowna Accord," *The Globe and Mail* (January 11, 2013), accessed January 24, 2022, www.globeandmail.com/commentary/canada-first-nations-have-a-road-map-it-was-the-kelowna-accord/article7210814/.

The Harper government's move away from the Kelowna Accord also marked a return to a more aggressive Canadian centric and settler-colonial approach in Indigenous/Canadian relations.

In addition to the Kelowna Accord being shelved, the Harper government also opted to cut funding for Indigenous languages and continued to impose the two per cent cap on annual funding increases that had been in place since the Chretien years. Further cuts were made to Indigenous engagement initiatives relating to voting and federal elections – almost all such activities implemented by the Martin government were removed prior to the 2008 Canadian federal election, including early voting at Friendship Centres, and programs in place to engage Elders and Youth.³²⁵ Lastly, changes to the *Elections Act* in 2007, through Bill C-31, further complicated Indigenous participation in the 2008 election as new rules not only made it difficult for Indigenous voters to validate their location but also led to lower turnout in key ridings such as Nunavut and Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River.

Although the main purpose of Bill C-31 was pushed was as a way to ensure additional accountability for those casting ballots, it also disenfranchised elderly, rural, and Indigenous voters. Bill C-31 specifically stated that in order to vote:

[E]lectors must prove their identity and residential address by providing one piece of government-issued photo identification showing their name and residential address, or two pieces of identification authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, each of which establishes their name and at least one of which establishes their residential address.³²⁶

Such requirements, as was highlighted by the IPC of the LPC were problematic for Indigenous voters. For example, the IPC made it a point that such changes did not take into consideration the

³²⁵ Ladner and McCrossan, "The Electoral Participation of Aboriginal People," pps. 41-42; Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pp. 33.

³²⁶ Government of Canada, "Changes to the Canada Elections Act." *Elections Canada* (2007), accessed January 24, 2022, <http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=loi&document=index&dir=2007&lang=e&textonly=false>.

lack of identification that existed for Indigenous peoples.³²⁷ Furthermore, many Indigenous peoples on-reserve or in rural areas did not necessarily have the type of expected address to be able to obtain proof for voting, not to mention many not living in a permanent location.³²⁸ In turn, the 2008 Canadian federal election witnessed frustration from many Indigenous voters towards the Harper government but also a higher than normal downturn in Indigenous voters participating.

In the 2008 Canadian federal election, which led to another Harper minority, there was a five per cent overall decrease in voter turnout between the 2006 and 2008 elections when considering participation of eligible Canadian voters; ridings with a high Indigenous population saw an even higher decrease.³²⁹ For instance, there was a 14% decline in the riding of Churchill, and a 13% decline in the riding of Desnethé-Mississippi-Churchill River.³³⁰ In ridings that had slightly less than a majority of their citizens being Indigenous, there were also substantial decreases. The riding of Kenora saw a drop of nine percent, while the riding of Labrador saw a significant decline of 19%.³³¹ Such decreases did benefit the Harper Conservative government, which actually won a larger number of seats than they had in 2006. The drop in voter turnout, in Nunavut, Churchill, and Desnethé-Mississippi-Churchill River led to the loss of all three electoral districts for the LPC and gains for the CPC and NDP, leaving Todd Russell as the lone

³²⁷ Indigenous Peoples' Commission of the Liberal Party of Canada.

³²⁸ Government of Canada, "Changes to the Canada Elections Act."

³²⁹ Government of Canada, "Thirty-Ninth General Election 2006: Official Voting Results," *Elections Canada*, accessed January 24 2022,

<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/39gedata&document=byed&lang=e;>

Government of Canada, "Fortieth General Election 2008: Official Voting Results," *Elections Canada*, accessed January 24 2002,

[https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/40gedata&document=index&lang=e.](https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/40gedata&document=index&lang=e)

³³⁰ Ibid; John H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, "Appendix B: Percentage of Votes Received by Constituency," in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2008*, edited by John H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), pps. 335 & 337. Note: These results were done by comparing the voter turnout in each election of each riding cited.

³³¹ Ibid; Pammett and Dornan, "Appendix B," pp. 315.

Indigenous MP within the LPC caucus. Leona Aglukkaq, Nunavut, and Rob Clarke, Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River both joined Bruinooge, who was re-elected, in the CPC caucus.³³² In addition to Aglukkaq, Clarke, and Bruinooge was Shelly Glover, who won in the electoral district of Saint Boniface.³³³

Although Indigenous turnout dropped compared to the 2008 Canadian federal election, there were historic firsts as well. Glover's win marked the first time a Métis woman was elected to the House of Commons in Canada. Additionally, Glover, Bruinooge, Clarke, and Aglukkaq's election wins also marked the first time four Indigenous MPs were elected to the CPC caucus. Furthermore, their election wins alongside the re-election of Russell marked the first time five Indigenous MPs were elected to the House of Commons. Lastly, although the NDP failed to secure a win for any of its Indigenous candidates, the party officially established its own Aboriginal Commission within the party structure. Therefore, the 2008 Canadian federal election had many historic moments despite the decline in Indigenous voter participation.

Following the 2008 Canadian federal election, the Harper government continued to push with a Canadian centric and settler colonial approach to Indigenous communities, policies, and relations. Unlike between 2006 and 2008, when the CPC had a lone Indigenous MP and an additional four Indigenous MPs sitting in Opposition, the Harper government not only had the majority of Indigenous MPs sitting with their caucus but also had representation from Métis, Inuit, and First Nation MPs.³³⁴ With Russell now as the lone Indigenous MP in the Opposition, it became difficult to contest the Harper governments approach to Indigenous peoples as anytime Russell or non-Indigenous MPs from the Opposition side spoke up, they were reminded by the

³³² Ibid; Pammett and Dornan, "Appendix B," pps. 336, 337, & 344.

³³³ Ibid; Pammett and Dornan, "Appendix B," pp. 336.

³³⁴ Note: Clarke is Cree, Aglukkaq is Inuk, and both Bruinooge and Glover are Métis.

Harper government that they had the majority of Indigenous MPs.³³⁵ In addition to the aforementioned point, the Harper government also utilized the CPC Indigenous MPs to speak publicly in favour of the government's approach to Indigenous peoples. Two examples of such mindset is especially noticeable when looking at the response to the economic downturn of 2008 and the Harper governments Matrimonial Real Property legislation.

In late 2008, it became clearer that the world has entered an economic downturn that impacted not only the Canadian state but also Canadian society. Alongside the economic downturn was heavy opposition from the opposition parties to the 2008 budget, leading to the potential of coalition government of the LPC and NDP, with support from the BQ. The Harper government sought to prorogue parliament in order to prevent such a coalition government, arguing it would bring forth instability within Canada – especially as it included the BQ, a separatist party. With proroguing of parliament being agreed to by the Governor General, it allowed the Harper government to avoid losing the confidence of the House of Commons and the potential of being replaced by an LPC/NDP coalition government.³³⁶ Additionally, the period of prorogation allowed for the Harper government to put forth its response to the economic downturn: The Economic Action Plan (EAP). Originally, the EAP did not include or reference First Nations, Inuit, or Métis communities. The lack of consideration or inclusion of Indigenous communities led to expressions of anger and outrage from not only Indigenous organizations, leaders, and peoples, but also the opposition parties.

³³⁵ Rachel Giese, "Stephen Harper is Failing Indian Canadians," *Chatelaine* (June 11, 2015), accessed January 31 2022, <https://www.chatelaine.com/living/stephen-harper-is-failing-indigenous-canadians/>.

³³⁶ Peter H. Russell, and Lorne Sossin, "Introduction," in *Parliamentary Democracy in Crises*, edited by Peter H. Russell and Lorne Sossin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. xiii; Michael Valpy, "The Crisis: A Narrative," in *Parliamentary Democracy in Crises*, edited by Peter H. Russell and Lorne Sossin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pps. 9-18.

In response to the anger and outrage, the Harper government added a section to reflect Indigenous communities. Projects considered for the purpose of the EAP in relation to Indigenous communities were expected to already be fully detailed and thus only projects that had already been fully assessed were to be considered.³³⁷ Projects that were approved were decided upon by the Canadian state with little input or prioritization for items desperately needed. The impact of the EAP in relation to Indigenous communities has yet to be fully assessed and questions relating to how helpful it had been, the percentage of projects approved, and which regions or nations mostly benefited from it need to be assessed and reviewed.

The mindset and approach to the EAP in relation to Indigenous communities was a common approach during the Harper government's second minority government. To further bolster their action and plans, CPC Indigenous MPs and Senators were utilized to express approval of said plans and policies. While Clarke, Bruinooge, and Glover were used to tour and vocally express support and approval of the governments approach, Senator Patrick Brazeau, a member of the community of Kitigan Zibi, did so in Ontario and Quebec.³³⁸ Such an approach was especially and clearly noticeable when putting forth matrimonial real property legislation in relation to First Nations communities.

Another piece of legislation that reflects the Harper governments approach to Indigenous policy and Indigenous relations that many were at odds with, specifically First Nations, was Bill C-47: Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act (MIRA). MIRA, as expressed by the Harper government, was to protect both sides of a couple if a divorce or

³³⁷ Government of Canada, "Long-Term Effectiveness of Canada's Economic Action Plan," Report to the Public Accounts Committee, *House of Commons*, accessed January 31 2022, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/41-1/PACP/report-10/response-8512-411-167>.

³³⁸ Bev Shipley, "Minister Flaherty Pre-Budget Consultation Release," Letter prepared by Bev Shipley, M.P. for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, *Bev Shipley, MP Lambton-Kent-Middlesex* (February 1, 2011), accessed January 31 2022, http://www.bevshipley.ca/media/_/press-releases/minister-flaherty-pre-budget-consultations-release/

separation occurred. Utilizing the Indigenous MPs on the governing side, the Harper government pushed the rhetoric that MIRA was to prevent First Nations women from being removed from property in the case of divorce, whether status-Indian or not.³³⁹ MIRA specifically related to First Nations communities, and the utilizing of CPC Indigenous MPs to push support for it, was a concern for many First Nations as only Clarke was First Nation. Additionally, the communities used as examples to bolster support for MIRA were not reflective of the majority of communities, many of which already had their own policies in place.³⁴⁰ For many First Nations leaders, communities, and individuals, MIRA was considered another attempt to further assimilate First Nations peoples into the Canadian state and also a step to implementing a form of private property.³⁴¹ Despite these concerns from First Nations, the Harper government pushed ahead with it, and utilized its messaging to appeal to the support of Canadians in pursuing such legislation and titled MIRA in such a way that allowed communication to focus on this being a benefit to First Nations women, a tactic that would continue to be utilized following the 2011 Canadian federal election.

The 2011 Canadian federal election, which led to a Harper majority, witnessed a dramatic shift in Canadian politics, and a couple of firsts for Indigenous participation. Prior to the 2011 Canadian federal election, the LPC replaced Stephane Dion, who had replaced Paul Martin in December of 2006, with Michael Ignatieff as party leader in May of 2009. During the summer of 2010, Ignatieff held a bus tour across much of Canada as a way to hear from Canadians and Indigenous peoples. Ignatieff's bus tour marked the first time since the Kelowna Accord that

³³⁹ Stacey L. MacTaggart, "Lessons From History: The Recent Applicability of Matrimonial Property and Human Rights Legislation on Reserve Lands in Canada," *Western Journal of Legal Studies*, vol. 6, iss. 2, (2015), pp. 1.

³⁴⁰ McTaggart, "Lessons from History," pps. 8-9.

³⁴¹ Karen Whonnock, "Matrimonial Real Property on Reserve in Canada," *The Scow Institute* (March 2008), accessed February 21 2022, http://scow-archive.libraries.coop/library/documents/Matrimonial_Property.pdf, pps. 17-22.

Indigenous communities were included in the outreach at such a level.³⁴² Although the inclusion of Indigenous communities and peoples can be viewed as positive, the question of how well Ignatieff and LPC policymakers listened was not answered until the release of the LPC platform. Ignatieff's focus was on education funding, despite hearing from Indigenous Liberals and peoples that infrastructure, healthcare, and housing also must be addressed in order for the education promises to succeed.³⁴³ Promises such as removing the two (2) per cent cap on education funding, funding for a Métis scholarship, and re-funding the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC) proposal were the key promises promoted during the election.³⁴⁴ In comparison, the CPC platform only included Indigenous peoples at a minimal level – focusing on policy relating to economic opportunities. The CPC platform focused on land management, incentives for Indigenous peoples to go into the trades, and to recognize Indigenous contributions in the War of 1812.³⁴⁵ Platform promises by the GPC and NDP for the 2011 Canadian federal election were limited, and in relation to the NDP less noticeable as it sought votes from Quebecers.

Regarding overall Indigenous participation, there was again an increase in the number of Indigenous candidates seeking election. In total, thirty-five (35) Indigenous candidates sought election to the House of Commons in the Federal election of 2011. All four Indigenous CPC incumbents (Aglukkaq, Bruinooge, Clarke, and Glover) were seeking re-election.³⁴⁶ In addition

³⁴² Joan Bryden, "Bus Tour Boosts Liberal Support but not Ignatieff's, Poll Suggests," *The Globe and Mail* (August 27, 2010), accessed February 21, 2022, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/bus-tour-boosts-liberal-support-but-not-ignatieffs-poll-suggests/article1378469/>.

³⁴³ Jorge Barrera, "Our Children Are Not Being Treated Fairly," *APTN National News* (September 21, 2010), accessed February 21 2022, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/our-children-are-not-being-treated-fairly-2/>.

³⁴⁴ Tim Fontaine, "An Aboriginal Who's Who of Canada's 2011 Federal Election," *MediaIndigena: Interactive Indigenous Insight* (April 7, 2011), accessed February 21 2022, <https://mediaindigena.com/an-aboriginal-who's-who-of-canadas-2011-federal-election/>.

³⁴⁵ Fontaine, "An Aboriginal Who's Who of Canada's 2011 Federal Election."

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

to the four Indigenous CPC incumbents, was the CPC's fifth Indigenous candidate: Peter Penashue. Penashue, a member of the Innu nation, sought to represent the electoral district of Labrador.³⁴⁷ In turn, Penashue would be seeking to unseat Russell, who going into the 2011 election, was still the lone Indigenous LPC MP. In addition to Russell, the LPC also had seven other Indigenous candidates seeking election to the House of Commons while the GPC also had eight candidates who had self-identified as Indigenous.³⁴⁸ Additionally, there was an Indigenous candidate running as an Independent as well as one each seeking election for the First Peoples National Party of Canada, the Communist Party of Canada, and the Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada.³⁴⁹ The NDP, replacing the LPC as the party with the most Indigenous candidates seeking election to the House of Commons, had a total of ten.³⁵⁰

Although the 2011 Canadian Federal Election marks the first time there was an active willingness to present a list of Indigenous candidates from the major federal political parties, little focus was given to Indigenous issues, rights, or relations. Despite the lack of focus, 2011 marked another significant moment for Indigenous representation. All five Indigenous CPC candidates won their seats, marking the highest number of Indigenous MPs elected to the CPC caucus to date.³⁵¹ In turn, Penashue's win meant Russell's loss and with it any Indigenous representation within the LPC Caucus – which had been reduced to third-party status and its

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid; Note: In total, when breaking down the number of Indigenous candidates running in the 2011 Canadian federal election, there were: 3 Inuit, 9 Métis, and 21 First Nations (7 Cree, 6 Anishinaabeg, 3 Innu, 2 L'nu, 1 Dene, 1 Gitksan, and 1 Cherokee). 2 candidates did not state which Indigenous nation they were identified with.

³⁵¹ Government of Canada, "Forty-First General Election 2011: Official Voting Results," *Elections Canada*, accessed February 21 2022,

<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/41gedata&document=byed&lang=e>; John H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, "Appendix B: Results by Constituency," in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2011*, edited by John H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), pps. 333, 353, 354, & 361.

worst showing since prior to 1867.³⁵² Joining Aglukkaq, Bruinooge, Clarke, Glover, and Penashue in the House Commons were Romeo Saganash and Jonathan Genest-Jourdain, both elected as NDP MPs in the ‘orange wave’ that saw the NDP form the Official Opposition for the first time in its history.³⁵³ Therefore, the 2011 Canadian federal election was significant for not only being another political earthquake in Canadian politics, with the NDP forming opposition and the LPC being reduced to third-party status, but also because the number of Indigenous MPs jumped from five to seven.

Despite the increase in Indigenous representation in the House of Commons following the 2011 Canadian federal election, it is important to note that the Harper Conservatives also won a majority. Following the election, Aglukkaq continued as Minister of Health.³⁵⁴ Joining Aglukkaq in Cabinet was Penashue, who Prime Minister Harper appointed as the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada – marking the first time an Innu person was given a position in Cabinet.³⁵⁵ The CPC majority meant there was no need to rely on other parties for support in passing legislation. Furthermore, the CPC was able to boast that, with the most Indigenous MPs, they had the support of Indigenous voters.³⁵⁶ In

³⁵² Brooke Jeffrey, “The Disappearing Liberals: Caught in the Crossfire,” in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2011*, edited by John H. Pammatt and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), pp. 70.

³⁵³ Government of Canada, “Forty-First General Election 2011;” Pammatt and Christopher Dornan, “Appendix B: Results by Constituency,” pps. 335 & 339; David McGrane, “Political Marketing and the NDP’s Historical Breakthrough,” in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2011*, edited by John H. Pammatt and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), pps. 77-109; Note: Saganash, who is Cree, was elected in the electoral district of Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou. Genest-Jourdain, who is Innu, was elected in the electoral district of Manicouagan.

³⁵⁴ DBpedia, “Leona Aglukkaq,” *DBpedia.org*, accessed February 21 2022, https://dbpedia.org/page/Leona_Aglukkaq.

³⁵⁵ Samantha Wright Allen, “Timeline: Canadian Parliamentary Firsts for Visible Minorities and Indigenous Peoples,” *The Hill Times* (June 19, 2019), accessed February 21 2022, <https://www.hilltimes.com/2019/06/19/timeline-canadian-parliamentary-firsts-for-visible-minorities-and-indigenous-people/204369>.

³⁵⁶ Josh Wingrove, “Record Number of Aboriginal MPs Heading to Ottawa,” *The Globe and Mail* (May 9, 2011), accessed February 21 2022, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/record-number-of-aboriginal-mps-heading-to-ottawa/article599246/>.

turn, policy relating to Indigenous peoples not only continued in a Canadian centric and settler-colonial approach, but also relied on the Indigenous CPC MPs and Cabinet Ministers to publicly endorse and speak in favour of such policies. Such endorsements were essential for the Harper government to continue claiming that it had the support of Indigenous peoples as they pursued their policy and legislative agenda.

Following re-election and securing a majority of the seats in the House of Commons, the Harper government reintroduced its proposed MRP legislation despite the high level of First Nations opposition. In addition to MRP, the Harper government implemented additional legislation and policy ideas that were heavily opposed by many Indigenous leaders, organizations, and peoples. For instance, Bill C-27, *First Nations Financial Transparency Act*, was touted as a way to prevent money mismanagement amongst the over 600 Indian Act Bands.³⁵⁷ Many First Nations were quick to point out many checks and balances were already in place and that approval for most budgetary items in a Band must be approved by the Canadian state via its Department of Indian Affairs.³⁵⁸ Another pieces of legislation, Bill C-428, *Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act* - put forth by CPC MP Clarke, also raised concern and frustration from First Nations. Bill C-428 directed the Minister of Indian Affairs to seek a replacement to the *Indian Act* and to thus work “with those willing to do the work.”³⁵⁹ Concerns highlighted from First Nations related to questions around whether or not Reservations would become Municipalities, the impact on communal land control and ownership, as well as further

³⁵⁷ Assembly of First Nations, “Bill C-27: First Nations Financial Transparency Act: Overview of Act,” *Assembly of First Nations*, accessed March 14 2022, <https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/parliamentary/analysisbillc-27.pdf>.

³⁵⁸ Ibid; Note: Indian Affairs, since 2017, has been divided into the Departments of Indigenous Services (DIS) and the Department of Crown/Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC).

³⁵⁹ JFK Law LLP “Summary of the Act to Amend the Indian Act,” *JFK Law LLP* (February 2, 2015), accessed March 14 2022, <https://jfkllaw.ca/summary-act-amend-indian-act/>.

jurisdictional complications because of little to no consultation with First Nations people in relation to the formation of Bill C-428.³⁶⁰

Furthermore, the Harper government sought to move forward on policy relating to First Nations property and ownership. The *First Nations Property Ownership Act* (FNPOA) did not make it very far in being introduced to the House of Commons, but sought to fundamentally change the laws and rules relating to First Nations territory. The FNPOA looked to divide First Nations lands, labelled as within the Reservations system into parcels of land that would be privately owned like land deemed by Canada to be non-First Nations.³⁶¹ The newly divided up lands would also then fall under provincial laws and provincial registries and a community would have to surrender all land within the community.³⁶² In turn, many First Nations strongly and adamantly opposed the FNPOA. The final limit that many Indigenous peoples reached came at the end of 2012.

At the end of 2012 the Harper Government introduced sweeping changes in relation to waterways and changes to the Indian act regarding lease and surrender of First Nations lands. *Omnibus Bill C-45* made First Nations lands easier to surrender and no longer needed Cabinet approval.³⁶³ In relation to waterways, amendments to the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* included removal of federal environmental oversight from most lakes and rivers.³⁶⁴ Furthermore, it gave the Minister of Transport authority to approve development projects like mining, bridges,

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Michael P.C. Fabris, "Beyond the New Dawes Act: A Critique of the First Nations Property Ownership Act," Master of Arts Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2016), pps. 17-25.

³⁶² Fabris, "Beyond the New Dawes Act," pps. 17-25.

³⁶³ Ken Coates, *#IdleNoMore and the Remaking of Canada* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), pp. 2; Tabitha de Bruin, "Idle No More," *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (April 12, 2013), accessed May 16, 2022, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/idle-no-more>; Note: This was considered a stepping point to introducing private property in First Nations communities.

³⁶⁴ Coates, *#IdleNoMore and the Remaking of Canada*, pp. 70.

building, and pipelines – no longer needing to take into account First Nations rights, title, or perspectives when approving such developments.³⁶⁵ Indigenous peoples were not consulted on such changes nor was their approval sought. For Indigenous peoples, the consistent Canadian centric and settler-colonial approach and lack of nation-to-nation approach by the Harper government had been too much and organization in order to push back against not only the Harper government's actions, but also to the Canadian state's actions since its formation began taking form. One such formation came at the end of November 2012: #IdleNoMore.

3.5: Conclusion:

From the onset of consultations for the *Charlottetown Accord* to the early days of #IdleNoMore, Indigenous participation, presence, and their political power was growing with the utilization of multiple methods. Whether through Indigenous organizations, protesting, or increases in representation in the House of Commons, Indigenous presence was growing and becoming amplified. Although amplified, the period between the *Charlottetown Accord* and *RCAP*'s findings and recommendations being introduced into the House of Commons, witnessed much input from Indigenous peoples but little movement on key items that were highlighted. Furthermore, the Chretien years saw similar standstill while the Canadian state dealt with, and reined in, spending and made its priority fiscal austerity. The Martin years saw a change in approach with Indigenous-Canadian relations. Martin sought to not only have Indigenous nations at the table as equals, but also to increase Indigenous participation and representation within the House of Commons and his government.

Following Martin's election loss in 2006, and the election of Stephen Harper, another change relating to Indigenous-Canadian relations took place. The Harper government's approach

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

to Indigenous-Canadian relations returned to a much stricter Canadian centric and settler-colonial style of governing, eventually utilizing its increased share of the vote, number of seats in the House of Commons, and the number of Indigenous MPs in the government, to move forward on policies and legislation that were heavily criticized and opposed by most Indigenous peoples. After securing a majority government in the 2011 Canadian federal election, the Harper government further sought to implement its Indigenous policies and utilized its status as a majority government to do so. For many Indigenous peoples, the breaking point was the unilateral imposition of policies by the Harper government which took place following the introduction of the Omnibus Bill C-45. With the Harper government's unilateral removal of important parts of consultation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in relation to territory and waterways, mobilization in response was beginning to take form in #IdleNoMore – mobilization that would not only lead to Indigenous responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but also the formation of Indigenous grassroots organizations which sought to increase Indigenous participation in the 2015 Canadian federal election.

Chapter Four:
Enough is Enough: Unilateral Imposition, #IdleNoMore, and the 2015 Canadian Federal Election

4.0: Introduction

A year into the Harper government's third term, and with a majority now secured, the continued Canadian centric, settler-colonial, and unilateral approach utilized towards Indigenous relations showed no sign of slowing down or changing. The repeated election of the Harper government in 2006, 2008, and 2011 continued a path that told Indigenous peoples what was to be done in relation to themselves – utilizing CPC Indigenous MPs to publicly express support for the CPC approach. This tactic purported to Canadians that it was the Harper government who had the support of Indigenous peoples seeing as their government had five of the seven Indigenous MPs in the House of Commons within their own caucus. Indigenous peoples consistently tried to express disagreement with these claims, whether it was through posting to social media, discussions within communities or organizations, or trying to figure out ways to counter such claims and approaches. While such opposition continued to grow from Indigenous peoples, the introduction of an Omnibus Bill in the Autumn of 2012 would be the final straw – ushering forth a movement that assisted in other options and ways to not only approach the Canadian state but also to push back on its continued encroachment. The formation of #IdleNoMore saw many firsts in relation to Canadian politics, and also to Canadian-Indigenous relations and its impact between 2012-2015.

The purpose of Chapter Four will be to answer questions about the extent to which #IdleNoMore influenced Indigenous engagement – especially in relation to the 2015 Canadian federal election, as well as the unique realities of Indigenous partisan activists being both enfranchised as Canadian citizens and citizens of their own Indigenous nations. Thus, this

chapter will assess the impact of #IdleNoMore in relation to the 2015 Canadian federal election. In order to do so, this chapter will first assess the Canadian/Indigenous political climate from the introduction of the *Jobs and Growth Act*, Omnibus Bill C-45, as well as Indigenous responses and reactions towards it. Secondly, the engagement by Canada's major political parties in relation to #IdleNoMore will be explored. Lastly, this chapter will delve into the recruitment of Indigenous candidates, as well as the responses of Indigenous peoples to the federal election campaign of 2015. This chapter argues that #IdleNoMore was key to assisting in formulating grassroots organizations relating to Indigenous voter turnout as well as bringing Indigenous peoples together to vote in order to oust the Harper government. This process began in the Autumn of 2012 but came to the forefront of general Canadian knowledge by the Winter of 2013.

4.1: The Final Straw: Omnibus Bill C-45 and #IdleNoMore

As the Autumn of 2012 progressed, the growing frustration and discontent from First Nations, Métis and Inuit was reaching a boiling point, similar to those surrounding the *White Paper (1969)* and the *Constitution Act, 1982*. This frustration stemmed from the continued unilateral choices being made on Indigenous/Canadian relations and policies by the Harper government, which showed little understanding of, or willingness to understand, a relationship that would bring the Canadian state and Indigenous nations to the table as equal partners or on a nation-to-nation basis. The final straw for many Indigenous peoples came in November of 2012 following the first and second readings of the *Jobs and Growth Act, 2012: Omnibus Bill C-45*.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁶ Note: The *Jobs and Growth Act, 2012*, was introduced to the House of Commons on October 18, 2012 and had its first reading that day. The aforementioned piece of legislation was then presented for its second reading on October 31, 2012 (Barker, *A Direct Act of Resurgence*, pps. 48-49).

Although Bill C-45 targeted economic growth, and was tailored to reflect that, there were many other components of the Bill that impacted Indigenous nations, communities, and peoples. Amendments to Bill C-45 not only limited the full extent of consultation with Indigenous peoples that was required under Canadian law since the *Calder Case*, but they also made drastic changes to environmental protections. For instance, the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* (NWPA), 1882, was to be replaced with the *Navigation Protection Act* (NPA) once royal assent would be given to Bill C-45. The replacement of the NWPA with the NPA would mean “the number of protected water bodies [would be] greatly reduced ... the NPA [would only cover] 3 oceans, 97 lakes, and portions of 62 rivers.”³⁶⁷ Furthermore, Bill C-45 would now give the authority to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs “to call a meeting or referendum for the purpose of land surrender from the band’s territory [and also give] the authority to accept or refuse a land designation after receiving a proposal from the band council or the body governing the band.”³⁶⁸ Such changes reduced and removed requirements for consultation with Indigenous peoples. Sheelah McLean, one of the co-founders of #IdleNoMore, pointed out that “it was illegal for Aboriginal peoples not to be consulted about proposed legislation affecting the Indian Act.”³⁶⁹ McLean further expressed in her commentary on Bill C-45 that “if this is going to be beneficial for Aboriginal communities, why aren’t they being consulted on it?”³⁷⁰

Other Indigenous critics, such as Russell Diabo, a Kanien’kéha:ka who has critically assessed Canadian policy since the 1990s, pointed out that such changes were not to benefit Indigenous peoples but rather were another example of the Harper Government’s desire “to

³⁶⁷ Derek Inman, Stefaan Smis, & Dorothee Cambou, “We Will Remain Idle No More: The Shortcomings of Canada’s Duty to Consult Indigenous Peoples,” in *Goettingen Journal of International Law*, volume 5, issue 1 (2013): pp. 256.

³⁶⁸ Inman, Smis, and Cambou, “We Will Remain Idle No More,” pp. 256.

³⁶⁹ Coates, #IdleNoMore, pp. 6.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

undermine the collective rights of First Nations by focusing on individual rights.”³⁷¹ Like Diabo, scholars Terry Wotherspoon and John Hansen expressed concern that the Harper Government’s undermining of Indigenous rights, due to lack of consultation, represented a furthering of colonialism and social exclusion when relating to the contentious changes promoted by Bill C-45.³⁷² Bob Rae, former Premier of Ontario and interim leader of the LPC at the time, in an opinion piece for *Huffington Post Canada*, argued that the Harper government was continuing a backward trend with returning to assimilation rather than moving towards self-government, autonomy, or a transfer of power and resources.³⁷³ Additionally, Rae stated that the Harper government demonstrated “no understanding of the significance of treaties and the meaning of nation to nation relations.”³⁷⁴ The conclusions of Diabo, Wotherspoon, Hansen, and Rae came from listening to the growing voices of Indigenous peoples speaking out against Bill C-45. For a growing number of Indigenous peoples, Bill C-45 amounted to the final straw. They thus began coordinated efforts to not only educate Canadians, but also push back against the Harper government’s approach on Indigenous nations, communities, and rights.

In turn, there was a growing increase in action being considered amongst Indigenous peoples – action that would lead to new forms and types of participation through protesting, educating, and even consideration of a purposeful casting of ballots in the next Canadian federal

³⁷¹ Russell Diabo, “Harper Launches Major First Nations Termination Plan: As Negotiating Tables Legitimize Canada’s Colonialism,” in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 51-65 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 53.

³⁷² Terry Wotherspoon and John Hansen, “The Idle No More Movement: Paradoxes of First Nations Inclusion in the Canadian Context,” in *Social Inclusion*, volume 1, issue 1 (2013), pp. 29.

³⁷³ Bob Rae, “This Land Was Their Land,” *Huffington Post Canada*, (January 7, 2013), accessed July 7 2022, https://www.huffpost.com/archive/ca/entry/bob-rae-theresa-spence_b_2426382?utm_hp_ref=%2F%2Fexample.com.

³⁷⁴ Rae, “This Land Was Their Land.”

election.³⁷⁵ The first step in what was to be a response by Indigenous peoples to Bill C-45 occurred on November 10 in the form of a teach-in. The teach-in was held in the city of Saskatoon and encouraged many individuals, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, to attend and learn not only what Bill C-45 entailed but also other legislation that had been pushed, or planned to be pushed for, by the Harper government.³⁷⁶ The teach-in, hosted by four women was titled: *Idle No More*.

The first teach-in was organized and run by Sylvia McAdam, Jess Gordan, Nina Wilson and Sheelah Mclean. It focused on the concerns regarding the removal of environmental protections as well as the changes to Indigenous consultation and land leasing.³⁷⁷ In order for as many people to be included and offered an invite, the event was highlighted through then relatively new social media platforms such as *Twitter* and *Facebook*. The utilization of social media was an important element in the formation of the broader #IdleNoMore movement as it allowed for Indigenous peoples across territorial divides shared with Canada to communicate and

³⁷⁵ Chadwick Cowie, "Canada: It's Time to #IdleNoMore," *Indigenous Peoples Commission of the Liberal Party of Canada* (December 2012), accessed July 7 2022, <https://ipc-cpa.liberal.ca/blog/idle-no-more/>; Barker, "A Direct Resurgence," pp. 47.

³⁷⁶ Sylvia McAdam, "Armed with Nothing More than a Song and a Drum," in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 65-67 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 66; The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, "Idle No More: The Winter We Danced," in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 21-27 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 21; Wab Kinew, "Idle No More is Not Just an Indian Thing," in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 95-98 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 96; Francesca Gottardi, "Sacred Sites Protection and Indigenous Women's Activism: Empowering Grassroots Social Movements to Influence Public Policy. A Look into the Women of Standing Rock and Idle No More Indigenous Movements," *Religions*, volume 11 (2020): pp. 7; Barker, "A Direct Act of Resurgence," pp. 47; Coates, *#IdleNoMore*, pp. xiii.

³⁷⁷ Sibon Chen, "How to Discredit a Social Movement: Negative Framing of Idle No More in Canadian Print Media," *Environmental Communication*, volume 13, issue 2 (2019): pp. 144; Jennifer Tupper, "Social Media and the Idle No More Movement" Citizenship, Activism, and Dissent in Canada," *Journal of Social Science Education*, volume 13, issue 4 (Winter 2014): pp. 90; The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, "Idle No More: The Winter We Danced," pp. 21; Kinew, "Idle No More is Not Just an Indian Thing," pp. 96; Gottardi, "Sacred Sites Protection and Indigenous Women's Activism," pp. 7; Wotherspoon and Hansen, "The Idle No More Movement," pp. 23; Inman, Smis, and Cambou, "We Will Remain Idle No More," pp. 253; Coates, *#IdleNoMore*, pp. 2.

learn more about the repercussions of Bill C-45.³⁷⁸ While understanding was still growing and spreading through the use of social media, a Committee Report from the House of Commons on C-45 was released on November 26 2012, with very limited Indigenous inclusion.³⁷⁹ The limited Indigenous consultations and lack of Indigenous voices in the committee led to some community representatives, organizations, and individuals to organize in front of the House of Commons on December 4th – the day before Bill C-45 was to be introduced for its third and final reading.

Some of those attending the rally on December 4th were Chiefs who were elected through the Indian Act Band Council system and were invited to the House of Commons by the NDP but were ultimately prevented from entering the House of Commons upon arrival. In fact, those Chiefs were there:

...[T]o bring attention to [the issues of Bill C-45] – only to be man handled by House of Commons Security. These elected officials who represented the people these pieces of legislation would impact were denied the right to be there to speak for their citizens.³⁸⁰

In preventing these Chiefs to directly voice their concerns, or to be allowed into the House of Commons, caused further frustration and anger from Indigenous peoples. Despite such anger, Bill C-45 was introduced for its third reading on December 5 2022 and was passed.³⁸¹ Social-media was again used by Indigenous peoples to express anger and frustration with the Harper government's actions, producing yet another sign of its unwillingness to work with Indigenous peoples or to honour treaty rights and nation-to-nation relations. Thus, social media was utilized to organize Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples to raise awareness and to organize for the cause of Idle No More across Turtle Island.

³⁷⁸ Barker, "A Direct Act of Resurgence," pp. 50; Note: Barker highlights that the first tweet recorded that utilizes #IdleNoMore was on November 23, 2012.

³⁷⁹ Ibid, pps. 48-49.

³⁸⁰ Cowie, "Canada: It's Time to #IdleNoMore."

³⁸¹ Barker, "A Direct Act of Resurgence," pps. 48-49

In response to the passage of Bill C-45, plans were made for Idle No More teach-ins and protests that would highlight the displeasure of Indigenous peoples and their allies. Rallies and events were planned in thirteen Canadian cities for December 10 2012.³⁸² Like the *Arab Spring of 2010-2012*, the utilization of social media was an important component of the mobilizing and organizing strategy of Idle No More rallies. Social Media was also key for expressing Idle No More's purpose and reaching people in every corner of Turtle Island and around the world. Idle No More, by the December 10 2012 rallies, reflected three broad motivations and objectives: 1) repealing C-45; 2) dealing with deplorable conditions in Indigenous communities, such as with housing and clean water; and 3) committing to a mutually beneficial nation-to-nation relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous nations.³⁸³ Such broad motivations, as the *Kino-nda-niimi Collective* point out, is "a culmination of the historical and contemporary legacies emerging from colonization and violence throughout North America and the world."³⁸⁴ In turn, as Pamela Palmater points out:

Idle No More is a coordinated, strategic movement, not led by any elected politician, national chief or paid executive director. It is a movement originally led by [I]ndigenous women and has been joined by grassroots First Nations leaders.³⁸⁵

³⁸² Inman, Smis, and Cambou, "We Will Remain Idle No More," pp. 254; Note: I was fortunate enough to attend the rally on December 10 2012 in front of Queen's Park, my first experience with Idle No More.

³⁸³ Idle No More, "A Call to Action from Idle No More & Defenders of the Land," *Idle No More*, accessed July 7 2022, <https://idlenomore.ca/idle-no-more-and-defenders-of-the-land-issue-call-for-solidarity-spring/>; Hayden King, "Ghosts of Indigenous Activism Past, Present, Future: #IdleNoMore's Transformative Potential," in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 79-83 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 79; The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, "Idle No More;" Cowie, "Canada: It's Time to #IdleNoMore;" Gottardi, "Sacred Sites Protection and Indigenous Women's Activism," pp. 7; Tupper, "Social media and the Idle No More Movement," pp. 91; Wotherspoon and Hansen, "The Idle No More Movement," pp. 23

³⁸⁴ The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, "Idle No More: The Winter We Danced," pp. 22.

³⁸⁵ Pamela Palmater, "Why Are We Idle No More?" in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 37-40 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 39.

A living example of Palmater's point would come to the forefront of media attention when Theresa Spence, the Chief of the Cree community of Attawapiskat, announced a hunger strike in relation to the ongoing issues that were impacting her community.

The Cree community of Attawapiskat has long dealt with infrastructure, water, and housing issues. Situated along the James Bay, on territory shared with the province of Ontario, Chief Spence had been trying to get assistance in dealing with over-crowding in housing as well as problematic construction practices and costs for housing. For most First Nations communities, the *Indian Act* details the process for how homes are to be built, and provided, as well as the amount of money that can be contributed towards housing – a cost that was impacted by the two per cent increase cap from the 1996 federal budget.³⁸⁶ Attawapiskat, like many northern First Nation communities, is especially impacted by the lack of parity in funding for homes. As a fly-in community, the costs are far higher than those of communities to the South. Following a lack of commitment or willingness on the part of the Harper government to meet with Chief Spence, and the growing protest and pushback regarding Bill C-45, she opted to begin a hunger strike on December 11 2012.³⁸⁷ Chief Spence, during her hunger strike, or fast as is expressed amongst Indigenous peoples, was situated on Victoria Island on the Ottawa River – not far from the House of Commons.³⁸⁸ Although separate, both Idle No More and Chief Spence's actions complimented one another and further assisted in bringing people together through participating in the Idle No More movement, which was continuing to grow.

As Idle No More grew, it became more diverse, broad-based, and included many different voices. The focus of the movement continued on Bill C-45 but also expanded in some

³⁸⁶ Note: See previous chapter – specifically in relation to the two per cent cap introduced during the Chretien period.

³⁸⁷ Barker, "A Direct Act of Resurgence," pp. 48-49; Rae, "This Land Was Their Land."

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

sections of Turtle Island to include protecting land, nation re-building, and sought movement on the high number of cases relating to missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit individuals.³⁸⁹ The movement and the strength of Idle No More, according to Waneek Horn-Miller, came:

[F]rom the fact that it is open to all who lend their voices for change. The potent combination of flash mob round dances, social media, and teach-ins, has created a new generation of politicized people.³⁹⁰

In addition to Horn-Miller's point, Derek Inman, Stefaan Smis, and Dorothée Cambou highlighted that Idle No More's growth led to additional hunger strikes in support of Chief Spence as well as a push for discussion and awareness on the issue of mental health and high suicide rates amongst First Nations and Inuit youth.³⁹¹ The flash mob round dances that Horn-Miller pointed out were one such example to highlight the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women as well as the issue of poor mental health services in Indigenous communities. The flash mob round dance occurred on December 17, 2022 when Indigenous peoples, in support of Idle No More and what it stood for, staged a round dance in a mall in the province of Saskatchewan.³⁹² Social-media, as was the case with other flash mobs that had occurred around the world, was key to the planning for the round dance that took over a busy shopping centre during the busy holiday period – utilizing another way to bring attention to

³⁸⁹ Amanda Morris, "Twenty-First-Century Debt Collectors: Idle No More Combats a Five-Hundred-Year Old Debt," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, volume 42, issues 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2014): pp. 244; The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, "Idle No More: The Winter We Danced," pp. 23; Barker, "A Direct Act of Resurgence," pp.55; Coates, *#IdleNoMore*, pp. xxi.

³⁹⁰ Waneek Horn-Miller, "Revolutionary Acts of Non-Violence Disempowers Opposition," in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 118-120 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 119; Note: A similar sentiment is highlighted by Morris in "Twenty-First-Century Debt Collectors," pp. 249;

³⁹¹ Inman, Smis, and Cambou, "We Will Remain Idle No More," pp. 254.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

Canadian/Indigenous relations. Following the round dance, further plans for additional events and a second set of 'Days of Action' were targeted for December 21, 22, and 23 of 2012.

Between December 21-23 2012, multiple round dances and rallies occurred in multiple cities throughout Canada and, in solidarity, around the world. Events took place in major cities, such as Toronto and Montreal, as well as smaller or northern cities and towns such as Iqaluit, Prince Albert, and Peterborough. In addition to the second round of Days of Action, calls began to mount from not only Chief Spence, but also other Indigenous leaders and individuals, for a meeting with Stephen Harper and the Governor General. As the Monarch's representative in Canada, the Governor General's presence would be important for many Indigenous peoples to reflect the nation-to-nation relationship and treaty relationships that had been established since contact.³⁹³ For many Canadians, the inclusion of the Governor General was likely confusing as the Prime Minister is considered their representative – forgetting the history of nation-to-nation relations and the fact that many Indigenous nations have had the Canadian state imposed upon them. Bob Rae stated:

Why not just follow the accepted channels? Why upset the normal ways of communicating? ... Chief Spence's hunger strike, carried out with dignity and determination, and the broader Idle No More campaign, which has gone beyond the traditional politics both within and outside the Aboriginal community, are based on a deep sense of frustration, of promises broken, of conditions that no people in Canada should have to accept.³⁹⁴

Others, such as Dale Turner, Ken Coates, and Tara Williamson explained that such participation not only related to the frustration, as indicated by Rae pointed out but also that it was assisting in engagement with concepts of nationhood.

³⁹³ Chen, "How to Discredit a Social Movement," pp. 149.

³⁹⁴ Rae, "This Land Was Their Land."

In writing about Idle No More, Williamson stated that for the proponents of the movement, it was “not about nation-state-hood but nationhood – the ability to take care of the land, our children, and our families in the way we best know how.”³⁹⁵ As Ken Coates explained, while connecting to the Idle No More movements development in the Yukon, it was about “mothers and children more than warriors and activists [and] all events were astonishingly calm ... [c]ulture mattered more...”³⁹⁶ Since culture mattered more, alongside the reestablishment of understanding of nation-to-nation relationships:

Idle No More brought illumination not destruction. Canadians saw something that they had rarely seen before – conviction tied to culture, hope arising from sorrow, determination wedded to a sense of injustice, family connected to political justice.³⁹⁷

Such analysis by Coates went alongside Turner’s points on Idle No More when explaining that the movement’s relationship to nationhood and nation-to-nation relations was an important reminder to Canadians as well. More specifically, Turner expressed that Idle No more is:

... reminding Canadians (yet again), just as they did in 1969, that this dialogue has deteriorated and is in danger of disintegrating. This is because the federal government’s solution to the Indian problem has not changed: extinguish Aboriginal title, open up Aboriginal homelands to large multinational resource companies, and exploit natural resources for the economic benefits of “all” Canadians.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ Tara Williamson, “#IdleNoMore Provides Us with Opportunity to Examine Nationhood,” in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*,” edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 152-154 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 153; Note Wotherspoon and Hansen also highlight this in their research on page 22 of “The Idle No More Movement.”

³⁹⁶ Coates, *#IdleNoMore*, pp. xi-xii.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Dale Turner, “The White Paper and the Idle No More Movement,” in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*,” edited by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 120-123 (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2014), pp. 122.

These economic benefits were targeted in another form of participation that was utilized on December 30 2012 with some groups blockading rail-lines that went through communities like that of Aamjiwnaang³⁹⁹ and Tyendinaga.⁴⁰⁰

For some, blockades were the next step in putting further pressure on the Canadian state. The founders of Idle No More, especially McAdam, discouraged such actions and again expressed this was to be a peaceful protest movement that did not hinder the every-day lives and needs of Canadians. Thus, any blockades that were put up in solidarity with Idle No More were not sanctioned by Idle No More and were few and far between. Glen Coulthard, in his writing on Idle No More, was quick to point out its uniqueness and how it was different from previous Indigenous movements. More specifically, Coulthard states that Idle No More is different in two ways:

The first condition that appears to be absent is the perceived threat of political violence that was present in the years leading to the resistance at Kanesatake. #IdleNoMore is an explicitly non-violent movement ... The second condition that differentiates #IdleNoMore from the decade of Indigenous activism that led to RCAP [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples] is the absence (so far) of widespread economic disruption...⁴⁰¹

Despite these differences, and diverse support of Idle No More, the approach by the Canadian state, and the opinion of many Canadians, continued to show a lack of understanding not only needed but also the ongoing perplexities of participation.

³⁹⁹ Note: Aamjiwnaang is a Chippewag Nishnaabeg community that borders with the Ontario city of Sarnia, along the St. Claire River.

⁴⁰⁰ Note: Tyendinaga is a Kanien'kéha:ka community currently situated on the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig Niishnaabeg nation near the Ontario town of Deseronto.

⁴⁰¹ Glen Coulthard, "#IdleNoMore in Historical Context," in *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Present, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*, edited by The Kin-nda-niimi Collective, pps. 32-37 (Winnipeg: ARP Press, 2014), pp. 36.

With reports highlighting that an agreement had been made for a meeting between the Harper government and the AFN, and a third set of Days of Action, for January 2013, the polling firm *IPSOS Reid* released findings from a survey that assessed Idle No More and Indigenous-Canadian Relations. The survey sampled 1,023 Canadians from an online panel and asked a number of questions relating to Idle No More, the hunger strike by Chief Spence, and responsibility in relation to Indigenous issues.⁴⁰² The survey found that of those who responded, only 29% approved of Chief Spence and 60% believed that the issues facing Indigenous peoples were brought on by their own actions.⁴⁰³ Additionally, 64% of those who responded to the survey believed Indigenous peoples received too much support from taxes paid by the average Canadian.⁴⁰⁴ In turn, 62% of those who responded believed Indigenous peoples were treated well by the Canadian state and thus the same percentage did not support Idle No More.⁴⁰⁵ Similar sentiments seemed to be noticeable within sections of the bureaucracy of the Canadian State.

As Idle No More grew, surveillance was undertaken by both the RCMP and bureaucratic offices such as *Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada* (AANDC). For instance, Andrew Crosby and Jeffrey Monaghan point out that:

The escalation of the #IdleNoMore hashtag on social media in December 2012 prompted AANDC to pay close attention. Internal documents indicate the department's concern on December 12: "[M]aybe we should be commissioning someone to monitor the social media around this more systematically than we can do."⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² Ipsos Reid, "Fast Fallout: Chief Spence and Idle No More Movement Galvanizes Canadians Around Money Management and Accountability," *IPSOS Reid*, accessed July 7 2022, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/fast-fallout-chief-spence-and-idle-no-more-movement-galvanizes-canadians-around-money-management>.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ Andrew Crosby and Jeffrey Monaghan, "Settler Colonialism and the Policing of Idle No More," *Social Justice*, volume 43, issue 2 (2016): pp. 43.

Alongside keeping surveillance, regular debriefings would be presented daily in AANDC and terminology such as ‘hotspots’ would be utilized to describe where events were planned.⁴⁰⁷ The RCMP also tracked events and kept notes and tabs. Unlike AANDC officials, a high ranking RCMP official was caught on record referring to the Idle No More Movement as something like a bacteria. More specifically, as highlighted by journalist Jorge Barrera, a high ranking RCMP official was recorded stating:

The Idle No More Movement is like bacteria. It has grown a life of its own all across this nation. It may be advisable for all to have contingency plans in place, as this is one issue that is not going to go away ... There is a high probability that we could see flash mobs, round dances, and blockades become much less compliant to laws in an attempt to get their point across. The escalation of violence is ever near.⁴⁰⁸

As previously highlighted, such escalation did not occur and an apology for the comparison was requested from the NDP on behalf of Indigenous peoples and, in turn, an apology was received.

Despite such tracking and unfavourable comparisons by sections of the Canadian state and Canadian society, Idle No More continued growing and the third round of rallies were held alongside the Assembly of First Nations (AFN)-Harper Government meeting. Although some Indigenous representatives, such as Chief Spence, boycotted the meeting due to the Governor General not being in attendance, the meeting was considered positive by those who attended.⁴⁰⁹ Many other Indigenous peoples were not convinced and continued their push toward educating Canadians and for change. Various options for change were considered by newly-formed grassroots organizations that came to fruition thanks to #IdleNoMore. These new grassroots organizations pertained to nation re-building, language learning, and also, to increasing voter

⁴⁰⁷ Crosby and Monaghan, “Settler Colonialism and the Policing of Idle No More,” pp. 43.

⁴⁰⁸ Jorge Barrera, “NDP MP Demands Apology for RCMP Idle No More Comparison,” *APTN National News* (May 8, 2015), accessed July 7 2022, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/ndp-mp-demands-apology-rcmp-idle-bacteria-comparison/>.

⁴⁰⁹ Chen, “How to Discredit a Social Movement,” pp. 149.

turnout amongst Indigenous peoples—but all formed in response to #IdleNoMore. The next generation of educated Indigenous peoples, as twitter user @JoyArc expressed to the Harper government, “[are] knocking on your door and they won’t walk away #IdleNoMore.”⁴¹⁰

4.2: #IdleNoMore: A Stepping Stone to Increased Indigenous Electoral Participation?

The mobilization of Indigenous peoples created from Idle No More, as well as its utilization of social media, was significant for increasing mainstream awareness of Indigenous-Canadian relations, rights, and issues. Such increase and mobilization from Idle No More also crossed over into Canadian federal politics – especially with the release of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC)’s findings, the introduction of Bill C-51, and the willingness of some political parties to engage. Forms of engagement and participation included: protesting in front of MPs constituency offices, forming grassroots organizations, becoming involved in a political party, and/or opting to run under the banner of a political party during the 2015 Canadian federal election. These ways of engaging and participating varied from the early days of Idle No More and up to the 2015 election. Additionally, Indigenous volunteers within political parties were key – acting as a bridge between the party structures and Idle No More itself.

The interaction of Canada’s federal political parties with the Idle No More movement is an area of research that has been left unexplored until now. Little exists other than through stories and writing by those who were intertwined with political involvement and Idle No More itself. Additionally, such information is non-existent in relation to the BQ and its approach other than its disapproval of the Harper government’s approach.⁴¹¹ The GPC expressed support for Idle

⁴¹⁰ Coates, *#IdleNoMore*, pp. 74.

⁴¹¹ Éric Bélanger and Richard Nadeau, “The Bloc Québécois in a Rainbow-Coloured Quebec,” in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2015*, edited by Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, pps. 117-140 (Toronto: Dundurn, 2016).

No More and what it stood for.⁴¹² Whether support was directed only to the environmental pillars of the various sections of Idle No More or not was not assessed and explained during the ongoing protests and teach-ins. The CPC approach seemed to be one of following the party line and, as had been practiced since 2008, rolling out Indigenous CPC MPs to argue in favour of their party's actions and to do so as Indigenous individuals. What limited information that does exist regarding Indigenous interaction and political party involvement seems to be focused in relation to the NDP and LPC.

In relation to the NDP, those involved with its Indigenous Commission – formed in 2008, as well as Indigenous NDP MPs Saganash and Genest-Jourdain, were active in Idle No More events in their regions and territories. While both Saganash and Genest-Jourdain spoke in favour of Idle No More, Indigenous Commission members were also posting support through social media as well as assisting with events. For example, MaryAnn Wilhelm, as a member of the Commission's executive, was active on Twitter and Facebook. Through her personal accounts, as well as sharing to the NDP Indigenous Peoples' Commission Facebook page, Wilhelm shared various posts coming from Idle No More organizers as well as highlighting her attendance of events in her vicinity.⁴¹³ Like Wilhelm, many others involved in the Commission executive gave similar signs of support through their own personal social media accounts and the NDP Indigenous Peoples' Commission Facebook page. Non-Indigenous NDP MPs, such as Nikki Ashton and Charlie Angus, also actively showed support for Idle No More whether by sharing posts, commenting to media, or attending events. In the House of Commons, they, along with Saganash and Genest-Jourdain pressed the Harper government on its actions and the need to

⁴¹² Susan Harada, "Opportunities and Obstacles: The Green Party of Canada's 2015 Campaign," in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2015*, edited by Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, pps. 141-162 (Toronto: Dundurn, 2016).

⁴¹³ Tupper, "Social Media and the Idle No More Movement."

listen. Such actions, along with the pressure from the NDP Indigenous Peoples' Commission, led to a letter written by the then NDP leader, Thomas Mulcair, to publicly express support for Idle No More and the need for a government that listens to Indigenous peoples.⁴¹⁴

Although expressions of support within the NDP ranks and structure did grow as January 2013 was coming to a close, the LPC structure had already been showing strong support in early December of 2012. The Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPC) of the LPC executive between 2012-2014 was active and involved from early December and through the rest of their term. Cherish Clarke, the IPC Female Co-Chair, led the Idle No More rallies and protests in Whitehorse, Yukon, where she resides. Coates, citing Clarke's involvement, explains how she led protests at the constituency office of the CPC MP for the Yukon. In doing so, Clarke is quoted as saying that:

Ryan Leef is our Member of Parliament and he needs to know that we want him to vote against the legislation ... this is just the beginning of the Conservative agenda ... this is just the beginning of the changes that are coming and if it's frightening now, like we should just wait until 2013, 2014, 2015, it's just going to go on and on and on unless we stand up as a grassroots movement and get it to stop.⁴¹⁵

In addition, Clarke, along with the rest of the IPC executive, engaged through the IPC itself.⁴¹⁶

The IPC, as an arm of the LPC, issued various press releases explaining Idle No More, showing support for Idle No More, as well as showcasing events that executive members and regional executive members were attending. The IPC's social media was also used to target CPC

⁴¹⁴ CBC Archives, "NDP on Idle No More," *CBC*, accessed September 8, 2022.

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2323469367>

⁴¹⁵ Coates, *#IdleNoMore*, pp. 52.

⁴¹⁶ Note: Like Cherish Clarke, I as the IPC's Male Co-Chair assisted in organizing in my home territory region as well as participating in speaking events on the Harper governments actions with regard to the Omnibus legislation in relation to Idle No More and Indigenous rights at the University of Manitoba and the University of Toronto. (Rodrigues, "Idle No More Lecture Held at The Hub")

MPs and to further highlight support for Idle No More. To bring in the new year of 2013, The IPC launched a ‘Twitter-bomb’ campaign of Prime Minister Harper’s twitter account.⁴¹⁷ Over a couple of hours, twitter users in support of pushing back on the Harper government’s unilateral movement on Indigenous peoples, bombarded Harper’s account with tweets of support for Indigenous peoples and of Idle No More.⁴¹⁸ The blending of the IPC executive’s place in Idle No More and the LPC party structure also allowed for it to engage with MPs and other party Commissions – assisting with additional support and calls for action by a large segment of the LPC itself.

Throughout January of 2013, various segments of the LPC structure, and sitting MPs, showed their support. Ralph Goodale, of his own accord, released a blog post in support of Idle No More at the same time that Dr. Carolyn Bennett, the LPC’s Indigenous Relations Critic, was also posting in support. In addition to her posts of support, Dr. Bennett was also attending events to speak and raise awareness: switching the term ‘Idle No More to ‘*Idle Know More*’ – to remind Canadians of the need to learn about Canadian/Indigenous relations and rights.⁴¹⁹ MPs Joyce Murray and John McCallum also lent their thoughts and support.⁴²⁰ Furthermore, The National Women’s Liberal Commission (NWLC), the Young Liberals of Canada (YLC), as well as regional sections such as the Liberal Party of Canada-British Columbia (LPCBC) released statements in support of #IdleNoMore.⁴²¹ Such support was well received and could very well be

⁴¹⁷ Indigenous Peoples’ Commission, “Liberals Support #IdleNoMore,” *Liberal Party of Canada*, accessed: July 7, 2022, <https://ipc-cpa.liberal.ca/liberals-support-idlenomore/>; Note: Twitter bombing according to the usage by the IPC of the LPC is to bombard someone’s social media account with constant comments and responses where they individual, organization, and/or company are tagged.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

related to the efforts of the IPC in encouraging understanding and allyships with different segments of the LPC structure.

At the time of Idle No More, the LPC was also in the process of a leadership contest. In turn, the IPC also pressed those seeking the role of LPC leader to express solidarity as well as answer a questionnaire relating to Canadian/Indigenous relations. Party stalwarts like Deborah Coyne, Martha Hall Findlay, Joyce Murray, Marc Garneau, and Justin Trudeau each took the opportunity to not only answer questions but to also discuss Idle No More in relation to how they would approach Canadian/Indigenous relations as leader and as Prime Minister.⁴²² Engagement with the LPC and by the LPC with Idle No More was strong and continued throughout much of 2013 – whether through individuals like Dr. Bennett or sections of the party itself.

Such support from both the LPC and NDP was also noticeable on January 11, 2013 as both parties pushed the Harper government to agree to a meeting with Indigenous leaders. On January 11th, the AFN and the Harper government agreed to meet in order to discuss items of importance. Originally, many called for a meeting with the Crown's representative the then Governor General David Johnston. Such a meeting was important and symbolized Indigenous leaders reminding the Canadian state that their relationships and treaties were with the Crown – that there had been no agreement to Canada's unilateral encroachment. Thus, meeting with only the Prime Minister of Canada did not truly represent the nation-to-nation relationships, or the treaty relationships.⁴²³ Despite this understanding, the meeting proposed was with Prime Minister Harper and some of his Cabinet. Additionally, the AFN was on the other side of this proposed meeting, making many feel that the focus was again on the Band Council system that

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Barker, "A Direct Act of Resurgence," pp. 52.

the Canadian state had imposed. Additionally, it was a closed-door one that was limited to Regional Chiefs and AFN representatives. In turn, some sections of the AFN boycotted the meeting – Chief Spence, who ended her hunger strike in hopes that the meeting would be a step in the right direction soon left the meeting also. Chief Spence, on addressing why she left, expressed that it was clear there was no listening. Had it been, Governor General Johnston would have been there.⁴²⁴ Like Chief Spence, many Indigenous leaders and many within the Idle No More movement did not see the meeting on January 11th as progress. A meeting dubbed as a ‘Crown/Indigenous’ meeting was lacking the Crown representative.

Following the Crown/Indigenous meeting, discussions and movement on other ways to hold the Harper government accountable began to gain traction amongst Indigenous peoples. Additional protests, teach-ins, and round dances were staged. Furthermore, other options such as voting and participating were also being discussed and debated. Such conversation was further bolstered by the LPC and NDP as they prepared for the 2015 Canadian federal election. Despite discussion at the grassroots level within Idle No More and other Indigenous circles, little focus was given to parties– even though byelections that were called throughout 2013 and 2014 were showing a potential impact of Indigenous peoples utilizing a ballot to push back on the Harper government.

During the rise of Idle No More, MP Penashue was hit with a scandal. Reports had come to show that Penashue’s campaign during the 2011 Canadian Federal General Election had taken ineligible donations.⁴²⁵ In turn, Penashue resigned from Cabinet and also as MP for Labrador –

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Bruce Champion-Smith, “Labrador MP Peter Penashue Quits Conservative Cabinet Over ‘Ineligible’ Donations,” *Toronto Star*, (March 14, 2013), accessed September 8, 2022. https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/03/14/labrador_mp_peter_penashue_quits_stephen_harper_cabinet_over_ineligible_donations.html; The Canadian Press, “Tory Cabinet Minister Blames Campaign Manager for ‘Mistakes’ After Being Accused of Accepting Free Flights,” *National Post*, (November 13, 2012), accessed

opting to seek re-election in a by-election.⁴²⁶ The by-election for Labrador was called for May 13, 2013 by the Harper government and, one could argue, was a good first test on how the Indigenous peoples were responding to the Harper government following the rise of Idle No More. Penashue returned as the CPC candidate while the LPC selected Yvonne Jones, a former provincial member of the Newfoundland and Labrador assembly from 1996-2013 who also claims Inuit lineage.⁴²⁷ Like in 2011, the by-election for Labrador witnessed two Indigenous candidates running against one another in a district where almost 40% of the population is Indigenous.⁴²⁸ In addition to concerns over Indigenous rights and issues facing the North, the concerns over the Muskrat Falls Dam project were also at the forefront of voters in Labrador. Voters shifted their support on May 13 2013 and elected Jones as their next MP – capturing 48% of the vote compared to Penashue’s 32.4%.⁴²⁹ Jones’ election not only witnessed the Liberals regaining the electoral district of Labrador but also an Indigenous MP returning to the LPC caucus. The by-election for Labrador in May of 2013 was effectively a warning to the Harper government.⁴³⁰

The by-election for Labrador is not the only electoral district where there was likely impact from Indigenous turnout. Another four by-elections were called for November 25, 2013: Toronto Centre, Bourassa, Brandon-Souris, and Provencher.⁴³¹ Both Provencher and Brandon-

September 8, 2022. <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/tory-cabinet-minister-blames-campaign-manager-after-being-accused-of-accepting-thousands-of-dollars-in-free-flights>.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ The Canadian Press, “Liberals Win Big Over Conservatives in Labrador Federal Byelection,” *National Post*, (May 13, 2013), accessed September 8, 2022. <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/liberals-win-big-over-conservatives-in-labrador-federal-byelection>; Note: The NDP candidate was Harry Borlase; the GPC did not field a candidate.

⁴²⁸ Cowie, “Validity and Potential,” pp. 141.

⁴²⁹ Government of Canada, “Labrador,” *Elections Canada*, accessed July 8, 2022.

https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/ovr_2013b&document=p4&lang=e.

⁴³⁰ Note: Turnout in Labrador increased from 52.9% in 2011 to 59.9% in the 2013 by-election. (Elections Canada)

⁴³¹ Government of Canada, “Byelections,” *Elections Canada*, accessed July 8, 2022.

<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&dir=pas&document=index&lang=e>.

Souris, had a large number of Indigenous peoples residing within their boundaries during the 2013 by-elections. Although this has been highlighted by the AFN, the percentage of Indigenous peoples is difficult to assess for the AFN did not include Métis in their numbers when identifying both electoral districts in 2011.⁴³² Despite the lack of adequate data regarding the number of Indigenous voters,⁴³³ it is important to note that although the CPC candidate for both were elected, the LPC candidates also saw a bounce-back in support – with Rolph Dinsdale coming within 1.4% of defeating Larry Maguire.⁴³⁴ Although the results were less favourable for the LPC’s Terry Hayward (29.9% to Ted Falk’s 58.2%),⁴³⁵ questions relating to whether Indigenous peoples turned out in higher numbers to cast a ballot against the Harper government must be considered. In most assessments, discussion focuses on the ‘Trudeau factor,’ the LPC’s choice to stand alongside Idle No More may also have assisted the turnout leading to both of their candidates placing second in both electoral districts. This point is important to consider when looking at previous LPC candidates in both electoral districts placing fourth (Brandon-Souris) and third (Provencher) in both the 2011 and 2008 Canadian federal elections.⁴³⁶

The following year there were another set of by-elections that took place on June 30 and November 17, 2014. For June 30, voters casted ballots in the electoral districts of Fort

⁴³² Cowie, “Validity and Potential,” pp. 141; Note: The electoral district of Provencher, at the time of the by-election in November 2013, recorded 10.4% of its voters as being Indigenous.

⁴³³ Note: Although Stats Canada does break down turnout and voting based on each poll in an electoral district, it does not necessarily reflect ethnic identity. Additionally, on-reserve polls, polls in Métis settlements, and polls in Inuit communities are not only utilized by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. In turn, the full data on Indigenous voter turnout and its connection to polls in Indigenous communities, and electoral districts with a high number of Indigenous voters does not equate full representation of Indigenous voter intentions or that they voted in favour of who may have or did not win that specific poll.

⁴³⁴ Government of Canada, “Brandon-Souris,” *Elections Canada*, accessed July 8, 2022.

https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/ovr_2013b2&document=p4&lang=e.

⁴³⁵ Government of Canada, “Provencher,” *Elections Canada*, accessed July 8, 2022.

https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/ovr_2013b2&document=p4&lang=e.

⁴³⁶ Government of Canada, “Brandon-Souris;” Government of Canada, “Provencher.”

McMurray-Athabasca, Macleod, Scarborough-Agincourt, and Trinity-Spadina.⁴³⁷ Fort McMurray-Athabasca's turnout and results are important to note as the electoral district suggests some 24.8% of potential voters being Indigenous.⁴³⁸ Although the CPC held on to the electoral district, considered one of their strongholds, the LPC candidate, Kyle Harrietha came a close second and compared better than previous results for the electoral district.⁴³⁹ Although voter turnout was much lower than in the 2011 Canadian federal election, there was only a difference of 11.4% between CPC David Yurdiga and Harrietha.⁴⁴⁰ Additionally, Harrietha scored the highest amount of support for an LPC candidate in the electoral district since its creation in 1968.⁴⁴¹ Harrietha's previous work in Fort McMurray included relationship building with many of the Cree communities that are within the boundaries of Fort McMurray-Athabasca. Such relationship building, and LPC presence with Idle No More, may have benefited Harrietha when assessing some of the polls that were 'on-reserve' as there was higher turnout and many went in his favour. For instance, in assessing the poll at Fort Chipewyan First Nation, Harrietha earned 62 of the 77 votes cast.⁴⁴² In the East Prairie Métis Settlement poll, Harrietha earned 31 of the 34 votes cast and in the Sucker Creek 150A poll he earned 66 of the 74 votes cast.⁴⁴³ Thus, although Harrietha did not win Fort McMurray-Athabasca, there was clear embrace of his candidacy from Indigenous voters within the electoral district. The full impact of the Indigenous vote, and difference in their turnout, warrants further analysis.

⁴³⁷ Government of Canada, "Byelections."

⁴³⁸ Cowie, "Validity and Potential," pp. 141.

⁴³⁹ Note: The CPC and its predecessor parties have held the riding since its creation in 1968 – winning anywhere with 47% to over 70% of the vote. (Elections Canada)

⁴⁴⁰ Government of Canada, "Fort McMurray-Athabasca," *Elections Canada*, accessed July 8, 2022.

https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rep/off/ovr_2014&document=p2&lang=e.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Government of Canada, "Fort McMurray-Athabasca: Results," *Elections Canada*, accessed July 8, 2022.

https://www.elections.ca/res/rep/off/ovr_2014/9630_e.html.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

Occurring alongside the by-elections of 2013 and 2014, were also other important events that were furthering Indigenous frustration, awareness, and pushback against both the Harper government and also the Canadian state. Idle No More continued to be active during this period and assisted in the development of other grassroots organizations and discussions by Indigenous peoples. One such example is the social media account @Indigenousx. @Indigenousx utilized Twitter as a means to have guests sit as the host of the Twitter account for a seven-day period, allowing for diverse views from various Indigenous nations and genders to discuss ongoing topics of importance, including participation outside, within, and alongside the Canadian state and its institutions.⁴⁴⁴ Topics included not only where to vote in the 2015 Canadian federal election but also whether individuals should seek party nominations and become involved within Canada's federal political party system.⁴⁴⁵ Other topics of focus related to calls for an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as well as the work of and response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The TRC, established in the fall of 2008, held consultations and sessions through seven national events which occurred between 2010 and 2014.⁴⁴⁶ The events held in Montreal, Vancouver, and Edmonton occurred following the rise of Idle No More. All seven TRC events sought to allow survivors of the Residential School System (RSS) to share their stories and for volunteers and others to listen and learn from them. In addition to these seven national events, consultation and community hearings were held in over 70 communities in order to hear from

⁴⁴⁴ Âpihtawikosisân., "IndigenousXca List of Hosts," *Âpihtawikosisân*, accessed September 10, 2022. <https://apihtawikosisan.com/indigenousxca/indigenous-xca-host-profiles/>.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2016); Note: The first national event was held in 2010 within the city of Winnipeg, the second in Inuvik (2011), third in Halifax (2012), and fourth in Saskatoon (2012).

survivors and those who had been impacted.⁴⁴⁷ In turn, the TRC was assessing a small component of Canadian colonialism in relation to Indigenous peoples, specifically First Nations youth. Information from these sessions and national events increased frustration and anger not only with the Canadian state but also the Harper Government. Little study has been done to review whether such frustration and anger, alongside that of the presence of Idle No More, may have led to further consideration of becoming involved in the 2015 Canadian federal election. It is difficult to ascertain the significance of this point as the calls to action and final report of the TRC were not released in their entirety until after the election was held. That said, other areas of concern for Indigenous peoples may have further added to participation leading up to, and during, the 2015 election – such as calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Calls for reviews, inquiries, and even a Royal Commission, into concerns over the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls had been vocalised well before 2014. Issues along highway 16, which stretches across the Prairie Provinces and into northern BC, have been well documented and assessed.⁴⁴⁸ Such issues led to highway 16 obtaining the nickname ‘Highway of Tears.’⁴⁴⁹ The calls for, and spotlight on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls again came to the forefront at a time when the Harper government was seen as not caring about Indigenous peoples, let alone the relationship with them if it went against the ideology that the Harper government followed. On August 17, 2014, the body of Tina Fontaine had been retrieved from within a section of the Red River that flowed

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid; Note: I volunteered for the national event in Edmonton.

⁴⁴⁸ See: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Jessica McDiarmid’s *Highway of Tears*.

⁴⁴⁹ Jessica McDiarmid, *Highway of Tears: A True Story of Racism, Indifference, and the Pursuit of Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Toronto: Penguin Random House, 2019).

through Winnipeg and it was ruled she had been murdered. Fontaine had been reported missing on July 31 and little was done by law enforcement to actively look for her.⁴⁵⁰ In many cases where Indigenous women have been found murdered, or reported missing have gone unsolved – in many cases there is belief such cases could have been solved or prevented had police services, and other services such as Child Protection Services, taken the disappearances seriously.⁴⁵¹ In many cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, it has been assumed that addiction or lifestyle was at fault and thus little effort had been made to find them.⁴⁵² Due to these mindsets, requests were again made by Indigenous peoples for a national inquiry.

At the time of Fontaine’s murder, organizations, such as the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) and the RCMP itself, had identified more than 1100 unsolved cases of Indigenous women who were missing or had been murdered. Despite the high number, and calls for an inquiry, Harper argued that Fontaine’s murder “should be viewed not as a sociological phenomenon but as a crime.”⁴⁵³ Harper’s response was considered heartless and callous from many, with the AFN-Quebec and Labrador Regional Chief, Ghislain Picard, Harper’s comment was:

A slap in the face ... the Prime Minister’s characterization of the issue could potentially deceive some Canadians. Aboriginal people look up to the government to have the courage to call for an inquiry. They don’t see that happening. What they see is a Prime Minister who is almost normalizing the situation.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁰ Kelly Geraldine Malone, “Nothing has Changed: Tina Fontaine’s Body Pulled from River Five Years Ago,” *CBC* (August 16, 2019), accessed September 10, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/tina-fontaine-death-five-years-anniversary-1.5249346>.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² McDiarmid, *Highway of Tears*.

⁴⁵³ Mark Kennedy, “Stephen Harper Blasted for Remarks on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women,” *Ottawa Citizen* (August 23, 2014), accessed September 10, 2022. <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/stephen-harper-blasted-for-remarks-on-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women>.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The Indigenous Affairs Critics for both the NDP and LPC also expressed dismay at Harper's statement regarding Fontaine and also called for a national inquiry. The NDP's Jean Crowder, in response to Harper's comment, stated that "it's just a callous disregard of the facts ... It continues to reaffirm that [Indigenous] people are treated as less than other Canadian women."⁴⁵⁵ The LPC's Dr. Carolyn Bennett expressed similar sentiment as Crowder, adding "it really does show how out of touch he is. And heartless ... [A]n inquiry is needed [to] delve into the root causes of the violence [Indigenous] women face."⁴⁵⁶ Michelle Audette, the NWAC's President at this time, further echoed similar sentiments shared by Picard, Crowder and Dr. Bennett – utilizing her position to press the Harper government on an inquiry, but to no avail. Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike also pressured the Harper government to mount an inquiry by protesting and taking to the streets, alongside support from the Idle No More movement and opposition parties in Canada's federal electoral process. As a result, the Harper government's response to Fontaine's murder, and the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, further encouraged Indigenous peoples to be more vocal, active, and seek ways to bring an end to the Harper government itself.

Although there was a nationwide growing frustration and dislike for the Harper government by the end of 2014, it was the LPC that was benefiting from such change in support. The LPC, under Trudeau, consistently was polling in first place, followed by the NDP and then the CPC.⁴⁵⁷ Public opinion, and even some Indigenous support was to shift following the events of October 22, 2014. On that day, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau staged an attack on Ottawa, first murdering Corporal Nathan Cirillo at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and then continuing his

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Brooke Jeffrey, "Back to the Future: The Resurgent Liberals," in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2015*, edited by Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, pps. 57-84 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2016): pp. 73.

shooting rampage in the House of Commons.⁴⁵⁸ While attacking the House of Commons, Zehaf-Bbeau was shot and killed.⁴⁵⁹ The Harper government's response was to propose Bill C-51: *The Anti-Terrorism Act (2015)*. Bill C-51 was introduced to the House of Commons on January 30, 2015 and authorized the Canadian government's institutions to disclose information to the government that have jurisdiction or responsibilities in relation to activities that could undermine the security of the Canadian state.⁴⁶⁰ Additionally, Bill C-51 permitted the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to take, within and outside of the Canadian state, measures to reduce threats to its security, such as those authorized by federal courts.⁴⁶¹ Furthermore, Bill C-51 would allow for a new legislative framework that would seek to identify and respond to persons who engage in what may be a threat to transportation security as well as those who may travel for the purpose of committing a terrorism offense.⁴⁶² Canadian response to Bill C-51 was mixed, as was the response from Opposition parties and Indigenous peoples.

Bill C-51 was quickly rebuked by both the GPC and the NDP. The NDP, more specifically expressed concerns over how Bill C-51 would hurt and endanger the civil rights of Canadians.⁴⁶³ The LPC, on the other hand, opted to support the CPC in advancing Bill C-51.⁴⁶⁴ Although the view by Canadians on Bill C-51 was mixed, it was clear many voters who were supporting the opposition parties were not in favour of how far the legislation would reach. In turn, the NDP and GPC saw their support increase while the LPC saw a decline.⁴⁶⁵ An LPC

⁴⁵⁸ Brooke, "Back to the Future," pp. 73.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid; David McGrane, "From Third to First and Back to Third: The 2015 NDP Campaign," in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2015*, edited by Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, pps. 85-116 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2016): pp. 88.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ McGrane, "From Third to First and Back to Third," pp. 88.

⁴⁶⁴ Jeffrey, "Back to the Future: The Resurgent Liberals," pp. 73.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid; McGrane, "From Third to First and Back to Third," pp. 88.

strategist, looking back at the LPC's support for Bill C-51, specifically highlighted the impact it had on volunteers and candidates. More specifically, the LPC strategist stated: "[w]e lost volunteers over it ... Candidates were hearing about it at the doorstep."⁴⁶⁶ Not only did it impact volunteers, but also candidates – with one LPC candidate in the province of Nova Scotia resigning.

In relation to Indigenous views on Bill C-51, it seemed to have had little impact on Indigenous candidates already enlisted to run for their party of choice. Although there was little impact on Indigenous candidates that were already nominated, the impact on Indigenous volunteers is an area that could, and should, be further investigated.⁴⁶⁷ In relation to Indigenous peoples who were thinking of voting in 2015, further research is also needed on the impact that Bill C-51 had in relation to which party they may have been willing to support. This point is important to also further investigate as Idle No More and other Indigenous organizations vocally opposed Bill C-51, highlighting that the legislation would further allow for even more extensive surveillance and monitoring of Indigenous peoples looking to protect their territories, treaty rights, and the environment.⁴⁶⁸ The probability of many newly engaged Indigenous peoples looking to the NDP, after having shifted to the LPC for much of 2013 and 2014, due to its opposition to Bill C-51 is another important component that needs to be further investigated. Such investigation would most likely show correlation with the NDP's poll numbers increasing and the increase in the number of Indigenous candidates they were to recruit.

⁴⁶⁶ Jeffrey, "Back to the Future: The Resurgent Liberals," pp. 73.

⁴⁶⁷ Note: I specify this as someone who was a former Co-Chair of the IPC and we saw the number of registered Indigenous Liberals decline following LPC support of Bill C-51.

⁴⁶⁸ Senwung Luk, "C-51 Could Be a Blank Cheque to the Government to Stifle Indigenous Dissent," *Olthuis Kleer Townshend – LLP*, accessed September 15, 2022. <https://www.oktlaw.com/bill-c-51-blank-cheque-government-stifle-indigenous-dissent/>.

With the impact of Bill C-51, calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the close results in byelections in electoral districts considered CPC strongholds, Idle No More, and other ongoing areas of contention – there was a growing call for change by Indigenous peoples. Dr. Bennett, rising in the House of Commons, told MPs: “Indigenous peoples [are] justified [in their actions] ... that it is time for a realignment, a proper and working relationship, and to wake up to the realities.”⁴⁶⁹ Dr. Bennett’s comments echoed those of many Indigenous peoples as involvement and participation in Canada’s federal electoral process was clearly reaching new levels not only throughout the spring and summer of 2015 but also the 2015 Canadian federal election.

4.3: Bubbling Over: Indigenous Recruitment, Engagement, and Participation in 2015

During the spring and summer of 2015, the NDP, LPC and GPC were also seeking to strengthen inroads they had been making amongst Indigenous peoples. Connections continued to be built with those in the ITK, MNC, AFN, NWAC, and CAP. Additionally, outreach was continuing through the NDP and LPC’s Indigenous commissions amongst Indigenous peoples outside of the political realm. For example, as highlighted by the IPC of the LPC, the party had witnessed an increase from 350 Indigenous members in 2012 to over 5000.⁴⁷⁰ Both the NDP and LPC conventions saw support further expressed for bettering Indigenous/Canadian relations as well as a commitment to push for a National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The importance of courting Indigenous peoples was front and centre in the early part of July 2015, with both Mulcair and Trudeau attending the AFN’s Annual General Assembly (AGA) to speak to those attending as guest speakers but also listen and

⁴⁶⁹ Cowie, “Canada: It’s Time to #IdleNoMore.”

⁴⁷⁰ Martin Lukacs, “Reconciliation: The False Promise of Trudeau’s Sunny Ways,” *The Walrus* (September 19, 2019), accessed September 20, 2022. <https://thewalrus.ca/the-false-promise-of-trudeaus-sunny-ways/>.

engage with Indigenous leaders and attendees off of the main stage. Such engagement was welcomed compared to the approach and actions the Harper government had been taking.

The view of the Harper government's approach was not helped by some of its Indigenous MPs due to their ardent support of the position and approach the Harper government had been taking. The view that the Harper government was not listening was further ensconced by Aglukkaq, who at the end of 2014, when a discussion on food insecurity in the riding of Nunavut was occurring, pulled out a newspaper and opted to read it rather than pay attention.⁴⁷¹ Such an action reinforced views of the Harper government not listening. In addition, Bernard Valcourt, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, while attending an Indigenous led meeting in June of 2015. Valcourt, came off as not willing to hear those in attendance, deflecting and ignoring the comments being presented about the Harper government's approach to First Nations peoples.⁴⁷² Further shock and frustration was expressed when, during a discussion on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), Valcourt stayed seated and did not clap like others in the room following a passionate request for an inquiry.⁴⁷³ Thus, the engagement, interaction, and willingness of Mulcair and Trudeau, alongside other members of their party, at the AFN AGA was a welcome change.⁴⁷⁴

The discussions held with Mulcair and Trudeau were highlighted by media and included many commitments made on behalf of the NDP and LPC. Both leaders vowed to promote reconciliation if they formed the next government. When Mulcair spoke at the AFN's Annual

⁴⁷¹ CBC News. "Leona Aglukkaq Admits Reading Newspaper was a 'Bad Idea' During Question Period," *CBC* (December 3, 2014), accessed September 20, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/leona-aglukkaq-admits-reading-newspaper-was-a-bad-idea-during-question-period-1.2859631>.

⁴⁷² Debra Foxcroft, "Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council Calls for Action: Intergenerational Effects of Cultural Genocide Felt by First Nations People," *Hope Standard* (June 11, 2015), accessed September 20, 2022. <https://www.hopestandard.com/opinion/nuu-chah-nulth-tribal-council-calls-for-action/>.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ Note: Valcourt, nor Harper or other members of the Cabinet attended the AFN AGA.

General Assembly, he noted that an NDP government “would usher in a new era of nation-to-nation relations with Indigenous communities.”⁴⁷⁵ Furthermore, Mulcair also vowed to create and chair a cabinet committee that would ensure federal government decisions, under the NDP, would respect treaty rights, inherent rights, as well as international obligations like that of UNDRIP.⁴⁷⁶ Trudeau, echoed similar points, expressing that a Liberal government would work with Indigenous peoples to build a renewed relationship with the Canadian state.⁴⁷⁷ Explaining further, Trudeau further noted that a Liberal government would immediately lift the two per cent cap on funding for First Nations and conduct a full review of legislation unilaterally imposed on Indigenous peoples between 2006-2015.⁴⁷⁸ In addition to the promises that were being made, the AFN AGA was a chance to showcase star candidates who were not only First Nations, but also Métis and Inuit.

4.3.1: A Who’s Who of 2015 Indigenous Candidates:

As highlighted by *Macleans*’s, attending with Trudeau at the AFN AGA was BC AFN Regional Chief, Jody Wilson-Raybould who was officially listed by this time as a star candidate for the LPC in the riding of Vancouver-Granville.⁴⁷⁹ Wilson-Raybould, who is of the Musgamagw Tsawataineuk and Laich-Kwil-Tach peoples, was not only one of the fifty-four (54) Indigenous candidates⁴⁸⁰ who were to have their names on a ballot for the 2015 Canadian federal election, but also one of the star Indigenous candidates who had been recruited. Wilson-

⁴⁷⁵ CBC News, “AFN General Assembly: Tom Mulcair, Justin Trudeau Vow to Promote Reconciliation,” *CBC* (July 7, 2015), accessed September 26, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/afn-general-assembly-tom-mulcair-justin-trudeau-vow-to-promote-reconciliation-1.3140885>.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ The Canadian Press, “Trudeau and Mulcair to Address AFN Gathering,” *Macleans* (July 7, 2022), accessed September 26, 2022. <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/trudeau-and-mulcair-to-address-afn-gathering/>.

⁴⁸⁰ Note: This does not include those who sought nominations and failed to win them. Further research into the number of Indigenous peoples who looked to secure a nomination in each party is needed.

Raybould's transition to becoming a candidate related in many ways to her experience as BC AFN Regional Chief during the Harper government's time in office. In Wilson-Raybould's autobiography, *Indian in the Cabinet*, she explains that:

On top of the internal challenges at the AFN, we were dealing, at best, with an indifferent Stephen Harper Conservative government in Ottawa that was not sympathetic to true reconciliation. A hostile government is probably a more accurate description.⁴⁸¹

Such a view of the Harper government was a contributor to her decision to run and her standing as AFN BC Regional Chief assisted with outreach from and to the federal opposition parties. Although Wilson-Raybould states that her decision to run under the LPC banner came in 2014, she first began to be approached at the end of 2012 and in early 2013 – during the height of Idle No More.

In showing his continued commitment to further inclusion of Indigenous voices, Paul Martin had contacted Wilson-Raybould and began a process of discussions and engagement.⁴⁸² Meetings and discussions between Martin and Wilson-Raybould led to the eventual in-person meeting with Justin Trudeau while both Martin and Wilson-Raybould were attending the 2013 AFN AGA in Whitehorse, Yukon. The eventual meeting between Wilson-Raybould and Trudeau also included Gerald Butts and focused on getting to know one another as well as seeing whether Wilson-Raybould would be interested in running. As Wilson-Raybould expressed when looking back on the meeting, she found it was less of a “job interview and more of a job offer.”⁴⁸³ As the relationship and sense of trust built between Wilson-Raybould, Trudeau, and the LPC, she agreed to Co-Chair the LPC's biennial convention in February of 2014, where she not only led a

⁴⁸¹ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pp. 25

⁴⁸² *Ibid*, pp. 27-28

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*, pp. 28

discussion on reconciliation but was able to engage with party leadership and supporters.⁴⁸⁴ Following the convention, and with the support of individuals such as Paul Martin, Justin Trudeau, and the LPC's Indigenous Affairs Critic, Dr Carolyn Bennett, Wilson-Raybould announced to Trudeau that she would indeed run for the LPC and ultimately she secured the nomination for Vancouver-Granville without having to compete with any other candidates.⁴⁸⁵

Another prominent candidate seeking to win a seat for the LPC was Dan Vandal. Vandal, who is Métis, was a professional Boxer before being elected as the Winnipeg Municipal Councillor for the area of St. Boniface – serving from 1995 to 2004 and from 2006-2014.⁴⁸⁶ Like Wilson-Raybould, Vandal was acclaimed as the LPC Candidate for the electoral district of Saint Boniface-Saint Vital.⁴⁸⁷ Serving as the LPC candidate in the federal electoral district of Nunavut, would be long-time territorial MLA, and Inuk, Hunter Tootoo. Tootoo, who ran for the NDP in 1997 and served in the Nunavut legislature for fourteen years, moved to the LPC banner for 2015 not only due to the leadership of Trudeau but also in response to the chance to challenge the CPC MP incumbent: Leona Aglukkaq.⁴⁸⁸ Aglukkaq's approach to issues facing Nunavut, the Harper governments approach to the territory, as well as promises by the LPC on infrastructure and housing needs in the north all contributed to Tootoo's decision.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 32

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 41

⁴⁸⁶ "About Daniel Vandal," *Hon. Daniel Vandal: Member of Parliament for Saint Boniface-Saint Vital*, accessed September 28, 2022. <https://danvandal.libparl.ca/about/>; Ben Miljure, "Dan Vandal Wins in Saint Boniface-Saint Vital for Liberals," *CTV News* (October 19, 2015), accessed September 26, 2022. <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/dan-vandal-wins-in-saint-boniface-saint-vital-for-liberals-1.2617687>.

⁴⁸⁷ CBC News, "Dan Vandal Takes Run at Federal Politics as Liberal Candidate," *CBC* (May 28, 2014), accessed November 8, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/dan-vandal-takes-run-at-federal-politics-as-liberal-candidate-1.2656563>.

⁴⁸⁸ Thomas Rohner, "Nunavut's Federal Candidates: Hunter Tootoo," *Nunatsiaq News* (September 30, 2015), accessed November 8, 2022, https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674nunavuts_federal_candidates_hunter_tootoo/.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

Like Tootoo, Lawrence Joseph also opted to run for the LPC rather than the NDP. Joseph, who is Cree and from Big River First Nation, was acclaimed as the LPC candidate in the electoral district of Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River and was strongly connected to the territory and the Cree who called the territory their homelands. Joseph's history in representative politics is long and his experience included not only serving as a former Vice-Chief and Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), but also as a former Prince Albert City Councillor, and as the former NDP candidate in the 2011 Canadian federal election.⁴⁹⁰ In explaining why Joseph made the leap after coming in a close-second in 2011 under the NDP, he stated:

The Liberal Party of Canada has talked about inclusion of the North, northern Saskatchewan, and also being able to make the time to sit down with leaders, the mayors, and the leaders of the Métis community and also the First Nations ... what does not work is having a government prescribe what's good for the North.⁴⁹¹

Joseph's view and hope in the LPC's promises are similar feelings that were shared by Michèle Audette. Although Audette, who is Innu, had similar views and hope, it was not only in relation to the inclusion of the lands and nations who are in the north.⁴⁹² Audette, who served as President of the Femmes Autochtones du Québec from 1998-2004 and 2010-2012 as well as President of NWAC from 2012-2014, also found hope and promise in the commitment by the LPC to form a national inquiry in relation to MMIWG.⁴⁹³ As the President of NWAC, she

⁴⁹⁰ Naylor, Jonathon. "MP Candidate Hopes Second Time's the Charm," *The Reminder* (August 28, 2015), accessed November 8, 2022. <https://www.thereReminder.ca/local-news/mp-candidate-hopes-second-times-the-charm-4079686>.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² NOTE: The Innu nation's territory includes much of the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River, further east of Quebec City and into Labrador and then north into both Labrador and North-Central Quebec)

⁴⁹³ Steeve Paradis, "La libérale Michèle Audette battue dans Manicouagan," *Le Soleil* (May 29, 2015), accessed November 8, 2022. <https://www.lesoleil.com/2015/03/30/la-liberale-michele-audette-battue-dans-manicouagan-0340a4e447efd2fbe5c9d839ace64211>.

pushed the Harper government to enact a national inquiry, and also for the opposition parties to commit to one. It was the Harper government's lack of action that led her to seek the nomination for the LPC in the electoral district that encompassed most of the Innu communities and territory: Manicouagan.⁴⁹⁴ Unlike Joseph, Tootoo, Vandal, and Wilson-Raybould, Audette was not acclaimed and faced a nomination battle in which she lost.⁴⁹⁵ Although unable to represent her nation and territory in a district that encompassed most of it, she went on to be acclaimed in the electoral district of Terrebonne.⁴⁹⁶ Despite the issues Audette faced in securing a nomination, her candidacy alongside that of Joseph, Tootoo, Vandal, and Wilson-Raybould showed promise as well as the strength in LPC recruitment for the 2015 Canadian federal election. Like the LPC, which had a total of nineteen (19) Indigenous candidates, the NDP recruitment of star Indigenous candidates also showed promise.

As the official opposition from 2011-2015, MPs Saganash and Genest-Jourdain had been key to countering the Harper government on Indigenous issues, legislation, rights, and relations. Both were again representing the NDP in their respective electoral districts and were joined by a total of twenty more Indigenous candidates seeking to be elected as NDP MPs. Former LPC MP Jack Anawak opted to switch parties and ran for the NDP in the electoral district of Nunavut. Anawak, in reminding those shocked by his change in preferred party, explained that "... everybody knows, I was a Liberal member of Parliament, but prior to that I was a member of the New Democratic Party when we elected our first Inuk member of Parliament."⁴⁹⁷ Anawak further explained that his reasoning for returning to the NDP was Mulcair's leadership as well as

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ CBC News, "Jack Anawak Named as Nunavut's NDP Candidate," *CBC* (August 23, 2015), accessed November 8, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/jack-anawak-named-as-nunavut-s-ndp-candidate-1.3201188>.

due to the NDP's commitment to job training, funding for education, and commitments made to assist with mental health.⁴⁹⁸ Like Anawak, Aaron Paquette, who is Cree, also was encouraged to run because of Mulcair's leadership and the NDP's action against Bill C-51 as well as commitments made to assist with mental health.⁴⁹⁹ Paquette, a well-known artist and community advocate representing the NDP in the electoral district of Edmonton-Manning, also explained:

I joined this race because I want to do my part to help move our society back into an alignment with our core values ... [The NDP] is a party that cares about Aboriginal people and Aboriginal rights and Mr. Mulcair has already made it clear that when elected he will take immediate action. His agenda will deal with numerous issues, including the recommendations put forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the call by Canadians who want to see an inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women.⁵⁰⁰

Similar to Paquette, Georgina Jolibois, who is Dene, opted to run for the NDP in the electoral district of Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River due to the stance of the NDP on Bill C-51 as well as its commitments to the TRC and an inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.⁵⁰¹ Jolibois, a former Mayor of La Roche for twelve years, highlighted her past community service and work with the RCMP civilian advisory board in Saskatoon⁵⁰² as reasons why she was a star candidate for the NDP in an electoral district they have traditionally not been viable in.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Nation Talk. "Aaron Paquette, A High Profile Candidate Running for the NDP in Edmonton – APTN," *NationTalk* (August 18, 2015), accessed November 8, 2022. https://nointalk.ca/story/aaron-paquette-a-high-profile-candidate-running-for-the-ndp-in-edmonton-aptn_

⁵⁰⁰ John Copley, "Aaron Paquette: NDP Candidate for Edmonton Manning," *Alberta Native News* (August 25, 2015), accessed November 8, 2022. <https://www.albertanativenews.com/aaron-paquette-ndp-candidate-for-edmonton-manning/>.

⁵⁰¹ David Giles, "NDP's Georgina Jolibois Wins in Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchil River," *Global News* (October 19, 2015), accessed November 8, 2022. <https://globalnews.ca/news/2287506/ndps-georgina-jolibois-wins-in-desnethe-missinippi-churchill-river/>.

⁵⁰² Flin Flon Reminder Staff. "Federal Candidate Questionnaire: Georgina Jolibois (NDP, Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchil River)," *The Reminder* (October 18, 2019), accessed November 8, 2022. <https://www.thereinder.ca/local-news/federal-candidate-questionnaire-georgina-jolibois-ndp-desnethe-missinippi-churchill-river-4139748>.

The GPC also saw an uptick in the number of Indigenous candidates seeking to represent them. A total of ten (10) Indigenous candidates were listed as representing the GPC and one of their most recognized candidates was well-known author Lorraine Rekmans, who had previously run for the GPC. Rekmans, who is Algonquin, opted to represent the GPC again because of its continued work on climate action and economic issues. In explaining her staunch support for the GPC, Rekmans stated that the GPC is a party:

...[W]ith a plan on climate action that has been in the making for more than twenty years. We are arriving at a time in history when the people need those ideas. It's an opportunity to build an economy in a crisis situation. We can build an economy that is Green...⁵⁰³

Alongside potential promise in GPC climate action and pursuit of a green economy, Rekmans highlighted that the Harper government had gone backwards on climate action, as seen with the Omnibus Bill C-45.⁵⁰⁴ Other Indigenous candidates, representing the CPC more specifically, stood by the Harper government's actions and legislation.

Of the four CPC Indigenous incumbents, both Aglukkaq and Clarke opted to seek re-election. Penashue also sought a return to the House of Commons as the CPC candidate for Labrador. Rounding out the four CPC Indigenous candidates for the 2015 Canadian federal election was Inuvik Mayor Floyd Roland, also a former Premier of the Northwest Territories.⁵⁰⁵ Roland, who served as Premier from 2007-2011 and is Inuk, was the only individual to seek the CPC nomination in the electoral district of Northwest Territories and locals in the electoral

⁵⁰³ NG Times, "The Federal Election: Interview with Lorraine Rekmans, Green Party of Canada," *The North Grenville Times* (September 4, 2019), accessed November 14, 2022. <https://ngtimes.ca/the-federal-election-interview-with-lorraine-rekmans-green-party-of-canada/>.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ollie Williams, "Floyd Roland Confirmed as NWT Conservative Candidate," *True North Now* (June 29, 2015), accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.mytruenorthnow.com/6450/news/hay-river-news/floyd-roland-confirmed-as-nwt-conservative-candidate/>; <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/floyd-roland-named-n-w-t-s-conservative-candidate-in-federal-election-1.3132182>.

district question whether the CPC had picked someone solely based on name recognition, rather than based on positive versus negative name recognition.⁵⁰⁶ Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, the author of *Finding Dahshaa* and a resident of Yellowknife, when interviewed by CBC on Roland's candidate stated:

I think the conservatives having a candidate with that kind of baggage and background, trying to win the hearts of individuals in the N.W.T., is going to be an uphill battle ... Yes, he probably has name recognition. But is that name recognition positive? Probably not.⁵⁰⁷

Irlbacher-Fox's point references Roland's political baggage from during his time as Premier, which includes questions over confidentiality of cabinet meetings and sharing information with a Deputy Assembly Clerk, which he was having an extramarital affair with.⁵⁰⁸ Roland's political baggage, alongside Penashue and Aglukkaq's, begins to highlight issues reflecting Indigenous candidacies within the CPC leading up to the 2015 Canadian federal election. Furthermore, both Glover and Bruinooge opting to not seek re-election contributed to a loss in CPC fortunes regarding Indigenous candidates when comparing to the five who ran in 2011.

Despite abysmal levels of CPC Indigenous candidates, the NDP, LPC, and GPC saw a record number of victories involving them during the 2015 Canadian federal election. Many factors contributed to such increase in Indigenous candidacies. A reoccurring reason that is noticeable when assessing many of the candidates who put their name forward related to not only opposition to the Harper government but also its unilateral approach to Indigenous peoples, rights, and nation-to-nation relations. In turn, when the Harper government called for an election

⁵⁰⁶ Quenneville, Guy. "Floyd Roland Named N.W.T.'s Conservative Candidate in Federal Election," *CBC* (June 29, 2015), accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/floyd-roland-named-n-w-t-s-conservative-candidate-in-federal-election-1.3132182>.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

in August of 2015, Indigenous peoples were already showing a willingness to participate electorally – as candidates and individuals looking to cast a ballot to protect their rights as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

4.3.2: The Call and the Lengthy Election Campaign of 2015:

The opportunity to further show disagreement with the Harper government's approach to Indigenous peoples, and to actively seek his government's removal from power, was given a date when Harper asked Governor General Johnston to dissolve parliament on August 4, 2015.⁵⁰⁹ In doing so, the election date for the 42nd parliament was set for October 19, 2015 – making the 2015 Canadian federal election one of the longest in Canadian history.⁵¹⁰ At the time of the election call, polls had Mulcair and the NDP leading, Harper and the CPC in second, and Trudeau and the LPC in third.⁵¹¹ Despite such polling at the time of the election call, pundits, candidates, and the parties knew this could change as the election campaign continued. A total of five leaders' debates were to be held, with the first occurring on August 6th and hosted by *Maclean's Magazine* via Rogers, CPAC, and Facebook.⁵¹² The MacLean's Magazine debate's length was two hours long and included Mulcair, Harper, Trudeau, GPC Leader Elizabeth May, and the BQ Leader Gilles Duceppe.⁵¹³ The topics and questions asked of party leaders varied and included questions relating to Indigenous peoples.

⁵⁰⁹ Jeffrey, "Back to the Future: The Resurgent Liberals," pp. 57; McGrane, "From Third to First and Back to Third: The 2015 NDP Campaign," pp. 85.

⁵¹⁰ Jeffrey, "Back to the Future: The Resurgent Liberals," pp. 57

⁵¹¹ Ibid; McGrane, "From Third to First and Back to Third: The 2015 NDP Campaign," pp. 85.

⁵¹² Jeffrey, "Back to the Future: The Resurgent Liberals," pp. 73; André Turcotte, "A Debate About the Debates," in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2015*, edited by Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, pps. 253-274 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2016): pp. 261.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

The second debate was held by Google Canada and *The Globe and Mail* on September 17, only Harper, Mulcair, and Trudeau were invited to attend.⁵¹⁴ The first French debate, which included all five party leaders, followed on September 24 and was hosted by the French media consortium – focusing on not only questions relating to Canada but also Quebec’s place within and alongside that of Canada.⁵¹⁵ The fourth debate of the election focused on foreign policy and was hosted by the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy on September 24 – invitations were only given to Mulcair, Harper, and Trudeau.⁵¹⁶ The fifth and final debate, hosted by TVA, included all five party leaders, was held on October 2 and was the second French-language debate of the campaign.⁵¹⁷ Overall the five debates did very little to include Indigenous policy and discussion, with the main exception being the bit that was discussed in the first debate. Despite the lack of focus in the national debates, Indigenous influence and discussion on Indigenous peoples took other forms within and outside of mainstream media.

On August 6, the same day as the first leaders’ debate, journalist Tim Fontaine published via CBC News “An Indigenous Guide to the 2015 Federal Election.” Fontaine’s article would continually be updated throughout the election as party platforms were released. An interesting part of Fontaine’s article was that it listed each Indigenous candidate running for the CPC, GPC, LPC, and NDP. Fontaine confirms that a record number of Indigenous candidates were seeking seats in the House of Commons: 4 CPC, 10 GPC, 18 LPC,⁵¹⁸ and 22 NDP.⁵¹⁹ Fontaine, in

⁵¹⁴ Turcotte, “A Debate About the Debates,” pp. 261.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid

⁵¹⁶ Ibid

⁵¹⁷ Ibid

⁵¹⁸ Note: The number for the LPC is actually 20. Randy Boissonault was not listed by Fontaine nor was Marc Sarre, who identifies as Métis

⁵¹⁹ Tim Fontaine, “An Indigenous Guide to the 2015 Federal Election,” *CBC* (August 6, 2015), accessed November 16, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/an-indigenous-guide-to-the-2015-federal-election-1.3179421>.

highlighting the record number of candidates, explains that this is “up 23% from the 2011 election, when there were 31 [I]ndigenous candidates.”⁵²⁰ Alongside the list of Indigenous candidates that Fontaine provides is also the electoral districts that they each were running in. In assessing the ridings each candidate was seeking to represent in the House of Commons, it is important to also consider the viability of the electoral chances of those candidates. In other words, how likely was each Indigenous candidate to win their electoral district on October 19, 2015 or were they, in a sense, ‘sacrificial lambs for full-slate purposes?

When considering the likelihood of an Indigenous candidate being elected to the House of Commons, there are a number of considerations that must be made. One such consideration is whether there were more than one Indigenous candidate seeking to win an electoral district. In relation to the 2015 Canadian federal election, a total of three electoral districts had three Indigenous candidates seeking to become the MP: Nunavut, Labrador, and Desnethe-Missinippi-Churchill River.⁵²¹ Additionally, another three electoral districts had a minimum of two Indigenous candidates competing against each other: Northwest Territories, Lakeland, and Cariboo-Prince George.⁵²² Since only one individual can be elected, one can thus conclude that of the fifteen candidates seeking the aforementioned seats, only six would potentially succeed, reducing the amount of potential Indigenous MPs being elected to forty-seven. Although forty-seven potential Indigenous MPs is still a large number compared to the seven that served in the forty-first parliament, there is another consideration that must be assessed.

In addition to the number of Indigenous candidates seeking to win in the same electoral district, consideration must also be given to the probability of their party winning in an electoral

⁵²⁰ Fontaine, “An Indigenous Guide to the 2015 Federal Election.”

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid.

district. For instance, although the GPC had ten Indigenous candidates, none of them were in electoral district where the party was expected to be a serious contender. In Skeena-Bulkley Valley, the GPC and its candidates obtained less than five per cent of votes cast.⁵²³ In the electoral districts of Edmonton Mill Woods and Hull-Alymer, GPC candidates consistently ranked a distant fourth and fifth place respectively.⁵²⁴ In relation to Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, the GPC almost reached ten per cent in the 2008 Canadian federal election, but dipped back below five per cent during the 2011 Canadian federal election.⁵²⁵ In turn, the GPC consistently ranked a distant fourth in the electoral district of Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.⁵²⁶ In fact, if you review all ten electoral districts where the GPC had Indigenous candidates, none of them had the chance of winning their electoral district unless public opinion dramatically shifted in favour of the GPC. The GPC candidates in each of the ten ridings where an Indigenous candidate was not seeking election in 2015 had consistently ranked fourth or fifth place in all previous elections that a candidate was present prior to the 2015 election. In turn, the ten GPC Indigenous candidates had a very low probability of being elected – thus reducing the number of potential Indigenous candidates to less than forty.

Like the GPC, the LPC and NDP also had Indigenous candidates running in electoral districts that they had never held previously or have consistently come in a distant third, fourth,

⁵²³ Government of Canada, “Thirty-Eighth General Election 2004: Official Voting Results,” *Elections Canada*, accessed November 16, 2022. <https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&document=index&dir=pas/38e&lang=e>; Government of Canada, “Thirty-Ninth General Election 2006: Official Voting Results;” Government of Canada, “Fortieth General Election 2008: Official Voting Results;” Government of Canada, “Forty-First General Election 2011: Official Voting Results,” *Elections Canada*, accessed November 16, 2022. <https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&document=index&dir=pas/41ge&lang=e>; Note from 2004 to 2015 the highest percentage the GPC received was 4.66%.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*; Note: Jeanie Warnock, the GPC candidate in the 2008 Canadian Federal Election came within five percentage points of the third-place candidate, the NDP’s Steve Armstrong. This was the closest the GPC had come to being in third place within the electoral district.

or fifth place. For instance, of the seven electoral districts that the NDP and LPC had Indigenous candidates seeking election in Alberta, only Edmonton-Centre had previously been represented by a non-CPC MP. The LPC, other than the 2011 Canadian federal election, also consistently ranked second in the 2006 and 2008 Canadian federal elections. A similar point can be made of the NDP and LPC candidates seeking election in Saskatchewan. Other than the electoral district of Desnethe-Missinippi-Curchill River, LPC Candidates in Saskatoon West and Regina Qu'appelle have consistently placed a distant third in votes for most elections, excluding the 1993 Canadian federal election.⁵²⁷ More specifically, in relation to Regina Qu'appelle, the last LPC MP to represent it was Henry Mang between 1953-1957.⁵²⁸ In relation to Regina-Wascana, the NDP continued to place a distant second or third from the 1993 Canadian federal election to the 2011 Canadian federal election.⁵²⁹ In turn, of the twelve electoral districts that GPC, LPC, and NDP Indigenous candidates were seeking to represent between Saskatchewan and Alberta, the two electoral districts that had the highest probability of being won were Desenethe-Missinippi-Churchill River and Edmonton-Centre – meaning out of fifteen Indigenous candidates, only two had a potential of being successful.

In addition to the potential of the political party that an Indigenous candidate is representing in an electoral district, one must also consider the population of the electoral district. Although it is difficult to fully assess the number of Indigenous voters in an electoral district as numbers tend to not be reflective fully of all Métis, status-First Nations, Inuit, and non-Status First Nations, the AFN and ITK have assisted with gauging the population of certain electoral districts. The AFN, in relation to the 2015 Canadian federal election highlighted

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

electoral districts where there were a high percentage of status-First Nations residents. In relation to the 2015 Canadian federal election, such electoral districts that also had an Indigenous Candidate included: Churchill-Keewatinook Aski (63%), Desnethe-Missinippi-Churchill River (49.3%), Northwest Territories (30%), Skeena-Bulkley Valley (27.5%), Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou (19%), Long Range Mountains (18.5%), Yukon (17.5%), Thunder Bay-Rainy River (10%), Winnipeg Centre (9%), and Labrador (8%).⁵³⁰ In addition to the aforementioned electoral districts, the Inuit are also the majority voters in the electoral district of Nunavut and also have high numbers in Labrador, Northwest Territories, Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeuou and thus further increase the potential number of Indigenous voters in those electoral districts.⁵³¹ For Non-Status First Nations and Métis, the statistics are not kept as well and recorded as thoroughly as those pertaining to status First Nations and Inuit.

Although statistics in relation to non-Status First Nations and Métis are not as robust, these groups have impact in electoral districts such as Northwest Territories, Yukon, Northern Ontario, and rural and urban prairie electoral districts – hence the importance of Métis representation in the electoral district of Saint Boniface-Saint Vital (where Louis Riel is buried). In addition, of those Indigenous candidates running there were five incumbents seeking re-election in Nunavut, Labrador, Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, Manicouagan, and Desnethe-Missinippi-Churchill River – with three of the five facing one or more candidates who were Indigenous.⁵³² When considering important elements like population, Indigenous

⁵³⁰ Assembly of First Nations. “First Nations Voters Can Decide the Election Outcome in 2021,” *Assembly of First Nation*, accessed November 17, 2022. <https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/21-08-25-First-Nations-Voters-Can-Decide-the-Election-in-2021-EN-1.pdf>; Note: All though this AFN document highlights 2021, these percentages have been similarly reported by the AFN from the 2015 election and on.

⁵³¹ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. “Inuit Nunangat Map,” *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami*, accessed November 17, 2022. <https://www.itk.ca/inuit-nunangat-map/>.

⁵³² Note: Leona Aglukkaq, Yvonne Jones, and Rob Clarke each were facing additional Indigenous candidates in their electoral districts

candidates, and the electoral prospects of the party in the riding an Indigenous candidate is running in the number of potential Indigenous candidates who may secure a win dwindles. Therefore, one could argue that leading into, and during the 2015 Canadian federal election, the electoral districts with an Indigenous candidate likely winning would include: Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon, Labrador, Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, Thunder Bay-Rainy River, Churchill-Keewatinook Aski, Saint Boniface-Saint Vital, Winnipeg Centre, Desenethe-Mississippi-Churchill River, Edmonton-Centre, and Vancouver Granville. In total, twelve Indigenous candidates had significant potential for being elected due to the probabilities in these ridings – this does not include Indigenous candidates who happen to also be running in ridings with a small percentage of the voters being Indigenous but who represent a party with a chance of winning in their respective electoral district.

Although the number of Indigenous candidates who most likely could win election in 2015 was around 20% of them, it did not dissuade Indigenous voters from participating. Alongside a record number of candidates, the GPC, LPC, and NDP working to further build relationships with Indigenous peoples, and frustration with the Harper government, the diversity of Indigenous representation within the GPC, LPC and NDP is also important to note.⁵³³ Since the formation of Idle No More, the GPC, LPC and NDP had been meeting with Indigenous peoples and organizations in order to recruit Indigenous candidates and volunteers and formulate policies for their platforms that related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

Such relationship building from the opposition parties, alongside the five Indigenous incumbants, meant that there was, at minimum, 13 different Indigenous nations who had citizens

⁵³³ Note: I focus on the LPC and NDP platform promises as much of the GPC platform generalized and did not give specific plans for Indigenous-Canadian relations to the same extent that the LPC and NDP did – both parties which were heavily focusing on Indigenous participation, outreach, recruitment, and support.

running for a seat in the House of Commons, alongside four candidates who simply self-identified as ‘mixed.’⁵³⁴ Of those Indigenous candidates listed for the 2015 Canadian federal election, 12 identified as Métis and another 10 as Cree.⁵³⁵ Another six of the candidates self-identified as Nishnaabeg and five as Inuit.⁵³⁶ Furthermore, three self-identified as Innu and two each self-identified as L’nu and Dene.⁵³⁷ Additionally, one candidate each self-identified as being connected to the following nations: Carrier, Nuu-Chah-nut, Kwakwaka’wakw, Nakota, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, Gitksan, Tsleil-Waututh, and Abanaki.⁵³⁸ Randy Boissonnault originally did not self-identify due to his lineage being non-status Cree and that he was still seeking to understand such lineage.⁵³⁹ Although the representation of individuals from different nations is less than half of those nations with which the Canadian state shares territory, the record number of candidates from so many different nations, alongside that of the diverse number of Indigenous volunteers within the party structure of the GPC, LPC, and NDP, also reflected party platforms.

The release of party platforms of the GPC, LPC, and NDP during the 2015 Canadian federal election marked an important first in Canadian political history: the inclusion of specific sections relating to Indigenous peoples for the GPC, LPC and NDP. For many Indigenous peoples looking for a change in government within the Canadian state, there seemed to be some optimism with promises being made by both the LPC and NDP especially. Over the period of the 2015 Canadian federal election, the CPC, GPC, LPC, and NDP each released their policy

⁵³⁴ Fontaine, “An Indigenous Guide to the 2015 Federal Election;” Note: What is meant by mixed is not defined in the article nor is it further delved in to.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Joanna Smith, “Liberal MP Randy Boissonnault: ‘Amazing’ How Far We Have Come on LGBTQ2 Rights,” *Saanich News* (April 18, 2017). Accessed November 17, 2022. <https://www.saanichnews.com/national-news/liberal-mp-randy-boissonnault-amazing-how-far-we-have-come-on-lgbtq2-rights/>.

priorities as well as their overall platforms. In relation to the CPC platform, there was little highlighted that was specific to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis rights, peoples, and relations.⁵⁴⁰ In relation to the GPC, LPC, and NDP, there were segments of their platform that they deemed related to Indigenous peoples when in fact they were actually policy promises that related to all those who were Canadian citizens and Indigenous alike.

For the NDP, promises such as \$250 million for Federal Student Grants over four years, the phasing out of interest on student loans, the repeal of Bill C-51, \$2.6 billion over four years for affordable housing, \$5 million in grants for communities, and \$100 million in mental health funding all were made and labelled as Indigenous related. These promises were also for non-Indigenous peoples and thus cannot be considered as Indigenous-focused promises despite the NDP claiming so.⁵⁴¹ Similarly, the LPC included promises such as its Childcare Plan, commitments to increasing the amount of the Canada Student Grant program for Full-Time and Part-Time students, \$20 billion in social infrastructure between 2015-2025, \$40 million for Nutrition North, as well as \$3 billion over four years for better homecare services as for Indigenous peoples.⁵⁴² In reality, these promises, like those already mentioned in relation to the NDP, were in fact for non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples alike. Additionally, GPC promises such as abolishing tuition fees, investing in infrastructure, establishing a National Housing Strategy, and rescinding Bill C-51 were listed as segments of their platforms that were specific to Indigenous peoples – despite them actually relating to non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples

⁵⁴⁰ Fontaine, “An Indigenous Guide to the 2015 Federal Election.”

⁵⁴¹ Ibid; New Democratic Party of Canada, “Building the Country of Our Dreams: Tom Mulcair’s Plan to Bring Change to Ottawa,” accessed November 28, 2022. <http://xfer.ndp.ca/2015/2015-Full-Platform-EN-PRINT.pdf>;

⁵⁴² Fontaine, “An Indigenous Guide to the 2015 Federal Election;” Liberal Party of Canada, “A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class,” *Liberal Party of Canada*, accessed November 28, 2022. <https://liberal.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/292/2020/09/New-plan-for-a-strong-middle-class.pdf>.

alike.⁵⁴³ Although Bill C-51 being repealed was important to Indigenous peoples, it being considered a specific promise to Indigenous peoples was less of the reasoning for making it a promise and more to do with the fact that both the GPC and NDP saw it as an infringement on the rights of Canadians.

When considering promises that were specific to Indigenous peoples, much focus by the GPC, LPC, and NDP is reflective of education, culture, language, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the environment, infrastructure, health services, social services, as well as nation-to-nation relations. In relation to education, the LPC and NDP had specific points in their platform that did relate to First Nations peoples and education. For the LPC, a Trudeau government promised to invest an additional \$2.6 billion between 2015-2019.⁵⁴⁴ More specifically, \$515 million would be invested into K-12 and another \$500 million for education infrastructure.⁵⁴⁵ A Trudeau government also promised to add an additional \$50 million in annual funding for post-secondary support to First Nations students and committed to handing control of First Nations education to First Nations themselves.⁵⁴⁶ Similar promises were made by the NDP, although a Mulcair government specified \$1.8 billion for First Nations education between 2015-2019 – highlighting that if elected to government in 2019 they would add another \$3 billion in their second term.⁵⁴⁷ Additionally, a Mulcair government promised to “work with First Nations to develop new education policies for First Nations.”⁵⁴⁸ In relation to the two per cent cap that had been put in place in 1996, the NDP, LPC, as well as the GPC each promised

⁵⁴³ Fontaine, “An Indigenous Guide to the 2015 Federal Election;” Green Party of Canada, “Building a Canada That Works. Together,” *Green Party of Canada*, accessed November 28, 2022.

https://www.greenparty.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/4e_platform_summary.pdf.

⁵⁴⁴ Liberal Party of Canada, “A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class.”

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid*; Note: Education infrastructure refers to the ability to upgrade, fix, and build schools.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴⁷ New Democratic Party of Canada, “Building the Country of Our Dreams.”

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

that if elected they would revoke it – allowing increases in funding for Indigenous education that would better reflect the rising costs as well as inflation.⁵⁴⁹ In relation to the CPC, a re-elected Harper government promised to focus on additional support for Indigenous peoples to obtain experience in trades, but made no promise for additional funding or to remove the two per cent cap.

With respect to culture and language, the GPC, LPC, and NDP each also committed to increased funding if elected in the 2015 Canadian federal election. Although each party specified culture and language, the key components of their platform promise relating to it focused solely on language. For the NDP, a Mulcair government agreed to invest \$68 million into language revitalization between 2015-2019.⁵⁵⁰ Like the NDP, the LPC and GPC both also promised that if elected they would invest in language revitalization for Indigenous peoples. However, unlike the NDP both the LPC and GPC did not specify an amount or to what extent they would agree to funding for language revitalization.⁵⁵¹ In relation to MMIWG as well as consultation and Indigenous rights in environmental assessments, all three major opposition parties agreed to hold a national inquiry as well as to revoke the changes the Harper government introduced with the Omnibus Bill C-45.⁵⁵² Unlike the opposition parties, a re-elected Harper government did not plan to hold a national inquiry on MMIWG nor consider changes to previous legislation they passed in relation to consultation.

Concerning infrastructure as well as health and social services, the GPC did not specify any particular commitments in their platform that related to Indigenous peoples. A Trudeau led

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid; Liberal Party of Canada, “A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class;” Green Party of Canada, “Building a Canada that Works.”

⁵⁵⁰ New Democratic Party of Canada, “Building the Country of Our Dreams.”

⁵⁵¹ Liberal Party of Canada, “A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class;” Green Party of Canada, “Building a Canada that Works.”

⁵⁵² Ibid; New Democratic Party of Canada, “Building the Country of Our Dreams.”

government expressed that the funding for education infrastructure was also an infrastructure commitment. Additionally, a Trudeau government agreed to respect the spirit and intent of the Kelowna Accord and introduce a policy to bring funding for infrastructure in Indigenous communities up to par with that of non-Indigenous communities.⁵⁵³ The commitment to the spirit and intent of the Kelowna Accord, the LPC expressed, included a commitment for better support for health and social services, but the full details and funding amounts were not specified – highlighting it would be delved into and priced once elected.⁵⁵⁴ Furthermore, a commitment was made that a Trudeau government would deal with, and bring an end to, the lack of proper drinking water in Indigenous communities within five years of taking office.⁵⁵⁵ Unlike the LPC, the NDP were more detailed in their platform promises for infrastructure as well as health and social services.

Regarding infrastructure, a Mulcair government committed to formulating a framework to recognize First Nation Policy Services as essential services, as well as additional funding for housing in northern communities – listing it as critical infrastructure.⁵⁵⁶ Additionally, a Mulcair government agreed to invest an additional \$375 million over four years for housing, schools, and clean water.⁵⁵⁷ Moreover, a Mulcair government committed to a total of \$800 million for infrastructure projects for Indigenous communities between the period of 2015 to 2035 if elected.⁵⁵⁸ Regarding health and social services, the NDP held that they would implement *Jordan's Principle*,⁵⁵⁹ would work with local child services organizations to reduce the number

⁵⁵³ Liberal Party of Canada, "A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class."

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ New Democratic Party of Canada, "Building the Country of Our Dreams."

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Note: Jordan's Principle was named after a young Cree boy who had many health conditions. When it came to his care and coverage, the Provincial Government of Manitoba and the Federal Government of Canada argued

of Indigenous children in care, as well as to work with Friendship Centres and urban Indigenous organizations to renew an Urban Indigenous Strategy.⁵⁶⁰ Lastly, a Mulcair government agreed to work with Indigenous peoples to formulate a plan to close the gap in health outcomes, to ensure quality and accessible health-care, as well as to invest \$30 million in relation to a palliative care fund for Indigenous communities.⁵⁶¹ Thus, regarding infrastructure, health care, and social services, the NDP not only made some promises related to funding to assist with issues Indigenous peoples were facing due to a long history of underfunding but also, it seems, highlighted key areas of policy that a Mulcair government wanted to improve. The LPC were less clear with these items but one could argue that the approach of being considered partners was also noticeable for the LPC as, like the NDP, there was a section in the party platform that focused specifically on nation-to-nation relations.

When assessing both the LPC and NDP platforms regarding their commitments on nation-to-nation relations with Indigenous nations, there are some elements that highlight both parties being of the same understanding. For instance, both the NDP and LPC expressed that their commitment to removing the two per cent cap on annual funding increases was a part of their commitment to nation-to-nation relations and reconciliation.⁵⁶² Additionally, both the NDP and LPC committed that if they formed government, they would seek to take action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations and implement UNDRIP as it pertains to

back and forth in relation who was to handle his costs and care, with Manitoba saying it was Canada and Canada saying it was Manitoba. In turn, Jordan passed away due to prolonged delays in the care needed leading to the concept of Jordan's Principle, which expressed that no Indigenous child should fall through the cracks of bureaucratic and jurisdictional issues in future health care situations and that the care would be given first and coverage dealt with between the jurisdictions afterwards.

⁵⁶⁰ New Democratic Party of Canada, "Building the Country of Our Dreams."

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ibid; Liberal Party of Canada, "A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class;" Note: The GPC Party Platform did not specify or highlight commitments relation to nation-to-nation relations.

federal jurisdiction, and work to settle outstanding land claims.⁵⁶³ An additional item the NDP promised to work towards if elected related to revenue sharing agreements between Canada, the provinces, and First Nations communities – how this would be achieved is unexplained as well as the impact such a commitment would or would not have had, on those already in tripartite agreements.⁵⁶⁴ Where the NDP and LPC differ, however, is in relation to Bill C-51. As previously highlighted, the NDP promised to revoke Bill C-51 due to privacy concerns for all who reside within the Canadian state. The LPC, who supported Bill C-51, promised a different approach. While the LPC would keep Bill C-51 in place, a Trudeau led government committed to reworking the legislation to make sure sections that impact Indigenous peoples would be removed.⁵⁶⁵ Trudeau’s commitment to such amendment to Bill C-51 was not a surprise as he expressed, at the AFN AGA during the summer of 2015, that “Indigenous peoples fighting for their rights are not terrorists.”⁵⁶⁶ For many Indigenous peoples, Trudeau’s words were a major change in mindset from previous governments when they had defended what they believed to be their inherent rights as well as their treaty rights as Indigenous nations. Commitments made by the LPC, NDP, and, to an extent, the GPC, showed a large shift in the approach political parties were opting to take towards Indigenous peoples and likely gave an additional boost in what would be the highest turnout of Indigenous peoples in a Canadian federal election.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ New Democratic Party of Canada, “Building the Country of Our Dreams.”

⁵⁶⁵ Liberal Party of Canada, “A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class.”

⁵⁶⁶ Mia Rabson, “Trudeau and Mulcair Make Pitches at AFN Assembly in Montreal,” *The Free Press* (July 7, 2015), accessed December 9, 2022. <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2015/07/07/trudeau-and-mulcair-make-pitches-at-afn-assembly>; Tom Fennario, “Mulcair and Trudeau Make A Lot of Promises at Annual AFN Meeting,” *APTN National News* (July 7, 2015), accessed December 9, 2022. <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/mulcair-trudeau-make-lot-promises-annual-afn-meeting/>.

4.4: Conclusion:

On October 19, 2015, one of Canada's longest federal elections drew to a close and with it the Harper era came to an end. Canadians opted to elect a majority of LPC candidates to the House of Commons thus ushering in Justin Trudeau as Canada's new Prime Minister. Voter turnout amongst Canadians rose to 69.1 per cent, an increase of eight per cent from 2011.⁵⁶⁷ The highest increase in turnout, however, was that of Indigenous peoples. The number of Indigenous people casting a ballot in a Canadian election reflected a double-digit increase, bringing Indigenous turnout to 61.5 per cent⁵⁶⁸ In some Indigenous communities, turnout increased by as much as 270 per cent; a dozen First Nations communities ran out of ballots, leading some community citizens unable to participate.⁵⁶⁹ The increase in both Canadian and Indigenous turnout not only led to a change in government but also the election of a record number of Indigenous representatives to the House of Commons. In total, 12⁵⁷⁰ Indigenous MPs, majority of them in winnable ridings for either being an Indigenous candidate or because of their party of choice, were elected to the House of Commons and media highlighted this result and Indigenous turnout as being historic.⁵⁷¹ Although such turnout and the number of Indigenous MPs being elected was historic, the reasoning for such turnout and the large increase in the number of

⁵⁶⁷ Éric Grenier, "Indigenous Voter Turnout Was Up – and Liberals May Have Benefited Most," *CBC* (December 16, 2015), accessed December 12, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/grenier-indigenous-turnout-1.3365926>.

⁵⁶⁸ Stephanie Dubois, "First Nations Vote Unlikely to Hit Levels Seen in 2015 Election, Says Experts," *CBC* (October 7, 2019), accessed December 12, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/on-reserve-votes-federal-election-1.5308087>.

⁵⁶⁹ Chinta Puxley, "Voter Turnout Up by 270 Per Cent in Some Aboriginal Communities," *Toronto Star* (October 25, 2015), accessed December 11, 2022. <https://www.thestar.com/news/federal-election/2015/10/25/voter-turnout-up-by-270-per-cent-in-some-aboriginal-communities.html>.

⁵⁷⁰ NOTE: Media reported 10. Marc Serre and Randy Boissonnault were not originally involved with the number of Indigenous MPs listed as being elected.

⁵⁷¹ Associated Press in Toronto, "Canada Elects Record Number of Indigenous Candidates to Parliament," *The Guardian* (October 22, 2015), accessed December 11, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/22/canada-elects-record-number-of-indigenous-candidates-to-parliament>.

Indigenous candidates in the 2015 Canadian federal election relates little to feelings of duty as Canadian citizens.

Rather than feeling a sense of duty as Canadian citizens, the formation and emergence of the #IdleNoMore movement encompassed frustration, irritation, and forms of re-educating in relation to Canada, Canadians, and the Canadian government. The consistent unilateral approach taken by the Harper government led to increased frustration amongst Indigenous peoples and, following the introduction of Omnibus Bill C-45, saw Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples pushing back. Not only did #IdleNoMore bring protests, round dances, and teachable moments to Canadians but it also brought together Indigenous peoples from all nations that share territory with the Canadian state - as well as in other parts of Turtle Island and the world. It also led many to seek ways to bring change to the Canadian state and government. As #IdleNoMore grew, the Harper government continued with a unilateral approach towards Indigenous peoples. In turn, through #IdleNoMore, grassroots organizations developed to assess and consider ways at effecting a change to who led the federal Canadian government. Such ways to bring change included grassroots organization that looked to participating in Canada's electoral process, either by voting or seeking election. Participation in the 2015 election took many forms. Interaction, support, and discussion with Canadians federal political parties indicated a willingness from the opposition parties to listen to, discuss, and consider Indigenous peoples as a potentially important set of voters that were important to engage with.

As a result of their outreach, the GPC, LPC, and NDP had a record number of Indigenous candidates seeking election to the House of Commons under their respective banners.

Additionally, such engagement and support for #IdleNoMore, and an increase in Indigenous volunteers within the party structures, also allowed for further engagement with Indigenous

nations, organizations, and peoples. Such engagement, alongside the increase in Indigenous candidates, encouraged policy platforms of, in particular, the LPC and NDP to have clearly marked sections that reflected Indigenous peoples on topics such as culture, infrastructure, and nation-to-nation relations. In turn, factors such as #IdleNoMore, and the creation of grassroots organizations to foster Indigenous engagement, increased inclusion and focus on Indigenous peoples by the GPC, LPC, and NDP. The lack of nation-to-nation approach by the Harper government, and the promises made especially by the LPC and NDP assisted in bringing Indigenous peoples out to vote in their highest level to date. The end result was to see the Harper government lose and the potential start of an approach to Indigenous peoples as equals – on a nation-to-nation basis. Whether such increase in Indigenous participation, engagement, and voter turnout created, and brought forth, a serious change in relations, alongside reconciliation, can only be understood by assessing the newly elected Trudeau government during its first term in office. The Trudeau government's approach and interaction not only with Indigenous peoples but Indigenous nations is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Five: A New and Renewed Relationship or a Skipping Record? Indigenous/Canadian ‘Progress’ (2015-2019)

5.0: Introduction:

The Canadian federal election of 2015 triggered a change in government for Canada and also changes in relation to the Indigenous MPs elected to the House of Commons. Returning to the House of Commons were Saganash and Jones, both easily winning re-election in their electoral districts. Genest-Jourdain, Aglukkaq, and Clarke each lost their re-election bids while ten new Indigenous faces would be joining Saganash and Jones. Although Aglukkaq and Clarke both lost their re-election bid, they were each replaced by another Indigenous MP (Tootoo and Jolibois respectively) – leading to both electoral districts continuing with a representative that is Indigenous. In total, twelve Indigenous people, up from seven in 2011, were elected, or re-elected, to the House of Commons on October 19 2015. Not only was the increase noted and welcomed by Indigenous peoples and Canadians alike, the diversity of the nations represented by those twelve MPs was also celebrated.

Amongst the twelve Indigenous MPs were those who identified as Métis, Inuit, Kqwakwaka’wakw, Anishinaabeg, Cree, and Dene. The twelve Indigenous MPs elected also represented two territorial electoral districts,⁵⁷² as well as electoral districts in Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Of those twelve MPs, ten were elected as Liberals. In Saskatchewan and Quebec, Jolibois and Saganash were elected for the NDP. The variety of Indigenous MPs and regions represented within the LPC caucus, and thus the newly-elected Trudeau government, was important and could very well reflect the turnout of not only Indigenous voters but also the appeal of the promises the LPC

⁵⁷² Note: The two territorial electoral districts included Western Arctic (Northwest Territories) and Nunavut.

made prior to and during the 2015 election campaign. The fact that so many Indigenous MPs, and various Indigenous nations represented within the LPC caucus, could potentially have impacted the first mandate of the Trudeau government. Also noteworthy was the number of Indigenous MPs that obtained positions of importance in the LPC caucus and Trudeau cabinet.

Chapter Five asks how did the record number of Indigenous MPs elected in 2015 impact legislation and policy? Additionally, how was legislation and policy impacted by Indigenous volunteerism at the grassroots level and within the LPC itself? In considering such questions, the purpose of this chapter will be to assess the first term of the Justin Trudeau Liberal government in relation to Indigenous relations, rights, and reconciliation. Although Trudeau, during the 2015 Canadian federal election, made many promises relating to a new, and renewed, relationship with Indigenous peoples, the analysis herein will argue that such a relationship continued to be a ‘Canadian-centric’ form rather than nation-to-nation. In advancing that the Trudeau government’s approach was more Canadian-centric than nation-to-nation, this chapter will first assess the first year of the Trudeau government – focusing on the swearing in of Cabinet and its introduction of the Budget for 2016. Following a review of Cabinet and Budget 2016, this chapter will then review policy decisions and movements that impact and relate to Indigenous nations, peoples, rights, consultations, and concepts of reconciliation. Lastly, the focus will then turn to assessing how such Canadian-centric approaches by the Trudeau government not only led to a decline in Indigenous support and volunteerism but also was further cemented with the treatment of former Minister of Justice and Attorney General: Jody Wilson-Raybould.

5.1: From Cautious Optimism to “Same Old Story:” Trudeau’s Cabinet and Budget of 2016

Following the formation of a majority government under Justin Trudeau, political commentators, political pundits, and political scientists with expertise on Canadian electoral politics were speculating which LPC MPs would likely be named to the Cabinet of a Trudeau-led government. Ralph Goodale, who had served as the MP for Regina-Wascana since 1993,⁵⁷³ was not only re-elected but was also the sole LPC MP to be elected from the province of Saskatchewan. Goodale, who had served in multiple cabinet positions in both the Chretien and Martin governments, was considered a safe bet for a role in a Trudeau-led government.⁵⁷⁴ Other long-time LPC MPs who were considered to likely be given important roles under Trudeau included Dr. Carolyn Bennett, Joyce Murray, Stephane Dion, Scott Brison, and Judy Foote – all individuals who had held cabinet roles under a previous federal Liberal government or in a provincial government in which they had served prior to being elected federally.⁵⁷⁵ Additionally, newly elected MPs who had been touted as ‘star candidates’ because of their character or expertise were also suggested. Bill Morneau, newly elected in Toronto-Centre, like Goodale, was also considered a shoe-in for Cabinet, specifically the Finance portfolio due to his background in Finance and his time as Executive Chairman of the firm Morneau Shepell.⁵⁷⁶ Many other names of long-standing LPC MPs who were re-elected as well as ‘star candidates’ and LPC candidates

⁵⁷³ Note: Goodale also served as an LPC MP for the electoral district of Assiniboia between 1974-1979.

⁵⁷⁴ CBC News, “Full List of Justin Trudeau’s 2015 Cabinet,” *CBC* (November 4, 2015), accessed March 21 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/full-list-of-justin-trudeau-s-2015-cabinet-1.3300699>; Tonda MacCharles, “Prime Minister Trudeau Unveils Diverse Cabinet in Touching Ceremony,” *Toronto Star* (November 4 2015), accessed March 21 2023, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/prime-minister-justin-trudeau-unveils-diverse-cabinet-in-touching-ceremony/article_ab12a8d0-a7e1-51e8-8229-5756a256cc15.html.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁶ Peter Kuitenbrouwer, “A CEO, But Not Exactly a Bay Street Guy: Bill Morneau’s Path to Becoming Canada’s Finance Minister,” *Financial Post* (November 6 2023), accessed March 21 2023, <https://financialpost.com/news/economy/a-ceo-but-not-exactly-a-bay-street-guy-how-bill-morneau-became-canadas-new-finance-minister>.

who had surprising wins allowed for Trudeau to have a wide range of individuals to consider when forming a Cabinet and government.

5.1.1: Because It's 2015: Indigenous Representation in Trudeau's Cabinet

The wide range of individuals Trudeau was considering were from one of the most diverse grouping of MPs, including a diverse group of Indigenous MPs elected as Liberals. Trudeau, in the LPC caucus, had four Métis MPs: Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories), Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface-St. Vital), Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre), and Marc Serré (Nickel Belt), all of whom were newly-elected in their electoral districts that had been held by a different party between 2011 to 2015. Amongst the four Métis LPC MPs, were two former Mayors (Badawey and McLeod)⁵⁷⁷ and a business entrepreneur whose father had also served as an MP during the Pierre Trudeau era (Serré).⁵⁷⁸ Vandal, was the sole Métis candidate from the LPC who was considered a star candidate.⁵⁷⁹ In addition to the four LPC Métis MPs elected, were two Inuit LPC MPs: Yvonne Jones (Labrador) and Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut).⁵⁸⁰ Jones, who was the sole LPC Indigenous MP that sat in the House of Commons prior to the 2015 election, easily won re-election and was considered a likely contender for Cabinet due to her byelection win in 2013 as well as her previous roles in Newfoundland and Labrador politics. Tootoo, considered a star

⁵⁷⁷ Note: McLeod was also a former elected member of the NWT Territorial Legislature.

⁵⁷⁸ The Sudbury Star, "20 Questions: March Serre, Nickel Belt Candidate," *The Sudbury Star* (October 14, 2015), accessed March 21 2023, <https://www.thesudburystar.com/2015/10/15/20-questions-marc-serre-nickel-belt-candidate>; Niagara Review, "Badawey Wins Niagara Centre," *Niagara Review* (October 20 2015), accessed March 21 2023, [https://www.niagarafallsreview.ca/news/niagara-region/badawey-wins-niagara-centre/article_09663616-e107-5776-8d7a-5b06a6f27754.html?;](https://www.niagarafallsreview.ca/news/niagara-region/badawey-wins-niagara-centre/article_09663616-e107-5776-8d7a-5b06a6f27754.html?) CBC News, "Liberal's Michael McLeod Wins Northwest Territories (October 19 2015), accessed March 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/results-nwt-federal-election-2015-1.3275815>; Tim Fontaine, "Record 10 Indigenous MPs Elected to the House of Commons, *CBC* (October 20 2015), accessed March 21 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-guide-to-house-of-commons-1.3278957>.

⁵⁷⁹ Note: For Vandal's background and why he was a star candidate, please see Chapter Four of this Dissertation)

⁵⁸⁰ Fontaine, "Record 10 Indigenous MPs."

candidate, was a former member of Nunavut's territorial legislature, was also considered a likely candidate for cabinet.

Rounding out the full list of LPC Indigenous MPs were Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver-Granville), Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg-Centre), and Don Rusnak (Thunder Bay-Rainy River).⁵⁸¹ Rusnak, who is Anishinaabe and Ukrainian, worked as a lawyer, utilizing his expertise in Forestry and Indigenous initiatives in Ontario and Manitoba prior to his election win.⁵⁸² Additionally, Ouellette, who is Cree, served in the Canadian Forces and also taught at the University of Manitoba prior to his surprise election win, taking out long-time NDP MP Pat Martin.⁵⁸³ Lastly, Wilson-Raybould, who is Kwakwaka'wakw and from the We Wai Kai Nation, with her experience as a lawyer as well as the outgoing Regional Chief for the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, was also considered a strong contender for Cabinet – she was, after all, a high profile star candidate for the LPC.⁵⁸⁴ Thus, Trudeau had nine Indigenous MPs, with strong experience, to consider when formulating his Cabinet in order to assist with the promises he made to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

On November 4, 2015, the speculation and wait came to an end. Trudeau announced his Cabinet and Canadians were able to get a first glance as the group walked to Rideau Hall to be

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² MPR News Staff, "Meet the New Leader up North: Canada's Don Rusnak," *MPR News* (November 2 2015), accessed March 23 2023, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/11/02/bct-don-rusnak>; Fontaine, "Record 10 Indigenous MPs."

⁵⁸³ CBC News, "Robert-Falcon Ouellette Wins in Winnipeg Centre," *CBC News* (October 19, 2015), accessed March 23 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/canada-election-results-winnipeg-centre-1.3278596>; Fontaine, "Record 10 Indigenous MPs."

⁵⁸⁴ Global News, "2015 Year in Review: One-on-One with Jody Wilson-Raybould," *Global News* (December 23 2015), accessed March 23 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/2417209/2015-year-in-review-one-on-one-with-jody-wilson-raybould/>; Fontaine, "Record 10 Indigenous MPs"; Note: Randy Boissonnault, who won his race in Edmonton-Centre, is also important to mention in relation to those elected and apart of the LPC's Indigenous Caucus as he has non-status Cree lineage and, although not listing this or utilizing it, was also a star-candidate due to his background in business, bilingualism, and connection with the Edmonton-area. He was also one of four newly elected LPC MPs from Alberta, leading some to ponder his potential of being named to Cabinet.

sworn in by then-Governor General David Johnson. The swearing-in of the first Trudeau Cabinet included 31 individuals, including Trudeau, and was highlighted as the most diverse in Canadian history. Maryam Monsef, member for Peterborough-Kawartha, was the first Muslim to be sworn into a Canadian Cabinet, becoming the Minister of Democratic Institutions.⁵⁸⁵ Alongside Monsef was newly sworn-in Minister of Infrastructure and Communities: Amarjeet Sohi,⁵⁸⁶ Minister of National Defence: Harjit Sajjan,⁵⁸⁷ Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Bardish Chagger,⁵⁸⁸ and Minister of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development, Navdeep Bains⁵⁸⁹ - all of whom are Punjabi and Sikh. The Cabinet also included two individuals who represented Canadians with disabilities: Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities and member for Delta, Carla Qualtrough, and Minister for Veterans Affairs and member for Calgary-Centre, Kent Hehr.⁵⁹⁰ Additionally, women made up half of the Cabinet. It included those considered likely to obtain a Cabinet position, such as Morneau and Chrystia Freeland, as well as long standing LPC MPs who were re-elected, such as Stephane Dion, Goodale and Bennett.⁵⁹¹ In fact, Bennett was offered and accepted the role of Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, something that was welcomed by many Indigenous leaders and peoples due to the amount of work she had done in building relations since becoming the LPC's Indigenous Affairs Critic in May of 2011.⁵⁹² Additionally, some Indigenous allies and peoples were ecstatic over the

⁵⁸⁵ MacCharles, "Prime Minister Unveils Diverse Cabinet;" Parliament of Canada, "The Hon. Maryam Monsef, P.C., M.P.," *Parliament of Canada*, accessed March 23 2015, https://lop.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/en_CA/People/Profile?personId=18530.

⁵⁸⁶ Omar Mouallem, "Amarjeet Sohi: From Political Prisoner to Parliamentarian," *Alberta Views* (January 4 2017), accessed March 23 2023, <https://albertaviews.ca/amarjeet-sohi/>; MacCharles, "Prime Minister Unveils Diverse Cabinet."

⁵⁸⁷ CBC News, "Full List of Cabinet;" MacCharles, "Prime Minister Unveils Diverse Cabinet."

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹² Tiar Wilson, "Hopeful Indigenous Reaction to Justin Trudeau's Cabinet Pick," *CBC* (November 4 2015), accessed March 23 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/aboriginal-leaders-react-cabinet-choices-1.3303972>.

swearing in of two Indigenous MPs into high-level Cabinet positions: Jody Wilson-Raybould and Hunter Tootoo.

Hunter Tootoo was sworn in as the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard. Tootoo agreeing to such a role had much significance and symbolism that accompanied it. Not only was Tootoo the first Inuk to hold such a role but also the first northern MP to be sworn in to a role that has traditionally been held by an MP from the Atlantic or Pacific coasts.⁵⁹³ Tootoo, after being sworn in expressed to media that Trudeau had also wanted him in the role because of his roots but also “to remind all Canadians that we have a third ocean ... [t]hat needs to be represented and brought to the table.”⁵⁹⁴ The importance of inclusion and understanding of the Arctic ocean is not only important for Inuit but also Canada because, as highlighted by CBC in their interview with Tootoo:

Canada has the longest coastline of any country mostly because of the 19,000 Arctic islands that exist in Nunavut and it is therefore our longest and arguably our most difficult coastline and one that needs a minister that fully understands that fact.⁵⁹⁵

For many in Nunavut, Tootoo’s role in Cabinet was welcomed – especially in relation to a role that had direct impact on the territory but also the Inuit in all four of their home regions.

Sworn in alongside Tootoo, was Wilson-Raybould – becoming the fifty-first Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada (MoJAG). In Wilson-Raybould’s autobiography, *Indian in the Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power*, she gives her personal views and understandings of her being offered such an important and high-ranking position. As Wilson-Raybould points out, alongside many Canadian media outlets, she became the first Indigenous person, and First

⁵⁹³ John Van Dusen, “Hunter Tootoo, Minister of the Arctic Ocean,” *CBC* (November 5 2015), accessed March 23 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/hunter-tootoo-minister-of-arctic-ocean-1.3305512>.

⁵⁹⁴ Van Dusen, “Hunter Tootoo.”

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Nations woman, to hold the position of MoJAG.⁵⁹⁶ Wilson-Raybould, telling herself after swearing her oath expressed internally to herself: “This is real ... I am a part of a government that is committed to doing the work to create real change I was raised to help make.”⁵⁹⁷ Wilson-Raybould’s upbringing, her father’s role in Indigenous politics and Canadian/Indigenous relations, legal training, as well as her own role in Indigenous politics and relations was significant and led many to view her appointment as a step forward in reconciliation. Wilson-Raybould also believed this to be the case, especially when stating that Trudeau expressed that differences were welcomed, as those appointed were expected to “bring our expertise, research, and policy options to Cabinet, and bring our best practice for collaboration ...”⁵⁹⁸ Thus, Wilson-Raybould felt there would be more of a willingness for consensus-building and understanding diversity in opinions – something at which Indigenous and BC leaders had expressed she was adept.

As highlighted by CBC, endorsements of Wilson-Raybould becoming MoJAG came from numerous sides of the political realm in Canada. Former Attorney General for BC, Wally Oppal expressed “I think it’s fantastic that they’ve appointed [Wilson-Raybould] ... [she has] court experience and is familiar with the criminal justice system.”⁵⁹⁹ Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) Grand Chief Stewart Phillip expressed that “given her experience at the Assembly First Nations (AFN) level as well as being our regional chief for many years and her legal background will serve her very well.”⁶⁰⁰ Grand Chief Phillip, as well as Ed John, the Grand

⁵⁹⁶ Jody Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd, 2021), pp. 74; CBC News, “B.C. MP Jody Wilson-Raybould Named Justice Minister.” *CBC News* (November 4 2015), accessed March 23 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/justice-minister-jody-wilson-raybould-1.3303609>,

⁵⁹⁷ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pp, 74.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pps. 84-85.

⁵⁹⁹ CBC News, “B.C. MP Named Justice Minister.”

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

Chief with the First Nations Summit, also expressed optimism in relation the appointments of both Wilson-Raybould's and Bennett, as Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development. Both Chiefs looked at such movement meaning that the Trudeau government would look to not only fulfill their promise for an inquiry in relation to MMIWG but that the parameters that would be set for said inquiry would be done in a good way.⁶⁰¹ Such optimism by those supporting Wilson-Raybould, as well as Wilson-Raybould herself, was only further emboldened by the words written and expressed within the letters outlining the duties for each Minister.

Each member of Trudeau's Cabinet, like all previous Cabinet Ministers, were given a letter that detailed their roles and responsibilities. In the letters for Trudeau's first Cabinet, focus was given to a need to bring transparency to government and to allow for discussion with Canadian journalists, to use evidence-based research, and to uplift Canada's middle class.⁶⁰² The letters reflected many of the promises made in the LPC's 2015 platform, but unlike other previous Cabinet letters, there was a specific line within all of them that further added to the optimism that was shown in relation to the appointments of Wilson-Raybould and Tootoo. In the Cabinet letters' seventh paragraph Trudeau expressed that:

No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous peoples. It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

Canadian media as well as Indigenous organizations, communities, and individuals picked up on Trudeau's words and welcomed the further commitment not only highlighted by Trudeau himself

⁶⁰¹ IBID; Note: Of the other Indigenous LPC caucus members, only two were given Parliamentary Secretary roles in relation to Trudeau's first Cabinet. Randy Boissonnault was named as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Yvonne Jones as Parliamentary Secretary of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

⁶⁰² Government of Canada, "Archived Mandate Letters," *Government of Canada*, accessed March 23 2023, <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/all-archived-mandate-letters>.

but also such approach being agreed to by each cabinet minister that had agreed to their role. For some Indigenous peoples, their decision to cast a ballot in order to bring change in who holds power in Canada did look like a positive change was coming – that a new nation-to-nation relationships would be based on respect and co-operation. This hope led many Indigenous peoples to expect such understanding to be highlighted in not only the first Trudeau budget under Finance Minister Morneau but also in its plans up to the 2019 Canadian federal election period.

5.1.2: The Proof is(n't) in the Numbers: Budget 2016 and First Term Promises

Following the swearing in of the Cabinet, and the filling of other key roles, the Trudeau government's next task was considering how to fulfill promises in relation to funding. The list of promises made that would require funding was large, especially in relation to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The full plan for the first budget of the Trudeau government, and suggested plans over the next following for years, was introduced in the House of Commons on March 22 2016. Again, Trudeau's comments regarding the most important relationship was that with Indigenous peoples. Within the budget introduced, the third section was titled: "A Better Future for Indigenous Peoples."⁶⁰³ In the opening paragraph of the third section, the Trudeau government expressed that:

Budget 2016 advances the Government's objective to renew the relationship with Indigenous peoples by making real progress on the issues most important to Indigenous people ... There should be no reason preventing an Indigenous child from having the opportunities to achieve them ... The unprecedented investments in Indigenous peoples proposed in Budget 2016 will help us to turn the page and begin a new chapter in the relationship between Canada and

⁶⁰³ Government of Canada, "Archived – Budget 2016 Highlights – Indigenous and Northern Investments," *Government of Canada*, accessed April 1 2023, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1458682313288/1620824687328>; Government of Canada, "Chapter 3 – A Better Future for Indigenous Peoples," *Government of Canada* (March 2016), accessed April 1 2023, <https://www.budget.canada.ca/2016/docs/plan/ch3-en.html>.

Indigenous peoples.⁶⁰⁴

The Trudeau government expressed its belief in such a statement alongside what was financially proposed for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

The 2016 budget and initial plans regarding spending and funding for Indigenous peoples between 2016 to 2021 is shown in detail within the package introduced to the House of Commons and Canadians. Breakdown of proposed spending for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit reflected:

1. Rebuilding the Relationship
2. Education, Children, and Training
3. Social Infrastructure
4. Green Infrastructure, and
5. Other Initiatives.⁶⁰⁵

During the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the Trudeau government earmarked \$1.5 billion⁶⁰⁶ for Indigenous peoples. One item of strong importance, and that had already been highlighted as being listed in the budget for the 2016-2017 period, was \$20 million for establishing an inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).⁶⁰⁷ Funding for the MMIWG inquiry would include another \$20 million for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, bring the total overall amount earmarked to \$40 million.⁶⁰⁸ Alongside the amount earmarked, a quote from a

⁶⁰⁴ Government of Canada, "Chapter 3 – A Better Future."

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid; Government of Canada, "Archived – Budget 2016 Highlights."

⁶⁰⁶ Note: All amounts highlighted are in CAD.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid; Gloria Galloway, "Major Indigenous Funding Restores Last Liberal Government's Promises," *The Globe and Mail* (March 22 2016), accessed April 1 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/major-indigenous-funding-restores-last-liberal-governments-promises/article29336162/>; Janyce McGregor, "Federal Budget 2016: Liberals Push Deficit to Spending Big on Families, Cities." *CBC* (March 22 2016), accessed April 1 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/federal-budget-2016-main-1.3501802>; Bruce Champion-Smith, "Justin Trudeau Promises Budget Holds 'Historic' Investments for Indigenous Peoples," *Toronto Star* (March 21 2016), accessed April 1 2023, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/justin-trudeau-promises-budget-holds-historic-investments-for-indigenous-peoples/article_025faf7d-4a76-5bf6-bc28-99d096e74e3e.html.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

joint statement by Minister Bennett, Minister Wilson-Raybould, and Minister of the Status of Women, Patricia Hadju, was also highlighted:

Our government is committed to real and substantive reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in this country, and the inquiry is an important step on this path to end the unacceptable rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls.⁶⁰⁹

Thus, the Trudeau government, as well as Canadian media and some Indigenous organizations, such as Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), looked at the promise of holding an inquiry as a promise kept.

Alongside the funding guarantee for an inquiry into MMIWG was another \$16 million for the 2016-2017 fiscal year in relation to seeking proper approaches to engaging with Indigenous peoples, \$460 million for education, children and training, \$503 million for Social infrastructure, \$311 million for green infrastructure, and, under 'other initiatives,' another \$218 million.⁶¹⁰ Under each section, items such as language and culture, health infrastructure, ending boil water advisories, as well as better housing were listed as key areas of focus. In other words, the bulk of the amount earmarked in relation to Indigenous peoples focused on infrastructure, education, and culture. In addition the Trudeau government again expressed it would look to fulfill another promise with the budget: the removal of the two per cent cap on funding that had been in place since the Chretien government.⁶¹¹ The removal of the two per cent cap, and the fiscal plan between 2016-2021 indicated plans of further increase in spending and amounts earmarked for Indigenous peoples – growing to \$8.374 billion over the next five years.⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁹ Government of Canada, "Chapter 3 – A Better Future."

⁶¹⁰ Ibid; Government of Canada, "Archived – Budget 2016 Highlights;" Galloway, "Major Indigenous Funding Restored," McGregor, "Federal Budget 2016," Campion-Smith, "Justin Trudeau Promises Budget."

⁶¹¹ Government of Canada, "Chapter 3 – A Better Future."

⁶¹² Ibid; Government of Canada, "Archived – Budget 2016 Highlights;" Galloway, "Major Indigenous Funding Restored," McGregor, "Federal Budget 2016," Campion-Smith, "Justin Trudeau Promises Budget."

Canadian media expressed optimism in the commitments made in the budget in relation to Indigenous peoples.

The *Globe and Mail*, in reporting on the amounts earmarked for Indigenous peoples titled their article “Major Indigenous Funding Restores Last Liberal Government’s Promises,”⁶¹³ while the headline for the *Toronto Star* expressed “Justin Trudeau Promises Budget Holds ‘Historic’ Investments for Indigenous Peoples.”⁶¹⁴ Additionally, as reported by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), Indigenous politicians, community leaders, and organizations also highlighted optimism with what was announced. APTN, on the day the budget for the 2016-2017 fiscal period was released quoted AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde as saying “[t]his is significant investment ... a historic day for this budget ... What I see reflected in this year’s budget is that it goes against maintaining the status quo and that, to me, is a very significant first step forward.”⁶¹⁵ Bellegarde further expressed his excitement that funding was guaranteed for Aboriginal Representative Organizations, such as the AFN, MNC, and ITK. More specifically, Bellegarde stated:

In the last 10 years all Aboriginal organizations were gutted, were cut back ... In order to be effective partners we have to have the capacity to make sure we have the proper policy analysis, proper legal analysis on things going forward so we can develop jointly the proper legislation and policy frameworks going forward.⁶¹⁶

Like Bellegarde, expressions of optimism were also highlighted from other key Indigenous leaders.

⁶¹³Galloway, “Major Indigenous Funding Restored;” APTN News, “Liberal Budget Praised and Panned,” *APTN News* (March 23 2016), accessed April 1 2023, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/liberal-budget-praised-and-panned/>.

⁶¹⁴ Campion-Smith, “Justin Trudeau Promises Budget.”

⁶¹⁵ APTN News, “AFN NC Bellegarde Says Liberal Budget Investments for Indigenous Peoples “Historic,”” *APTN News* (March 22 2015), accessed April 1 2023, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/afn-nc-bellegarde-says-liberal-budget-investments-for-indigenous-peoples-historic/>.

⁶¹⁶ APTN News, “AFN NC Says Budget Investments Historic.”

The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) also expressed optimism with the budget announcement for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The ITK, in assessing the budget for the 2016-2017 fiscal period, expressed that it included the first ever “Inuit-specific investment announcements,”⁶¹⁷ an approach that many Inuit had expressed was needed rather than grouping them under the umbrella term ‘Indigenous.’ Furthermore, as highlighted by APTN, there was considerable support from Inuit territories as commitments made also included assistance with housing as well as for proper funding for nutritional issues facing Inuit and other northern communities.⁶¹⁸ Additionally, President of the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), David Chartrand, expressed the position that the budget is good for Canada and that he had hope placing “trust in this young prime minister.”⁶¹⁹ Echoing similar optimism, Dwight Dorey, the National Leader for the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, also stated that the budget is “a good start and a positive change in attitude from the previous government, who continually slashed crucial funding.”⁶²⁰ Although optimism was initially highlighted, others were disappointed and expressing their concerns with how the \$8.4 billion would be spread across the four following fiscal-years.

Regarding the total of \$8.374 billion, the majority of the amount was divided between the following four fiscal periods. More specifically, the following breakdown was how the Trudeau government sought to divide the amount promised to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit:

⁶¹⁷ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, “Inuit-Specific Federal Budget Investments 2010-2019,” accessed April 7 2023, <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/20190624-ITK-budget-analysis.pdf>.

⁶¹⁸ Kent Driscoll, “Liberal Budget Gets Thumbs-Up from Nunavut Advocate on Nutrition North Enhancement,” *APTN News* (March 23 2016), accessed April 7 2023, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/liberal-budget-gets-thumbs-up-from-nunavut-advocate-on-nutrition-north-enhancement/>; APTN News, “Budget Funds for Northern Housing Leaves Advocates Optimistic,” *APTN News* (March 23 2016), accessed April 7 2023, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/budget-funds-for-northern-housing-leaves-advocates-optimistic/>

⁶¹⁹ Josh Dehaas and Sanja Puzic, “Mixed Reaction to \$8.4B Budget for Indigenous People,” *CTV News* (March 22 2016), accessed April 7 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/mixed-reaction-to-8-4b-budgeted-for-indigenous-people-1.2828119?cache=%3FclipId%3D89830>.

⁶²⁰ Dehaas and Puzic, “Mixed Reaction to \$8.4 Budget.”

1. 2016-2017: \$1.528 billion;
2. 2017-2018: \$2.041 billion;
3. 2018-2019: \$1.422 billion;
4. 2019-2020: \$1.600 billion; and
5. 2020-2021: \$1.784 billion.⁶²¹

For many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, it was difficult to not notice that less than 50 per cent of what was being allocated would be released in the first two fiscal periods and thus concern was voiced as an assessment of the numbers was further delved into. Sheila North Wilson, Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) at the time of Budget 2016, that “the need is right now ... [it] is not enough ... there is no time for broken promises.”⁶²² In focusing on the 30 First Nation communities and thus the 65,000 people that MKO reflects, North Wilson explained that \$2 billion was needed for housing and infrastructure in her region alone.⁶²³ Cindy Blackstock, President of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, also expressed disappointment and that she was looking for \$200 million earmarked for Indigenous children each fiscal period, rather than the presented amount of \$71 million for 2016-2017 and \$99 million in 2017-2018.⁶²⁴ In furthering her concern and critique of the budget plans by the Trudeau government, Blackstock also expressed that “if you look at the overall figure it is over \$600 million, but that’s back-ended.”⁶²⁵ In other words, as Blackstock pointed out, majority of the \$600 million was only to be released between the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 fiscal periods and thus not assist Indigenous children in a timely manner. Blackstock concluded

⁶²¹ Government of Canada, “Chapter 3 – A Better Future;” Galloway, “Major Indigenous Funding Restored.”

⁶²² Dehaas and Puzic, “Mixed Reaction to \$8.4 Budget.”

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Ibid; Government of Canada, “Archived – Budget 2016 Highlights;” Galloway, “Major Indigenous Funding Restored.”

⁶²⁵ Dehaas and Puzic, “Mixed Reaction to \$8.4 Budget.”

her assessment by stating “my feeling is, that the bar falls far below what is required to meet the order that is required by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.”⁶²⁶

Like Blackstock and North Wilson, Pamela Palmater⁶²⁷ added to the criticism and dismay that was growing towards the budget promises by the Trudeau government. The day following the tabling of budget 2016, Palmater put forth a less flattering and optimistic assessment in a written submission for *Policy Options Politiques*. Like Blackstock, Palmater highlighted concerns relating to how most of the amounts earmarked would not be released until the fiscal periods around the next Canadian federal election, which was to be held in October 2019. Furthermore, in assessing the overall amounts projected by the Trudeau government, Palmater expressed that “Canadians are faced with two major obstacles to understanding this budget: (1) trying to figure out which numbers are accurate and (2) assessing those numbers in their own proper context.”⁶²⁸ Palmater alludes to the need for Canadians and journalists to assess how much is actually going to be spent – further explaining that what is promised for future mandates were not set in stone. Thus, the amount stated (from 2016-2019) is less than \$5.3 billion.⁶²⁹ Moreover, the actual amount Trudeau promised, during the 2015 Canadian federal election, of “\$2.6 billion [to] First Nations is really only \$1.15 [billion]. He failed to deliver on his own election promise to First Nations.”⁶³⁰ To further bolster her points, Palmater then detailed the shortcomings of the budget presented for 2016 in relation to the needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Note: Palmater is L’nu, a member of the Law Society of New Brunswick, as well as a Professor and Chair in Indigenous Governance, at Toronto Metropolitan University.

⁶²⁸ Pamela D. Palmater, “Trudeau’s Empty Budget Promises on the Nation-to-Nation Relationship.” *Policy Options Politiques* (March 23 2016), accessed April 14 2023, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/2016/03/trudeaus-empty-budget-promises-on-the-nation-to-nation-relationship/>.

⁶²⁹ Palmater, “Trudeau’s Empty Budget Promises.”

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

Palmater then highlighted five specific examples and the amounts that had been highlighted as needed to fix the system issues Indigenous peoples have faced in comparison to what the budget put forth. In relation to First Nations housing ‘on reserve,’ the amount needed to alleviate the issues related to overcrowding, shortages, and improperly built homes, the amount Palmater expressed as needed was \$20 billion – highlighting that there is a shortfall of 19.45 billion.⁶³¹ Regarding the \$18 billion needed for First Nations water and sewage, Palmater argues that the amount earmarked, \$618 million, thus meant another shortfall of \$15.4 billion while there was a shortfall of \$18.5 billion in relation to First Nations education.⁶³² Additionally, in relation to Indigenous languages, a total of \$5 million was earmarked despite, according to Palmater, \$8 billion being needed – leading to another shortfall of \$7.95 billion.⁶³³ Lastly, Palmater highlighted the funding allocations needed for the MMIWG inquiry. As indicated previously in this chapter, the overall amount committed during the Trudeau government’s first mandate equated \$40 million – according to Palmater the amount needed for a robust inquiry on MMIWG totalled \$100 million, thus highlighting a shortfall of \$60 million in relation to another promise.⁶³⁴

Following a review of amounts needed versus what was budgeted, Palmater then takes aim at the Trudeau government’s lack of clear commitment to nation-to-nation relations. At the time of presenting the budget for the 2016-2017 fiscal period, there was no clear amount listed for key items that reflected nation-to-nation relations. Palmater expressed that no amounts were highlighted for implementing the TRC Calls to Action, UNDRIP provisions, negotiations of the

⁶³¹ Ibid; Note: Palmater highlights the budget for the first term of the Trudeau government in relation to First Nations housing only reflected \$550 million.

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

nation-to-nation relationship structure, for implementing Aboriginal and treaty rights, as well as for reviewing and repealing all legislation enacted without consultation during the Harper era.⁶³⁵

Palmater expressed that the lack of funding for the aforementioned items was concerning for they were promises made by Trudeau and re-affirmed in a speech given to Chiefs during a special assembly in December 2015. Palmater goes further, stating:

Nowhere in the budget document does he refer to this “nation to nation” relationship, but instead refers to a renewed relationship with “Canada’s” Indigenous people aimed at “unifying Canada” and ensuring participation of Indigenous people in the economy ... Throughout the document we have been downgraded from Nations to people, groups, communities, and stakeholders. There is no mention of UNDRIP, TRSC, or free, informed and prior consent.⁶³⁶

Palmater further argued that the Trudeau government’s financial commitments did not reflect its previous claims of being committed to change or to nation-to-nation relationships.

Although the opinions from individuals such as Bellegarde, Chartrand, Dorey, North Wilson, Blackstock, as well as Palmater so a mixed view of the financial promises made by the Trudeau government not only in relation to the 2016-2017 fiscal year, but also during its first mandate, the overall impact of the Trudeau government cannot solely be made on budgets. Concerns of shortfalls are valid, as Palmater highlights, impact any promises made for renewed nation-to-nation relations. Although there were mixed feelings in relation to budgetary promises put forth, the budget itself and the number of Indigenous MPs elected to the House of Commons, and given a role in Cabinet, are not the only component that needs to be assessed. In other words, to further consider the full impact of Indigenous participation and its effects on reconciliation and change following the 2015 Canadian election, it is also important to review potential impact

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

and inclusion on key pieces of policy and legislation that were proposed during the first term of the Trudeau government as well.

5.2: We Win Some and We Lose Some: Policy, Legislation, and Choices Made (2015-2019)

Following the naming of Trudeau's Cabinet and the release of budgetary plans, movement on legislation in relation to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples was steadily proposed and released. In assessing the Trudeau government's first term in office for the Yellowhead Institute in June of 2018, Indigenous academics Hayden King and Shiri Pasternak highlighted in their findings that both the Canadian legislature and government had been one of the most active in relation to Indigenous policy and legislation in more than 100 years.⁶³⁷ For King and Pasternak, highlighting not only the Trudeau Government as well as the legislature was important when assessing Indigenous policy due to private members bills introduced that not only included LPC MPs but also NDP MPs. Between April 2016 and Fall of 2019, a total of sixteen bills were introduced, including from private members, the government, as well as the Senate.⁶³⁸ In addition to such bills, there were also other items that were ongoing, such as movement on constitutional rights, the establishment of the MMIWG Inquiry, action on the TRC recommendations, as well as processes of consultations and negotiations.

Although not every item or bill introduced during the first term of the Trudeau Government was implemented, there were both successes and failures. Additionally, successful legislation and movement seems to be of those bills focused on services and delivery of services to Indigenous peoples, as well as in relation to their administration. In other words, the successes

⁶³⁷ Hayden King and Shiri Pasternak, "A Special Report: Canada's Emerging Indigenous Rights Framework: A Critical Analysis," *Yellowhead Institute* (June 5 2018): pp. 5, accessed April 7 2023, <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/yi-rights-report-june-2018-final-5.4.pdf>.

⁶³⁸ King and Pasternak, "A Special Report," pp. 22

in relation to policy and legislation during the first term of the Trudeau government continued an approach that handled Indigenous policy through a Canadian lens rather than one of mutual respect and Indigenous perspectives on nation-to-nation relations and consultation. When assessing natural resource developments, pushback from Indigenous peoples on such development and its impact on their traditional territories and inherent rights, the lack of full nation-to-nation relations was noticeable – especially when considering the slow movement on the TRC’s Calls to Action. Lastly, many of the ‘successes’ claimed by the Trudeau government during its first term in government have been assessed as pan-Indigenous, with one exception: the Métis and the *Daniels Decision*.

5.2.1: ‘Winning’ through Services, Administration and Métis Recognition

Throughout the first term of the Trudeau government, action and movement on nation-to-nation reconciliation, as recommended from the TRC’s Calls to Action and Indigenous peoples themselves, were promised and claimed to have been being made. One of the most noticeable movements forward came from the Supreme Court of Canada’s (SCC), *Daniels Decision* in 2016. The Daniels Case, as highlighted by Thomas Isaac, “sought to settle the issue of who has constitutional authority for Métis and non-Status First Nations.”⁶³⁹ Focus, Isaac points out, on why Métis and non-Status First Nations should be under the constitutional authority of the Federal government of Canada related to the argument that:

[H]istorical and legislative evidence showed that the purpose of [Section 91(24)] was to facilitate the westward expansion of Canada and the construction of a National Railway. This, it was argued, could be achieved only if the federal government had authority over all Aboriginal peoples.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁹ Thomas Isaac, “Recognition and Reconciliation: Recent Developments in Métis Rights Law,” in *Bead by Bead: Constitutional Rights and Métis Community*, edited by Yvonne Boyer and Larry Chartrand (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021), pp. 42.

⁶⁴⁰ Isaac, “Recognition and Reconciliation,” pp. 43.

The court also pointed out that “Métis participation and treaties between the government and First Nations and Métis inclusion under the Indian Act in certain circumstances showed that the government appeared to assume authority over Métis peoples.”⁶⁴¹ In other words, as pointed out by Jeremy Patzer, the SCC found that the Métis should be read into Section 91(24), like the Inuit had been with the *Eskimo Decision* of the 1930s.⁶⁴²

Furthermore, as both Isaac and Patzer point out, the SCC did not further explain how to define and express who is non-status or Métis, and thus does not create a duty, via Section 91(24), to legislate when concerning Métis, but considering and including them would assist in remedying situations that have grown out of the period of Canada refusing to recognize Métis and their rights following the *Manitoba Act, 1870*, and the Manitoba School Crises.⁶⁴³ In turn, the *Daniels Decision* demonstrated not only a dramatic shift in the courts acknowledgement for reconciliation between the Métis and the Crown, but also that of the Canadian government as they did not appeal the ruling. Instead, the Trudeau government moved forward in looking to show reconciliation with the Métis through working with Métis governments and organizations through a process of implementing practical actions.

For instance, on November 15 2016, Canada and the *Manitoba Métis Federation* (MMF) signed a framework agreement that looked to move the MMF further towards its own autonomy and a form of self-government. More specifically, “[t]he agreement provides that Canada and the MMF are committed to engaging in an “interest based” and “results-orientated” negotiation

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Jeremy Patzer, “Manitoba Métis Federation and Daniels: Post-Legal, Reconciliation, and Western Métis, in *Bead by Bead: Constitutional Rights and Métis Community*, edited by Yvonne Boyer and Larry Chartrand (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2021), pp. 121.

⁶⁴³ Isaac, “Recognition and Reconciliation,” pp. 44; Patzer, “Manitoba Métis Federation and Daniels,” pp. 122.

process, and that Canada will seek funds to support MMF participation in the negotiations.”⁶⁴⁴ Such participation and negotiations would allow for and set out “next steps for the Métis nation to transition from their current corporate form to an Indigenous government [and be] recognised in Canadian law.”⁶⁴⁵ By mid 2017, Canada had also made similar agreements with both the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Nation of Ontario – each signing their own Memorandum of Understanding.⁶⁴⁶ Such movement can be considered historic and successful for Métis recognition and rights – whether or not the fact that half of the Indigenous Liberal Caucus were Métis or a mix of First Nation and Métis assisting with such movement has not been assessed.

Alongside the movement on Métis recognition, and thus rights within the Canadian state, other items relating to services and administration were also achieved according to the Trudeau government. In relation to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Prime Minister Trudeau expressed on December 15, 2015 that:

[W]e will, in partnership with Indigenous communities, the provinces, territories, and other vital partners, fully implement the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, starting with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁶⁴⁷

Additionally, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett, stated on March 10 2016, stated, when on behalf of Canada, adopted UNDRIP, that Canada did so “without qualification ... [b]y adopting and implementing the declaration, we are excited that we are breathing life into Section 35 and recognizing it as a full box of rights for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.”⁶⁴⁸ In showing support for both Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Bennett’s words,

⁶⁴⁴ Isaac, “Recognition and Reconciliation,” pp. 45.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pps. 45-46.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁴⁷ Indigenous Peoples Commission, “IPC Remains Committed.”

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

the Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPC) of the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) expressed in a press release that:

The IPC strongly believes that by abiding the TRC Calls to Action and the Full endorsement of UNDRIP, Canada is looking to chart a path of reconciliation with Indigenous nations ... It is in the spirit of these words and a longstanding ethic of the IPC of the Liberal Party of Canada that we live and stand by the need for decolonization and a renewed/equal nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and Indigenous nations.⁶⁴⁹

Such support was instrumental from the IPC in assisting to promote the view that a commitment to adopting UNDRIP was a win for the Trudeau government. Additionally, such action by the IPC also promoted the idea that there would be continued movement to see its full implementation under the Trudeau Government. Although the commitment from the Trudeau government had been expressed, much consultation was needed and little in relation to UNDRIP would fully be put into place between 2015-2019. Despite little movement on its full implementation, many Indigenous leaders, such as Perry Bellegarde, and Indigenous academics, such as Eva Jewell and Naomi Metallic, continued to express hope – understanding that the process of its implementation would not be a simple one and some components of Canadian law would be incompatible with UNDRIP.⁶⁵⁰

It could be argued that UNDRIP goes hand in hand with the 94 Calls to Action forwarded by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as well. Within the 94 Calls to Action there is reference to many components of UNDRIP – directly recommending its implementation.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby, "A Special Report: Calls to Action Accountability: A 2021 Status Update on Reconciliation," *Yellowhead Institute* (December 2021), accessed April 15 2023, <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/trc-2021-accountability-update-yellowhead-institute-special-report.pdf>; Naomi Walqwan Metallic, Hadley Friendland, Sarah Morales, Jeffrey Hewitt and Aimée Craft, "A Special Report: An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Children, Youth and Families, Does Bill C-92 Make the Grade?," *Yellowhead Institute* (March 21 2019), accessed April 15 2023, https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/does-bill-c-92-make-the-grade_-full-report.pdf.

Thus, for the Trudeau government, one could argue, it would have been difficult to follow and fully enact many of the Calls to Action within its first term due to consultation, negotiations, and provincial jurisdictions. That said, the Trudeau government did mark Call to Action #48, adoption of UNDRIP by Churches and faith groups, as completed prior to the end of their first term.⁶⁵¹ As highlighted by Eva Jewell and Ian Mosby, the Trudeau government had in fact completed 8 of the 94 Calls to Action by the end of its first term in government. More specifically, Jewell and Mosby point out that by October 2019, the Canadian state had completed the following Calls to Action:

- 13: Federal Acknowledgment of Indigenous Language Rights;
- 41: Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls;
- 48: Adoption of UNDRIP by Churches and Faith Groups;
- 49: Rejection of the Doctrine of Discovery by Churches and Faith Groups;
- 72: Federal Support for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's National Residential School Student Death Register;
- 83: Reconciliation Agenda for the Canada Council for the Arts;
- 85: Reconciliation Agenda for APTN; and
- 88: Long-term Support for all Levels of Government for North American Indigenous Games.⁶⁵²

Some of the above listed Calls to Action were touted by the Trudeau government as showing how serious they were in their renewal of nation-to-nation relations. One of the most significant items listed as completed was the Inquiry into MMIWG.

Following the budgetary promise made with the Trudeau government's first budget in the Spring of 2016, an Inquiry into MMIWG, as well as Two-Spirit people, was held between September 2016 and December 2018.⁶⁵³ Mid-way through the process the Inquiry had issued an

⁶⁵¹ Jewell and Mosby, "Calls to Action Accountability," pp. 7.

⁶⁵² Ibid, pps. 5,7, & 12.

⁶⁵³ Government of Canada, "Backgrounder – National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls," *Government of Canada*, accessed April 15 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender->

Interim Report and with it a ‘family-first’ approach was taken when moving further with the MMIWG Inquiry.⁶⁵⁴ In other words, focus was given to those who had loved ones who had been murdered or were missing in order to assist with healing and listening. In turn, the Inquiry obtained evidence from more than 1400 witnesses, and reviewed information collected over the decades from community hearings, institutional hearings, as well as police records.⁶⁵⁵

The Final Report on MMIWG was presented on June 3, 2019. At its release, Prime Minister Trudeau expressed Canada’s commitment to addressing the issues highlighted and implementing its recommendations. In assessing the recommendations, the Trudeau government has been quick to express the need for evidence-based implementation and thus “careful consideration and examinations [is needed] in order for the Government of Canada to establish a holistic and effective path forward that will empower Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ and Two-Spirited People.”⁶⁵⁶ Key components of the recommendations include education, dealing with the issue of systemic racism in services such as policing, as well as for establishing forms of commemoration for those who have been murdered and are missing.⁶⁵⁷ Regarding commemoration, the Trudeau government put aside additional funding to assist Indigenous communities and organizations to host commemoration events – leading to over 100 different events doing so. Such commemoration led to further recognition of what is referred to as *Red Dress Day* – occurring every year on May 5.⁶⁵⁸ Again, although the findings and recommendations were presented at the end of the first term of the Trudeau government, there

equality/news/2019/06/backgrounder--national-inquiry-into-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls.html.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid; Note: The day is also referred to as National MMIWG2S Awareness Day.

was cause for optimism by Indigenous peoples and organizations, such as from NWAC and the AFN to name but two, as Trudeau himself expressed that “the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls ... in recent decades amount to an act of genocide.”⁶⁵⁹

Another policy area that was looked at optimistically, and considered a success by the Trudeau government, related to that of child welfare and services. Again, similar to other areas claimed as win by the Trudeau government, movement on welfare and services related to Indigenous youth, came forth near the end of the Trudeau Government’s first term in the form of Bill C-92. Bill C-92, *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth, and Families*, was signed into law on June 21 2019 and, for Metallic, Hadley Friendland, and Sarah Morales, was “a huge and unprecedented step forward ... it [marks] the first time the federal government has exercised its jurisdiction to legislate in the area of Indigenous child welfare.”⁶⁶⁰ Bill C-92, as Metallic, Friendland, and Morales argue in their 2019 assessment, allows for improvements in many ways by establishing national standards. The bill:

[S]ets a floor, not a ceiling, and if implemented may make a difference in the lives of some Indigenous children and families currently involved in provincial child welfare systems ... [and] contains crucial clauses requiring notice and standing for an Indigenous child’s family, including extended family, and governing body, in significant decisions regarding the child’s placement.⁶⁶¹

Thus, Metallic, Friendland, and Morales saw potential with Bill C-92 when assessing its impact on national standards and administration of services. Such potential could thus mean positive change in relation to the welfare and needs of Indigenous youth and families going forward –

⁶⁵⁹ Catharine Tunney, “Trudeau Says Deaths and Disappearances of Indigenous Women and Girls Amount to Genocide.” *CBC News* (June 4 2019), accessed November 27 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-mmiwg-genocide-1.5161681>.

⁶⁶⁰ Metallic, Friendland, and Morales, “The Promise and Pitfalls of C-92,” pp. 4.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid*, pps. 5.

counteracting some of the issues created and that have continually existed through the history of Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the ongoing Millennial Scoop.

A key promise the Trudeau government had also touted as being worked on is that of drinking water for First Nations communities. Originally, the promise made during the 2015 Canadian federal election was that the issues of potable drinking water in First Nations communities would be fixed and long-term drinking water advisories (LT-DWAs) would be ended.⁶⁶² Although reports, such as from the David Suzuki Foundation, were highlighting as early as mid-2017 that the promise of ending all LT-DWAs by 2020 was likely to fail, there are reasons the Trudeau government could claim progress and success. In the fall of 2016, it was reported that there were 151 LT-DWAs in place amongst First Nations communities – with some LT-DWAs having been in place for longer than 15 years.⁶⁶³ For instance, as pointed out by the Council of Canadians and the David Suzuki Foundation, the LT-DWA for Neskantaga First Nation dates to 1995 and to 1999 for Kitigan Zibi First Nation.⁶⁶⁴ Thus the work and full assessments on potable drinking water amongst First Nations need long-term fixes, compared to short term approaches, or ‘band-aid’ solutions, as had been utilized by previous governments. Thus, it could be argued that although the promise to end LT-DWAs in five years was short sighted as it did not consider those communities who were given short-term solutions having to be readded to the list of LT-DWAs. Due to this short-sightedness, 39 LT-DWAs were added to

⁶⁶² Christopher Alcantara, Sheri Longboat, and Shanaya Vanhooren, “Improving First Nations Water Security Through Governance,” *Canadian Public Administration* Vol. 63, Iss. 2 (May 2020): pp. 2.

⁶⁶³ Jessica Lukawiecki, “Glass Half Empty? Year 1 Progress Toward Resolving Drinking Water Advisories in Nine First Nations in Ontario,” *David Suzuki Foundation*, accessed April 21 2023, <https://david Suzuki.org/science-learning-centre-article/report-glass-half-empty-year-1-progress-toward-resolving-drinking-water-advisories-nine-first-nations-ontario/>.

⁶⁶⁴ Lukawiecki, “Glass Half-Empty?” pp. 12.

the list between 2016 to 2019.⁶⁶⁵ Despite the increase of 39 LT-DWAs by 2019, the Trudeau government was also successful in lifting 83 LT-DWAs during the same period.⁶⁶⁶ In turn, there were an overall total of 107 LT-DWAs in place by the 2019 Canadian federal election – showing movement in the right direction.⁶⁶⁷

Lastly, another area that is considered a success of the Trudeau government's commitment to reconciliation and nation-to-nation relations, as well as movement in the right direction was the division of Indigenous Affairs into two separate departments: 1) Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), and 2) Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). Prime Minister Trudeau announced the dissolution of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) on August 28, 2017, and with it the creation of CIRNAC and ISC.⁶⁶⁸ In doing so, the Trudeau government expressed that such separation of relations and services was to highlight a movement towards reconciliation and nation-to-nation relations, but to also fulfill a recommendation first put forward 21 years earlier from RCAP. The formation of CIRNAC and ISC would allow for not only the consideration and movement forward away from the Indian Act, as highlighted by the government, but to also move on services that could, at times, be held up in bureaucratic red tape over jurisdiction.⁶⁶⁹ The newly formed departments were also headed by two trusted individuals who not only originally had the support of many Indigenous peoples, but also Prime Minister Trudeau: Dr. Carolyn Bennett and Dr. Jane Philpott.⁶⁷⁰ Although such

⁶⁶⁵ Government of Canada, "Ending Long-Term Drinking Water Advisories," *Government of Canada*, accessed April 21 2023, <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1533317130660>.

⁶⁶⁶ Government of Canada, "Ending Long-Term Drinking Water Advisories."

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Government of Canada, "Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada Legal Fees," *Government of Canada*, accessed April 21 2023, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1547129719241/1547129739904>.

⁶⁶⁹ Government of Canada, "Crown-Indigenous Relations."

⁶⁷⁰ Government of Canada, "The Honourable Carolyn Bennett and Honourable Jane Philpott Recognize United Nations Human Rights Day," *Government of Canada*, accessed April 21 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-northern->

devolution of INAC into CIRNAC and ISC was lauded, the full understanding of the new roles and their specific areas of focus continue to be debated and discussed not only between the departments, but also between Indigenous nations, communities, organization and the Canadian state. Thus, although looked at as a movement forward and a success by the Trudeau government, the full ability and nation-to-nation relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous nations mostly reflected what has been highlighted thus far in this section: one focused on policy and administration within the Canadian state.

5.2.2: *We Lose Some: Pipelines, Dams, and Natural Resource Development, OH MY!*

As the Trudeau government's first term was ending in the Autumn of 2019, the LPC and Canadian government touted their accomplishments regarding Indigenous peoples, nations, and relations. In appealing to voters leading up to and during the 2019 election, the Trudeau government was quick to highlight its achievements and express that the work needed regarding reconciliation and nation-to-nation relation required a second mandate for them. By the Autumn of 2019, many Indigenous peoples were skeptical of the Trudeau's commitments to reconciliation and thus whether their participation in 2015 mattered or still led to a government that looked at nation-to-nation relations still through a Canadian centric lens and approach – just not to the extent that the Harper government had utilized. Indigenous skepticism, especially for First Nations and Inuit, regarding the continued unilateral movement by the Canadian state in relation to resource development, infrastructure projects, and other items that were argued to be in Canada's national interest. Additionally, the Trudeau government's claims of progress on matters such as UNDRIP and the TRC recommendations were questioned. Although some

https://www150.ca.gov/affairs/news/2017/12/the_honourable_carolynbennettandhonourablejanephilpottrecognizeu.html; Note: Minister Bennett became the first Minister of CIRNAC and Minister Philpott became the first Minister of ISC.

matters saw progress, when recommendations and points related to autonomy and land rights were assessed there was little or no movement.

For example, the *Yellowhead Institute*, an Indigenous ‘Think Tank’ organization, has released several reports and assessments on the Trudeau government’s approach to nation-to-nation relations, consultation, land rights, and jurisdictional matters. Jewell and Mosby’s assessment in their Yellowhead Institute report, released in December of 2020, specifically considered progress on the TRC recommendations and their implementations. As highlighted in the previous section, the Trudeau government had expressed achievement on implementing eight of the recommendations during its first term in office. Jewell and Mosby, highlight that those implemented focused on services and administration and, therefore, avoided key components of nation-to-nation relations. As Jewell and Mosby state, “Canada has fallen far short of these commitments and has, by any reasonable metric, received a failing grade when it comes to the 94 Calls to Action.”⁶⁷¹ In fact, Jewell and Mosby specifically highlighted that there were three specific barriers in the way of completing the Calls to Action:

- 1) A vision among policy makers of the “public interest” as generally excluding Indigenous people;
- 2) The deep-rooted paternalistic attitudes of politicians, Bureaucrats, and other policy makers; and
- 3) The ongoing legacy and reality of structural anti-Indigenous racism.⁶⁷²

Such barriers especially hinder the nation-to-nation relationship, as well as issues surrounding Indigenous jurisdiction, consultation, and title in relation to land and resource development.

Metallic, Friendland, and Morales’ assessment of C-92, on behalf of the Yellowhead Institute, is a good example of this. While there has been positive progress on C-92 by the

⁶⁷¹ Jewell and Mosby, “Calls to Action Accountability,” pp. 4.

⁶⁷² Ibid, pp. 20; Note: CBC has also been tracking and showing the movement, or lack thereof, on the TRC’s Calls to Action.

Trudeau government, concerns are highlighted regarding matters of jurisdiction, funding, and accountability. With respect to jurisdiction, Metallic, Friendland and Morales express two concerns specifically, “[f]irst, the lack of recognition of the inherent jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples, and second, the ongoing jurisdiction quagmire between federal and provincial governments.”⁶⁷³ For example, Metallic, Friendland, and Morales point out that:

[A]n issue raised by many Indigenous groups is jurisdiction over the large number of Indigenous children in urban areas who are First Nations but live off reserve, or non-status, Métis, or Inuit. While federal officials publicly state that Indigenous laws may apply to children and families living on and off reserve, and even out of province, this was not reflected in the wording of the Bill ... This could have been remedied simply by the addition of Jordan’s Principle applying to any funding disputes.⁶⁷⁴

Alongside this point on jurisdiction, Metallic, Friendland, and Morales also stated that adequate funding of C-92 is required for it to be successful and that funding must not only reflect care of the children in question, but also self-government over child welfare services, housing, infrastructure, governance, and capacity building.⁶⁷⁵ Similar arguments have been highlighted by those critiquing the Trudeau government’s approach to UNDRIP, MMIWG, and especially regarding its proposed Indigenous rights framework.

Palmer also highlighted concern on this point and explained that the lack of inclusion of Indigenous jurisdictions, title, and consultation that respects Indigenous inherent rights was noticeable with the type of wording used. On UNDRIP, MMIWG, and TRC recommendations that considered such components of the Canadian/Indigenous relationship, Palmer indicated that the Trudeau government, would, and has continued the process of “letting the courts

⁶⁷³ Metallic, Friendland, and Morales, “The Promise and Pitfalls of C-92,” pp. 7.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pps. 7-8.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 8.

determine the relationship.”⁶⁷⁶ Additionally, Palmater points out that, in most cases, Indigenous nations are “downgraded from Nations to peoples, groups, communities, and stakeholders ... [that] free informed and prior consent [is defined by Canada].”⁶⁷⁷ When assessing issues, especially with respect to natural resources and land, Palmater’s concerns are accurate – especially when looking at the continued development of land management, pipelines, and development projects like the Muskrat Falls Hydroelectric Dam, and the Site C Hydroelectric Dam.

The Site C Hydroelectric Dam is a megaproject along the Peace River near Fort St. John, British Columbia. The Site C project received support and approval from both the Harper government and the provincial government of British Columbia in 2014, with construction on the project beginning the following year. The area would see swaths of the Peace River, Moberly River, and Halfway River valleys permanently flooded, impacting both agricultural areas as well as those within the small section of Treaty 8 territory: specifically, six Cree communities and two Dunne-Za communities.⁶⁷⁸ In the process of assessing the Site C project, each community was reached out to. While the six Cree communities, who were less impacted by the project and its flooding did not express dissent, the two Dunne-Za communities did, highlighting that the flooding directly impacted their traditional hunting area, the land they were the stewards of, as well as territory deemed of spiritual importance.⁶⁷⁹ Both the Federal Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia at the time expressed that the proper protocols for consent

⁶⁷⁶ Palmater, “Trudeau’s Empty Budget Promises.”

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, “Approval of the Site C Dam Was Irresponsible and Must be Reversed,” *Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs*, accessed July 10 2023, <https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/reversesitec>.

⁶⁷⁹ Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, “Approval of the Site C Dam Was Irresponsible.”

had been followed and that the courts had ruled in their favour on multiple occasions.⁶⁸⁰

Although the procedures put in place for such projects may have been followed, they are a clear example of a pan-Indigenous approach, which does not fully consider the differences between the two different nations that the eight communities are a part of: the Cree and the Dunne-Za. If such consideration had been given, one would have to acknowledge the stark difference both nations took to the project and who's traditional territory was primarily to be affected.

Support for halting the Site C project was eventually given by UBCIC and a United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The panel, in its report, expressed that "...holding the project in northeastern B.C. up as an example of an outdated approach to resource development that fails to secure the free, prior, and informed consent to Indigenous peoples"⁶⁸¹ In response to the report, Chris Gardner, then the President of the Independent Contractors and Business Association of BC, expressed that it "paints an incomplete picture as to how much work BC Hydro has done consulting with First Nations on Site C."⁶⁸² Again, Gardner's point reflects a pan-Indigenous approach and since only two communities disapproved then, in the view of Gardner, BC Hydro, and others, the project should be proceeding. UBCIC Grad Chief Stewart Phillip, as well as the leaders of the two Dunne-Za communities, lauded the report.

In responding to the UN report, Grand Chief Phillip expressed that it "reinforces how the province must continue shifting the paradigm of how much projects should proceed ... Indigenous land rights and human rights are a constitutional and legal reality."⁶⁸³ Additionally,

⁶⁸⁰ Mike Hager, "United Nations Panel Calls for Halt of Site C Dam Project in B.C.," *CBC* (August 28 2017), accessed July 10 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/united-nations-panel-calls-for-halt-of-site-c-dam-project-in-bc/article36102238/>.

⁶⁸¹ Hager, "United Nations Panel Calls for Halt of Site C."

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*

an interim report by the BC Utility Commission gave further credibility to stopping the project. In a press release by Grand Chief Phillip and UBCIC highlight that the interim report “provides further proof that the federal and provincial governments acted irresponsibly when they granted approval for construction.”⁶⁸⁴ Chief Rolan Wilson of West Moberly added that the interim report’s findings show “there’s simply no credible rationale for the devastating harm that would be caused by the flooding of the Peace River Valley.”⁶⁸⁵ The most important critique from the interim report was echoed by Chief Lynette Tsakoza of Prophet River:

Up to now the whole decision-making process has ignored the fact that our rights as Treaty people are at stake ... The joint federal-provincial environmental impact assessment of the Site C dam was clear that flooding the Peace River Valley would destroy hundreds of graves and other cultural sites and cause severe, permanent, and irreversible harm to the natural environment on which we rely. All this was pushed aside in the rush to build Site C.⁶⁸⁶

Thus, when during the election period for 2015 there was potential for renewing the nation-to-nation relationship and implementing UNDRIP, there was optimism a Trudeau government would remove federal support for a project that was vehemently opposed by the two communities and nation who would be drastically and negatively affected by it.

Following the 2015 election, pressure was put on the Trudeau government to halt the project. By the summer and fall of 2016, it quickly became clear that such movement would not be taken by the Trudeau government. In fact, the Trudeau government relied on the arguments put forth by their predecessors, as well as the newly elected NDP government of British Columbia, and its predecessor, that the proper protocols were followed and that previous court rulings had also expressed the Site C project could go forward. UBCIC, in response to the

⁶⁸⁴ Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, “Approval of Site C Dam was Irresponsible.”

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Trudeau government's position, expressed dismay in the lack of a nation-to-nation approach since the Trudeau government looked to proceed anyways: "approving the project over the objections of First Nations, the federal and provincial governments assert the extreme harm caused by Site C [are] justified by its claimed economic benefits."⁶⁸⁷ In other words, overriding Indigenous rights, title and consideration of nation-to-nation relations was applicable when in Canada's national and economic interests.

Like Site C, the impact of the Muskrat Falls Dam project also highlighted Indigenous dismay in the lack of free, prior, and informed consent – especially the inherent rights and title of the Inuit and Innu on the territory that would be impacted. Frustration over the Muskrat Falls Dam, located along the *Mishta-shipu*⁶⁸⁸ had been voiced since the project had been initiated by the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2006. For Inuit and Innu in the region, the area to be impacted by the project was concerning, for not only was the territory important spiritually and culturally, but also for their hunting, trapping, and harvesting rights.⁶⁸⁹ More specifically, the concern was related to the ecosystem of the Lake Melville area due to its importance as a region for Innu and Inuit hunting and fishing. Thus, while former Premiers Danny Williams and Kathy Dunderdale both promoted and hailed the project as the way forward, the Innu and Inuit of the region were not included in the discussions for the project, nor when the construction of the project started in 2012.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁸ Note: Mishta-shipu is the Innu name for what is referred to as the Churchill River in the area referred to as Labrador on present-day maps.

⁶⁸⁹ Patricia Johnson-Castle and Jessica Penney, "Not-so Grand Plans: The Continued Erasure of Indigenous Rights in Newfoundland and Labrador's Hydroelectric Development," *Yellowhead Institute* (June 2021): pp. 2, accessed July 11 2023, <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/yi-brief-6.2021-hydroelectric-development-johnson-castle-penney-.pdf>.

In turn, the Nunatsiavut government, representing the Inuit of the area, agreed to be a part of a study with scientists from Harvard University. The study sought to review the effects of what Nalcor and the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador had tabled and to delve deeper into areas that they had not included – such as Lake Melville. The study “concluded that methylmercury levels could rise as much as 380 per cent in Lake Melville if the reservoir was only partially cleared before flooding.”⁶⁹⁰ The study also concluded that the “increase could be drastically reduced, to 13 per cent, if the reservoir was fully cleared.”⁶⁹¹ The provincial government and Nalcor refuted the findings from the Nunatsiavut-Harvard study, again reiterating their own findings and continued with the project.⁶⁹² Like the communities and nations that sought to stop Site C, the Inuit and Innu who were opposed to the project because of its lack of free, informed, and prior consent, hoped the election win of the Trudeau Liberals would lead to change.

Despite the electoral district voting heavily for the LPC incumbent, Yvonne Jones, the Trudeau government originally opted to also stay the course and not interfere. Frustration boiled over in October 2016, as blockades, protests and arrests arose at the Muskrat Falls Dam site.⁶⁹³ Again, Inuit protesters expressed “[We] don’t oppose the project itself, but [we] want to see it done right – specifically, clearing the reservoir area to minimize the risk.”⁶⁹⁴ Additionally, on October 14 2016, Billy Gauthier, Jerry Kohlmeister, and Delilah Saunders began a hunger strike

⁶⁹⁰ CBC News, “Battle Over Muskrat Falls” What You Need to Know,” *CBC* (October 27 2016), accessed August 12 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/muskrat-falls-what-you-need-to-know-1.3822898>.

⁶⁹¹ CBC, “Battle Over Muskrat Falls.”

⁶⁹² NOTE: The Innu representatives eventually also agreed with the Newfoundland and Labrador government and rejected calls for the complete clearing of the reservoir. Like the Cree in the Site C area, it is important to note that the Innu were not to be affected at the same level as the Inuit were to be.

⁶⁹³ Ryan Calder, “Muskrat Falls Hydroelectric Project Poses Risks for Canada that are Being Ignored,” *The Conversation Canada* (October 4 2019), accessed August 12 2023, <https://theconversation.com/muskrat-falls-hydroelectric-project-poses-risks-for-canada-that-are-being-ignored-122360#:~:text=Muskrat%20Falls%20and%20methylmercury,such%20as%20seals%20and%20birds.>

⁶⁹⁴ CBC, “Battle Over Muskrat Falls.”

in support of protecting their traditional territory, as well as their hunting, fishing, and harvesting rights.⁶⁹⁵ As the protest and blockade continued, Gauthier, Kohlmeister, and Saunders also continued their hunger strike – relocating to Ottawa to draw further attention to what was occurring, particularly to the inaction of the Trudeau government.⁶⁹⁶

Originally, the relocation of those on a hunger strike did attract attention from Canadian media, as well as support and involvement from Jones. While Jones was assisting with discussions between the Newfoundland and Labrador Government, which was now headed by Premier Dwight Ball, and Nunatsiavut leaders, a fellow LPC MP caused controversy in response to the situation. Taking to twitter, Nick Whalen, the LPC MP for St. John’s East, tweeted that those who were worried about an increase in methylmercury, they should “eat less fish.”⁶⁹⁷ Indigenous activists, leaders, those directly impacted, as well as Jones, were unimpressed with Whalen’s comments. Whalen was called out by various people over social media as his tweet was commented on by Canadian media. As frustration and anger continued to grow over his tweet, Whalen eventually removed it and offered an apology for what he classified as an insensitive comment.⁶⁹⁸ Although an apology was given, Whalen was neither rebuked by his own party or by Trudeau. It is not publicly known whether or not Trudeau had instructed him to retract his comment.

Alongside Whalen’s comment were written and social media endorsements of those trying to protect their territory, and situations that further caused contention. Maude Barlow, in her role as head of the Council of Canadians, publicly stated that the organization supported

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

those seeking an end to the project because the way it was formulated and moved forward violated Article 19 of UNDRIP. Article 19 expresses:

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.⁶⁹⁹

According to media, Barlow indicated that alongside Article 19, UNDRIP also highlights:

Indigenous peoples have the “right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories” and “the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands”. The Muskrat Falls Dam violates all three of these rights.⁷⁰⁰

Not long after Barlow’s comments were released, APTN and other media outlets were notified that Jones had requested a review of the permit issued to Dominic LeBlanc, the Minister for Fisheries and Oceans. More specifically, APTN stated that “[Jones] asked the minister to do a review of the environmental conditions that were supposed to be met when a permit was issued by the federal government.”⁷⁰¹ With the positive and negative media coverage, protestors, endorsements, and hunger strikes, the negotiations with which Jones was assisting continued to grow in importance. Finally, in the early morning of October 26th 2016 an agreement was reached between the Nunatsiavut and the Newfoundland and Labrador governments.

The agreement, reached after an eleven-hour stint of fresh negotiations, included a promise by Premier Ball to seek further independent assessments of the Muskrat Falls Dam project and to create a special committee to look at ways to reduce methylmercury

⁶⁹⁹ Brent Patterson, “Barlow Says Muskrat Falls Dam Violates UNDRIP,” *The Council of Canadians* (October 18 2016), accessed August 14 2023, <https://canadians.org/analysis/barlow-says-muskrat-falls-dam-violates-undrip/>.

⁷⁰⁰ Patterson, “Barlow Says Muskrat Falls Dam Violates UNDRIP.”

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*

contamination.⁷⁰² However, Premier Ball made no promise to fully clear vegetation and soil from the area that was to be flooded.⁷⁰³ Although the full clearing of vegetation and soil was not a part of the agreement, Johannes Lampe, Nunatsiavut’s Leader, still called on protesters “to go home and for the hunger strikers to stop.”⁷⁰⁴ Protestors heeded Lampe’s request, as did Gauthier, Kohlmeister, and Saunders. All three broke their hunger strike – being offered smoked char in Jones’ Ottawa office. Upon the agreement being formed, and feeding smoked char to Gauthier, Kohlmeister, and Saunders, Jones tweeted “[h]appy to feed smoked char to these three beauties, even at 1:37am @Osmich @DwightBallMHA @innunation @NunatsiavutGov @NunatuKavut @muskratmaderight.”⁷⁰⁵

Unfortunately, the promises made by Premier Ball would go unfulfilled and little action was taken or pursued by Minister LeBlanc by the time the reservoir was fully filled in October 2019. By the end of the Trudeau government’s first term, scholars, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, were making sure to highlight such lack of fulfillment. Ryan Calder, just prior to the 2019 Canadian federal election, highlighted this not only in a write-up for media but also a co-authored piece the month prior. Calder highlights that:

The province has spent the last 10 years refusing to engage the Labrador Inuit over their credible concerns of health impacts from the hydroelectric project ... In 2018, [a provincial committee] voted in favour of soil removal and wetland capping to reduce methylmercury risks. The Nunatsiavut Government ... urged the provincial government to act on the recommendations.⁷⁰⁶

Additionally, Calder, Amina Schartup, Trevor Bell, and Elsie Sunderland argue that the Newfoundland and Labrador government let the period in which implementation of the

⁷⁰² CBC, “Battle Over Muskrat Falls.”

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶ Calder, “Muskrat Falls Hydroelectric Project Risks.”

recommendations could occur accidentally lapse.⁷⁰⁷ Patricia Johnson-Castle and Jessica Penney, in their policy brief on behalf of the Yellowhead Institute also highlighted the ‘lapsed’ time and even more concerning, the fact that as of 2020 the government of Newfoundland and Labrador had begun exploring additional construction in the same basin to add to the hydroelectric output. Johnson-Castle and Penney point out that, yet again, there had been no consideration of consultation with the Innu and Inuit – highlighting false promises from a provincial government and a federal government allowing provincial rights to override free, prior, and informed consent.⁷⁰⁸

Accompanying the issues that stemmed from Site C and Muskrat Falls, was also the issue of pipelines and the Trudeau government’s focus on such development as projects in Canada’s national interests. Once elected, the Trudeau government also had to contend with agreements established by the Harper government for facilitating oil and gas transfers via pipelines. Opposition to pipelines over Indigenous territories and territories of importance to Indigenous peoples spiritually, cultural, and for sustaining their lives has long been documented.⁷⁰⁹ During the first term of the Trudeau government, the planned Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline project, was one of two pipeline proposals approved.⁷¹⁰ Under free, prior and informed consent and consultation, many Indigenous peoples expect that a project of such nature can only go forward if communities and nations approve of it through their territory – especially territory not surrendered.⁷¹¹ Although some communities and nations approve of the pipeline running through

⁷⁰⁷ Ryan S.D. Calder, Amina T. Shartup, Trevor Bell, and Elsie M. Sunderland, “Muskrat Falls, Methylmercury, Food Security, and Canadian Hydroelectric Development,” in *Muskrat Falls: How a Mega Dam Became a Predatory Formation*, edited by S Crocker and L Moore, pps. 81-109 (St. John’s: Memorial University Press, 2021).

⁷⁰⁸ Johnson-Castle Penney, “Not-so Grand Plans,” pps. 4-5.

⁷⁰⁹ Note: See reports and writing on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Project as well as the Energy East Proposed project.

⁷¹⁰ Note: The project approved was for a replacement of the Line 3 pipeline that Enbridge controlled.

⁷¹¹ Johnson-Castle and Penney, “Not-So Grand Plans;” Calder et al, “Muskrat Falls.”

their territory, others more directly impacted by the expansion did not agree. For instance, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation consistently expressed opposition and did not agree with the project as it would see an increase in “tanker traffic through the Burrard Inlet on their doorsteps from about 30 to 70 oil tankers a year to 360 a year.”⁷¹² Nations like the Tsleil-Waututh, that faced far more impact from the expansion, were ignored.

At the same time, protests and blockades had erupted in the United States – specifically in relation to a proposed pipeline project that would impact territory of significance to the Sioux nation.⁷¹³ The protests and blockades near the Sioux community of Standing Rock became violent and were repressed with force, including the use of water cannons. In response to the developments at Standing Rock, Tsleil-Waututh leaders highlighted that they believe a similar demonstration in their territory would be inevitable.⁷¹⁴ In turn, business leaders pressed the Natural Resource Minister, Jim Carr, on the likelihood of such protests’ development and growth to the level that had occurred at Standing Rock. Minister Carr responded:

If people choose for their own reasons not to be peaceful, then the government of Canada – through its defence forces, through its police forces – will ensure that people are kept safe ... We have a history of peaceful dialogue and dissent in Canada. I’m certainly hopeful that tradition will continue. If people determine for their own reasons that that is not the path they want to follow, then we live under the rule of law.⁷¹⁵

Minister Carr’s comments were quickly rebuked by various Indigenous leaders and individuals alike – with the Grand Chief of Kanehsatà:ke, Serge Simon, expressing the statement brought

⁷¹² APTN News, “Carr ‘Sorry’ for Saying Military Could be Called in Against Pipeline Protestors,” *APTN News* (December 6 2016), accessed August 15 2023, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/carr-sorry-for-saying-military-could-be-called-in-against-pipeline-protesters/>.

⁷¹³ APTN News, “Carr Sorry.”

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*

back memories of Oka in 1990.⁷¹⁶ Within five days, Carr had issued an apology and expressed that he regretted the words he chose and should have been more mindful.⁷¹⁷ When pressed on what Carr said, Prime Minister Trudeau expressed that he was proud that Carr had apologized and moved on to the next question.⁷¹⁸ Trudeau and his government's response to these projects strongly showed a difference in how they and Indigenous peoples viewed nation-to-nation relations, consultation, and reconciliation – the government's view being one that continued to utilize a Canadian-centric approach.

Another area of focus that did not fully meet Indigenous views on nation-to-nation relations was that of the Trudeau government's proposed Indigenous rights framework. Formulated and pursued by Minister Bennett in her role at first as Indigenous Affairs, and then as CIRNAC Minister, Trudeau announced that the government would introduce legislation for a framework on *Indigenous Rights, Recognition, and Implementation* sometime in the last half of 2018.⁷¹⁹ In turn, King and Pasternak, in their special report for the Yellowhead Institute, assessed the Trudeau government's approach in relation to said framework. In their special report, King and Pasternak looked at all policy and decisions made relating to Indigenous peoples.⁷²⁰ Specifically, King and Pasternak “analyze the Liberal government's impending reforms to First Nation policy and legislation in relation to one another: as a set of pieces that together comprise the background picture of Canada's notion of decolonization.”⁷²¹ Such policy areas considered related to land management as well as to land claims, self-government, Canadian bureaucracy, transparency, and finances, to name but four examples.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ King and Pasternak, “Canada's Emerging Indigenous Rights Framework,” pp. 4 & 6.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

How each piece of legislation and the consultation processes were utilized was also assessed – which both King and Pasternak concluded were limited and largely not available to the public, especially when relating to individual Indigenous people.⁷²² King and Pasternak explain that “[o]f the 60 Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination Discussion Tables, public information is only available for seven.”⁷²³ Relating to questions surrounding sovereignty, and governance, both King and Pasternak also found that focus tended to be from a top-down approach – despite the government claiming otherwise. For instance, on questions of fiscal matters relating to governance:

Four principle institutions are tasked with undertaking this fiscal relations reform ... the leadership of each of these fiscal institutions is appointed by Cabinet, not through a First Nation-led or even democratic process ... these institutions do not represent the diversity of First Nations communities, yet they have considerable power in determining the direction of new fiscal policies ... their work has been highly criticized for its conservative positions on First Nation’s economic rights ... [and] critics have also found that these institutions embody a strong municipal approach to First Nations governments because they delegate authority to First Nations but do not expand their fiscal autonomy or land base⁷²⁴

Despite these concerns, such plans and approaches would guide policy and movement on future self-government and land management agreements. Guidance has been sought through sixty discussion tables that only involve 320 communities – thus only half of the over 600 communities, comprising of 50 different nations and confederacies as well as multiple treaty areas.⁷²⁵ With both approaches guiding much of the framework agreement, King and Pasternak conclude that:

The danger of accepting government messaging and the Rights Framework as it is currently articulated, is entrenching ... gaps for

⁷²² Ibid, pp. 27.

⁷²³ Ibid, pp. 20

⁷²⁴ Ibid, pps. 15-16.

⁷²⁵ Ibid, pp. 17

the long term and settling for a very narrow vision of Indigenous jurisdiction over lands, resources, and self-determination generally.⁷²⁶

The evaluation and concerns which King and Pasternak report show that the Trudeau government's approach on nation-to-nation relations still reflected a Canadian-centric and settler-colonial approach. The Trudeau government's approach to reconciliation thus focused on policy, services, and one that continues to hold the Canadian state as the legitimate authority over land, resources and development. Progress on issues of social policy, infrastructure needs, and an expansion in recognition of Métis rights highlight the continued focus on Indigenous peoples through the lens of the Canadian state and its jurisdiction over First Nations, Métis, and Inuit – where it did not infringe on provincial rights. Thus, the approach to nation-to-nation relations seemed to be in name only. Resource and energy projects and land management initiatives add credence to this perspective and approach: if they were in Canada's national interest, they were to still be pursued, whether with provincial or federal support. Thus, the inability to effect change and re-establish nation-to-nation relations with Indigenous nations, for many Indigenous peoples, began to once more relegate Indigenous peoples into one group within the Canadian state. Such a mindset was likely furthered by the decline in Indigenous representation within the Trudeau government and Indigenous support for the government itself.

5.3: A Decline in Indigenous Allies, Representation, and Support for the LPC

Following the election win in October of 2015, the Trudeau government was able to boast that it had the highest number of Indigenous MPs, representation from multiple individuals who identified as Métis, but also two MPs who were Inuit, and a number who were First Nations. Additionally, the original cabinet that had been introduced to Canadians in November of 2015

⁷²⁶ Ibid, pp. 27

included two Indigenous peoples – holding important positions that were also historic, The swearing in of Jody Wilson-Raybould as Attorney General and Minister of Justice was the first time a First Nations person, and an Indigenous person, held such a significant and high ranking role in a Canadian cabinet. Additionally, Hunter Tootoo, as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans not only marked the first time a northern MP held the position but also the first time an Inuk, and an Indigenous person, filled such a role. The LPC, following the Trudeau government’s win, was able to boast that its Indigenous wing, the IPC, had a supporters list comprising over 5000 Indigenous people.⁷²⁷

Hope and optimism slowly gave way to worry and apathy due to unfulfilled budgetary promises that required support at the time of the next election, and a continued Canadian centric approach by the Trudeau government regarding nation-to-nation relations and reconciliation. In addition to this shift from hope and optimism to worry and apathy is dismay at the difference in how Indigenous Cabinet Ministers were treated versus other Cabinet Ministers in times of moral or ethical positions, self-care, and character. The limited available analysis on Indigenous voters during the first term of the Trudeau government assumes that there was little change in Indigenous support and thus it is important to connect how the Trudeau government’s actions did, in fact, have an impact on the level of Indigenous support, and especially the number of its Indigenous MPs and Indigenous volunteers by the 2019 Canadian federal election – starting with the ejection of Hunter Tootoo not only from Cabinet but also from the LPC caucus entirely.

Following the LPC’s 2016 Convention, held in the city of Winnipeg near the end of May, it was announced that Minister Tootoo had resigned from the federal cabinet and was also leaving the Liberal caucus. Canadian media reported that Prime Minister Trudeau’s office stated

⁷²⁷ Martin Lukacs, “Reconciliation: The False Promise of Trudeau’s Sunny Ways,” *The Walrus* (September 19 2019), accessed September 20 2022, <https://thewalrus.ca/the-false-promise-of-trudeaus-sunny-ways/>.

that Tootoo was “taking time to seek treatment for addiction issues.”⁷²⁸ The abrupt and quick departure was a shock, especially amongst Indigenous peoples and organizations – especially those focused on Nunavut and the Inuit. Contributing to this shock, and confusion, could be connected to the difference in approach that seemed to be taken, or given, to Tootoo compared to that of fellow LPC MP Seamus O’Regan just a few months earlier. O’Regan, also a longstanding friend of Prime Minister Trudeau, sought help in December 2015 for, as he highlighted, a drinking problem.⁷²⁹ Asked if he identified as an alcoholic, O’Regan responded with “yes.”⁷³⁰ Prime Minister Trudeau, as reported by media including the *Globe and Mail*, expressed support for O’Regan when seeking assistance with his substance abuse.⁷³¹ This would not be O’Regan’s only time seeking assistance with this issue – obtaining assistance a second time and taking a leave to do so while also a Cabinet Minister.

In turn, when comparing O’Regan’s treatment to that of Tootoo, there is a noticeable difference. Questions began to arise as to whether Tootoo chose to resign and leave caucus or if he was ejected. Additionally, Prime Minister Trudeau didn’t show the same level of support for Tootoo as he had done for O’Regan. It had been well known that Tootoo had dealt with alcohol addiction issues through his life, especially as a survivor of the residential school system. Thus, questions of why there was such a different approach were growing and at the time the noticeable differences found were making many Indigenous peoples concerned and angry. At the end of July 2016, it was reported that Tootoo’s ouster from Cabinet and the Liberal caucus was

⁷²⁸ Kenny Mason “Fisheries Minister Hunter Tootoo Leaving Caucus Over ‘Addiction Issues’: PM,” *CityNews* (May 31 2016), accessed September 5 2023, <https://vancouver.citynews.ca/2016/05/31/fisheries-minister-hunter-tootoo-leaving-caucus-over-addiction-issues-pm/>.

⁷²⁹ The Canadian Press, “Seamus O’Regan Returning to Work After Treatment for Alcohol Problem,” *The Globe and Mail* (January 18 2016), accessed September 6 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/seamus-oregan-returning-to-work-after-treatment-for-alcohol-problem/article28236661/>.

⁷³⁰ The Canadian Press, “Seamus O’Regan Returning to Work.”

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*

related to an inappropriate workplace relationship. The release of the additional information came as questions arose to why Tootoo, who had finished his treatment for alcohol addiction, was not welcomed back into the LPC caucus.⁷³² Thus, sources told *The Globe and Mail* that prior to Tootoo's resignation, the PMO had become aware of what it defined as "an inappropriate relationship with a junior female staff member."⁷³³

Cameron Ahmad, a spokesperson at the time for Prime Minister Trudeau said that "Tootoo acknowledged at [a] meeting [that] he had been engaging in what was an inappropriate relationship in the workplace and ... withdrawing from his ministerial and caucus responsibilities."⁷³⁴ Tootoo himself, explained "I let my judgement be clouded and I also let alcohol take over my life"⁷³⁵ in response to the additional information. In further explaining to his constituents and fellow citizens of Nunavut, Tootoo also stated "[t]he people of Nunavut asked for and deserve further explanation. I've heard that message loud and clear."⁷³⁶ Despite taking full responsibility for his actions, obtaining assistance with his addiction, and adding further understanding to his resignation, Tootoo was still not welcomed back into the LPC caucus. It could be argued that the treatment Tootoo had received, in comparison to others like O'Regan, may have had significant impact on the LPC's standing in Nunavut when the 2019 Canadian federal election was called and held – allowing it to be picked up by the NDP for the first time since 1980.

⁷³² Robert Fife and Laura Stone, "Sex Allegations Led to Tootoo's Ouster from Liberal Caucus," *The Globe and Mail* (July 28 2016), accessed September 6 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/sex-allegations-led-to-tootoos-ouster-from-liberal-caucus/article31146044/?login=true>.

⁷³³ Fife and Stone, "Sex Allegations Led to Tootoo's Ouster."

⁷³⁴ Marie-Danielle Smith, "MP Hunter Tootoo Says 'Inappropriate' Relationship the Reason He Quit Liberal Cabinet, Caucus," *The Globe and Mail* (August 3 2016), accessed September 6 2023, <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/mp-hunter-tootoo-says-consensual-but-inappropriate-relationship-the-reason-he-quit-liberal-cabinet-caucus>.

⁷³⁵ Smith, "MP Hunter Tootoo Says 'Inappropriate' Relationship the Reason He Quit."

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

Around the same time as Tootoo's resignation and removal from the LPC caucus, criticism and doubt was also showing from high profile Indigenous individuals who were well respected within and outside of Indigenous circles. In the summer of 2016, former Justice Murray Sinclair, who was also serving as a Senator in the Red Chamber by this point, critiqued the Trudeau government's movement on the TRC recommendations. Sinclair, who served as Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and is also Anishinaabe, expressed on the one-year anniversary of the TRC's final report and recommendations that little change had progressed to the extent that it could have. More specifically, Sinclair stated:

In reality, I think that there has been progress, and I don't want to take anything away from the fact that there has been movement on a number of fronts that we need to acknowledge – but whether it's adequate or not, that remains to be seen.⁷³⁷

Additionally, Sinclair expressed that the lack of progress, or slowness of progress, should give reason to Indigenous leaders and peoples to feel upset. Speaking to CBC, Sinclair added:

We need to be prepared to acknowledge the frustration and the impatience that the Indigenous community, particularly young Indigenous leaders have about the march of progress, because they have been waiting for a long time to see change and they're not seeing change yet ... For me or any other person to suggest that there has been progress would be to suggest we have achieved change, but we're just on the beginning edge of starting to change things.⁷³⁸

Sinclair's comments also came at the same time that Indigenous people, such as Palmater and Blackstock were critiquing the Trudeau government's budgetary promises – with Blackstock continuously seeking to hold Canada, and the Trudeau government, accountable throughout its first governing mandate.

⁷³⁷ Mas, Susana, "1 Year After Truth and Reconciliation Report: Not Seeing Change Yet," *CBC* (June 2 2016), accessed September 12 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-murray-sinclair-1.3611110>.

⁷³⁸ Mas, "1 Year After Truth and Reconciliation."

As early as September 2016, just a month shy of the one-year anniversary of the Trudeau government being elected, Blackstock told media that the Trudeau government was continuing the practice of knowingly discriminating against First Nations children within their communities. Throughout much of Blackstock's career, specifically in relation to First Nations child welfare, she had, and continues to, push for proper and equal funding in relation to on-reserve education and social welfare for children. Blackstock's push has related to the fact that the per capita funding for First Nations children is lower than non-First Nations children.⁷³⁹ Working alongside the AFN, Blackstock pushed for equal funding to be committed and petitioned the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) regarding discrimination facing First Nations children. In January of 2016 the CHRT agreed that Canada had discriminated against First Nations children in the delivery of services.⁷⁴⁰ A second ruling was put forth by CHRT in September of 2016 and with it were a series of directives for Canada, and the Trudeau government, to follow.

Directives included that Canada implement Jordan's Principle, which is "a policy designated to ensure First Nations children do not get caught up in bureaucratic wrangling ... [whether] on [or] off reserve."⁷⁴¹ Blackstock, in supporting such a call, highlighted the case of a young First Nations girl in Alberta who required dental treatment to ensure she wouldn't endure pain when talking or eating. Blackstock pointed out that:

The federal government has spent \$32,000 in legal fees fighting the matter as opposed to the \$8,000 that would have been required for treatment ... It is saying, in its actions that

⁷³⁹ First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, "About Us," *First Nations Child & Family Caring Society*. Accessed September 12 2023, <https://fncaringsociety.com/about>.

⁷⁴⁰ Kristy Kirkup, "Trudeau Government Racially Discriminated Against Kids on Reserve: Blackstock," *CTV News* (September 15 2016), accessed September 16 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/trudeau-government-racially-discriminating-against-kids-on-reserve-blackstock-1.3074434>; Kristy Kirkup, "Advocate Slams Trudeau Government for Lack of Child Welfare Services on Reserve," *Toronto Star* (September 15 2016), accessed September 16 2023, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/advocate-slams-trudeau-government-for-lack-of-child-welfare-services-on-reserves/article_86745ac2-fc42-5441-98f8-c05efdb9abc0.html.

⁷⁴¹ Kirkup, "Trudeau Government Racially Discriminated;" Kirkup, "Advocate Slams Trudeau Government."

the government of Canada is above the law and sadly, that First Nations children are below the law.⁷⁴²

AFN National Chief, Perry Bellegarde, supported Blackstock's call to action, noting that the CHRT's original findings had been quite clear, and that action must be taken.

In response to Blackstock and Bellegarde, Minister Bennett expressed that the government was currently reviewing the tribunal's latest compliance orders and would assess next steps. Minister Bennett, in her response, added that:

We know that the child welfare system on reserve needs to be overhauled, and that is why we are engaging with First Nations youth, First Nations leadership, service providers, the provinces, and Yukon Territory ... Our government is committed to changing the status quo and we are taking action to ensure that we get this right for First Nations children and families.⁷⁴³

Despite Minister Bennett's response, Blackstock would again be quoted that the Trudeau government was still making excuses for its actions and the continued neglect of Indigenous children. At the end of July 2017, Blackstock, in an interview with Canada's National Observer, reminded Canadians that First Nations child welfare was still chronically underfunded, and that the Trudeau government still had not acted. More specifically, Blackstock states that:

They are not taking action and really obfuscating and making excuses for not taking action. If you listen to the narrative from the government it's all everyone else's fault ... I've seen community-level solutions being put forward to that government that are extremely detailed and well thought out because people have been waiting for this decision for 10 years. They have all the consultation they need with the community, we just need money to do it ... then we have heard that the First Nations aren't ready for the money and they don't have capacity. They argued that in the non-compliance hearings and we asked where is your evidence ... It's the kind of thing where they aren't

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

embracing their responsibility to do things differently.⁷⁴⁴

By the Autumn of 2019, Blackstock was again keeping the Trudeau government accountable not only with First Nations child welfare but in relation to the forcible removal of Indigenous youth from their homes. Although Blackstock acknowledged to APTN News that the government has moved on some items, it has been slow at doing so and only after the CHRT had issued non-compliance orders.⁷⁴⁵

With well-respected Indigenous individuals, as well as Indigenous scholars, calling out the Trudeau government's lack of action, or, in many cases its own Canadian centric and settler-colonial approach, to its promises on nation-to-nation relations and reconciliation, the level of support in the LPC is noticeable – especially through the decline in action and presence of its Indigenous wing. By the summer of 2019, the IPC's social media presence, press releases, and even the size of its national board had begun to shrink.⁷⁴⁶ Press releases and notifications of new executive members is well documented between 2012-2018 but drops significantly following the LPC's biennial convention in April of 2018. Whether the number of Indigenous individuals registered with the IPC also declined needs further assessment and a willingness for the LPC to share those numbers. Despite such decline in IPC activity and the criticisms brought forth by individuals like Sinclair and Blackstock, there continued to be some hope with ongoing work

⁷⁴⁴ Tracy Sherlock, "Cindy Blackstock Says Trudeau Government's "Making Excuses for Neglecting Indigenous Children"," *Canada's National Observer* (July 31 2017), accessed September 22 2023, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2017/07/31/news/cindy-blackstock-says-trudeau-governments-making-excuses-neglecting-indigenous>.

⁷⁴⁵ Kenneth Jackson, "'Morally Inappropriate': How the Trudeau Government is Trying to Get Rid of Cindy Blackstock," *APTN News* (October 28 2019), accessed September 22 2023, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/morally-inappropriate-how-the-trudeau-government-is-trying-to-get-rid-of-cindy-blackstock/>.

⁷⁴⁶ Note: For information relating to this, one can simply look at the IPC's 'X' and Facebook accounts as well as its website: <https://ipc-cpa.liberal.ca>.

being taken by Minister Wilson-Raybould – that is until her surprise reassignment from the role of Attorney General to that of Veterans Affairs in January of 2019.

The shuffle of Wilson-Raybould from Justice to Veteran’s Affairs, and then the eventual removal from the LPC caucus was a process that, as Wilson-Raybould argued, began in September of 2018. It was in September of 2018 that pressure began to be put on Wilson-Raybould in relation to an ongoing legal matter with the company SNC-Lavalin. Prior to the LPC winning, and thus Trudeau forming government in October of 2015, SNC-Lavalin had been “charged with fraud and bribery based on work it had done in Libya.”⁷⁴⁷ As Wilson-Raybould further highlighted:

In 2017, the government began working on an amendment to the Criminal Code that would allow for a “deferred prosecution agreement” (also known as a ‘remediation agreement regime), which provides prosecutors an additional tool with which to hold corporate offenders to account ... the DPA law was passed in June 2018 and came into force on September 19 2018. In early September, I received a “Section 13” notice under the Director of Public Prosecutions Act from the director of public prosecutions. It stated that she would not be offering an invitation to SNC-Lavalin to negotiate a DPA ... Between September and December 2018, efforts aimed at pressuring me to give SNC-Lavalin a DPA began ... Eventually, eleven officials from the PMO, the Privy Council Office, and the Office of the Minister of Finance [had] made attempts.⁷⁴⁸

In Wilson-Raybould’s own documentation of the situation, she expressed that when she had been notified in early January of 2019 that she was going to be shuffled she believed it was in relation to her unwillingness to bend to the pressure of Trudeau’s expectation that she would override public prosecution of the director. Wilson-Raybould’s reasoning for not overriding was that she believed her role as Attorney General meant it was to be non-partisan and not influenced by

⁷⁴⁷ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pp. 210.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pps. 210-212.

political motives when making decisions.⁷⁴⁹ When finally having the discussion with Prime Minister Trudeau, and that she was indeed being shuffled, the conversation did not go well.

According to Wilson-Raybould, the plan was to originally move her to the role of Minister of Indigenous Services - the conversation went as follows:

I finally said what I was really thinking. “I cannot help but think this is because of another issue—one where I would not do that which I was being asked.” I was, of course, referring to SNC-Lavalin, but I was being careful, given that I did not know if there was anyone else on the call. “No,” the prime minister replied. I reiterated something I had said to him, Gerry, and others many times before—that ISC was not where transformative change happened. “I will think about it,” I said. “Okay,” the prime minister replied.⁷⁵⁰

Originally, Trudeau claimed that the shuffle was in response to Scott Brison, Minister of the Treasury, stepping down from Cabinet and retiring from the House of Commons. Wilson-Raybould had long expressed an unwillingness to hold the role of Minister of Indigenous Services because of its root existence in colonialism and as a tool to control Indigenous peoples, especially First Nations peoples.⁷⁵¹ Eventually, due to unwillingness to assume responsibility for a ministry that is steeped in historic and contemporary settler-colonial structure, the offer eventually became to head the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Although Wilson-Raybould originally agreed, there was anger over the fact that Wilson-Raybould expressed that she would think about it.⁷⁵² Wilson-Raybould, in her autobiography regarding her time in Cabinet, expressed:

The bottom line is they were intent on moving me. I certainly did not want to move. I loved being MOJAG. But more than that I did not want them to get their way on SNC-Lavalin ... I decided not to resign from Cabinet and to accept the position at

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 183.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² Ibid, pp. 189.

Veterans Affairs.⁷⁵³

When the shuffle was announced and it became clear that Wilson-Raybould had been moved to a new file, there was much confusion and speculation – leading to what became known as the SNC-Lavalin Scandal.

Regarding the shuffle, confusion and anger was shared by not only Indigenous leaders, but many Indigenous peoples in general. Wilson-Raybould pointed out, as was found in various media reports, that many Indigenous experts had condemned the shuffle. For instance, as highlighted in the *Globe and Mail*, “Her demotion from the vital portfolio has been accompanied by insider whispers, based on poisonous stereotypes that Indigenous peoples, women in particular, face every day: that she was angry, difficult and uncompromising.”⁷⁵⁴ Additionally, it was also expressed by one op-ed, that Wilson-Raybould’s shuffle further exacerbates “reflections of many ugly notions that [Indigenous peoples] still [confront] today: that Indigenous peoples are not as capable, or not as responsible for the achievements and success that they have.”⁷⁵⁵ At the same time as individuals began to call into question the shuffling of Wilson-Raybould to another file, reports began to surface in the media of LPC and government insiders trying to link it to supposed questions of her capability during her time as MOJAG.

For example, CBC reported that: “[s]everal cabinet colleagues, political staffers, and some public servants ... found her difficult to deal with.”⁷⁵⁶ Additionally, CBC in the same

⁷⁵³ Ibid, pp. 190.

⁷⁵⁴ Merle Alexander, Leah George-Wilson, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Val Napoleon, Doug White, and Naiomi Metallic, “The Cabinet Shuffle Says Little About Jody Wilson-Raybould – and Plenty About the Government,” *The Globe and Mail* (January 16 2019), accessed September 30 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-cabinet-shuffle-says-little-about-jody-wilson-raybould-and/>.

⁷⁵⁵ Alexander et al, “The Cabinet Shuffle Says Little About Jody Wilson-Raybould.”

⁷⁵⁶ Peter Zimonjic, “After Being Removed as Justice Minister, Wilson-Raybould Defends Her Performance,” *CBC* (January 14 2019), accessed September 30 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/wilson-raybould-justice-veterans-1.4977782>.

article expressed that “[s]ome who spoke on background said [Wilson-Raybould] could be dismissive and quick to leap to confrontation when a more constructive approach to policy differences might have been employed.”⁷⁵⁷ Wilson-Raybould, in response to the media citing inside information being shared that tried to link the issue to being her competency responded, especially as lawyers writing in op-ed pieces began to also question her ability to do the role she had been given – lawyers that were supporters and volunteers within the LPC itself.⁷⁵⁸ In turn, on January 14 2019, Wilson-Raybould released a statement defending her character and credibility and calling into question not only the attacks on her credibility but also her shuffle. As the SNC-Lavalin Scandal got more complicated, Wilson-Raybould submitted her letter of resignation from Cabinet on February 12 2019 and agreed to be willing to talk with the Judiciary Committee on what she was able to share regarding the SNC-Lavalin debacle, her removal from MOJAG, and that she believed such a move was due to her unwillingness to get involved.

As the Judiciary Committee delved into the concerns raised, it became clear that Wilson-Raybould, and much of her team, had kept impeccable documentation and even recordings of calls and discussions with those trying to pressure her. Thus, it became clear that the storyline being used by LPC officials, as well as offices like the PMO, was indeed not fully accurate – leading to resignations of key right-hand people like Gerald Butts and Michael Wernack.⁷⁵⁹ In the end, Wilson-Raybould, along with Jane Philpott who stood by her side through the scandal, were booted from the LPC caucus and thus became independents on April 2 2019. Wilson-Raybould soon followed and announced on twitter that she had “been informed by the Prime

⁷⁵⁷ Zimonjic, “After Being Removed as Justice Minister.”

⁷⁵⁸ Note: I can express this point with personal experience as someone who had been involved in the LPC and had worked alongside some of the individuals who were now writing in op-eds questioning Wilson-Raybould’s credibility.

⁷⁵⁹ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pp. 228.

Minister of Canada that [she is] removed from the Liberal Caucus and as the confirmed Vancouver Granville candidate for the Liberal Party of Canada in the 2019 federal election.”⁷⁶⁰ In her own words, she described the experience as her being painted with the view by the Prime Minister, his team, and the LPC as being “difficult (bitchy, they meant). I was not up to the task (I was not a regular politician, they meant, or I was incompetent). I was not a team player (I was an independent Indian, they meant, not part of the old boys’ club.”⁷⁶¹ No longer could the Trudeau government boast about having Indigenous Cabinet Ministers, nor did it look like - for many Indigenous peoples - Indigenous voices were being heard or that nation-to-nation relations, and reconciliation, reflected what was promised and hoped for during the 2015 Canadian federal election.

5.4: Conclusion

With the shuffling, resignation, and removal of Jody Wilson-Raybould from the Trudeau cabinet and LPC caucus, the first term of the Trudeau’s government came to an end with less enthusiasm, trust, and belief in his government from not only Indigenous peoples, but, arguably, also amongst Indigenous allies and supporters. Wilson-Raybould’s removal was a final blow against the promises made around listening to Indigenous peoples, including them, and working to restore a relationship with them – which was stated as the most important relationship in November of 2015. Alongside Wilson-Raybould, another 9 MPs, who either self-identified or had Indigenous lineage, were elected as LPC MPs – a record number not only within a single party but, including Jolibois and Saganash, saw a record 12 Indigenous MPs elected to the House of Commons. Alongside this record number of Indigenous MPs, was also a record turnout by

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 253.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 191.

Indigenous peoples casting a ballot – with the LPC, and thus the newly elected Trudeau government, benefiting greatly from said turnout. Indigenous peoples opted to vote in the 2015 Canadian federal election due to anger with the previous government and cautious optimism in response to promises made by Trudeau and the LPC.

Following the promises made, the appointment of two Indigenous people to prominent, and important Cabinet roles, and stating the importance of reconciliation, the cautious optimism began to give way to the feelings of yet another Canadian government not fulfilling its obligations on behalf of the Crown. The release of the 2016 budget, and the plans for the following four years, were met with worry and frustration and the view that Indigenous rights and obligations were being used to try and obtain votes for the 2019 Canadian federal election. Indigenous experts and scholars such as Pam Palmater and Cindy Blackstock were quick to point out the budget failures and the fact the majority of funding promised would not be released until around the end of 2019. For many Indigenous peoples, the delays in critical funding had been in existence for decades if not for well over a century. Indigenous peoples expected promises and actions to be dealt with expediently. If the Trudeau government had understood the importance of addressing underfunding and reconciliation, why not have had a majority of the budgetary promises made be focused within the first couple of years of their mandate rather than the last two years?

Similar dismay and frustration spilled over and grew in relation to policy implementation, the nature of the so-called nation-to-nation relationship building, and the promises around reconciliation. As policies, negotiations, and legislation were introduced and implemented, it was clear that the Trudeau government did have some positive momentum forward. That said, such progress, as highlighted in this chapter, was mostly in areas of administration and services. In the

case of the Métis, there were judiciary wins that sought to have Canada further recognize Métis rights following the *Daniels Decision*. While Métis found momentum in having further rights recognized and affirmed through Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, continued negotiations and meetings were held. Unfortunately for First Nations and Inuit, reconciliation and nation-to-nation relations continued through a Canadian-centric lens. On the importance of consultation, TRC recommendations, UNDRIP, as well as inherent rights – the Trudeau government consistently used Canada’s national interest as a device to override the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples. The Trudeau government’s approach, especially for First Nations and Inuit, continued to be Canadian-centric when it came to defining the terms of the concepts of nation-to-nation relations, particularly in matters of provincial rights and natural resource development.

As such developments were occurring during the Trudeau government’s 2015-2019 mandate, the impact on Indigenous support grew increasingly clear. High-profile Indigenous experts who had been applauded by the LPC during Idle No More were now being pushed aside by the Trudeau government due to their opposition to the Trudeau government’s inaction and their calling out of the Trudeau government on its failure to fulfill its promises and commitments. Additionally, the decline in activity of the LPC’s IPC and others during the Trudeau government’s first mandate becomes more noticeable upon assessing the implementation, action, and approaches taken in relation to Indigenous peoples. Lastly, the treatment of Indigenous Cabinet Ministers, Tootoo and Wilson-Raybould, as well as well-respected Indigenous experts, such as Cindy Blackstock, further eroded the support and the cautious optimism of Indigenous peoples in the Trudeau government. Such changes not only would have impact on the Trudeau government, and LPC incumbents, in October 2019 but also

showcase a variety of responses and viewpoints that are pertinent to exploring when considering Indigenous peoples and their participation in Canadian electoral politics between 2015-2019.

Chapter Six: Did Indigenous Involvement Matter? Responses from Indigenous Volunteers, Candidates, and MPs Between the 2015 – 2019 Canadian Federal Elections

6.0: Introduction:

The impact and movement of the Trudeau government on files such as reconciliation and nation-to-nation relations, as illuminated in Chapter Five, reveals a first term of elected office that focused on reconciliation specifically with regard to services and administration rather than issues of land, consultation, and nation-to-nation relations. Although assessing the actions, expectations, and results of the Trudeau government's promises to Indigenous peoples highlights that an approach that reflected Canada's authority and legitimacy was utilized, some headway was made for Métis rights, as well as on certain services such as drinking water on reserves. While the Trudeau government has claimed success across the board in Canadian/Indigenous relations, such claims are not considered reality by many Indigenous peoples. While many Indigenous peoples supported and sought a change in the Canadian government in 2015, many felt little had actually changed by 2019. Additionally, little consideration or assessment of Indigenous peoples who participated by doing more than casting a ballot had been explored. The importance of Indigenous volunteers, candidates, and elected MPs are particularly important for understanding Indigenous involvement in federal elections and whether this involvement matters.

To further assess Indigenous involvement, especially between the 2015 and 2019 Canadian federal elections, this chapter will consider writings and responses from Indigenous peoples. More specifically, this chapter will first introduce the author of this dissertation's personal experience as an Indigenous volunteer in the LPC up to April of 2018. By sharing this context and experience, the reader will better understand the methodological approach, and

questions utilized during interviews held with ten Indigenous individuals who had sought involvement in Canada's federal electoral process. The next section turns to the questions, methodology, and details on those interviewed in relation to Indigenous participation between 2015 to 2019. Lastly, Chapter Six highlights the responses to the interviews, as well as an analysis of their key insights. Jody Wilson-Raybould's own experiences from her autobiography, *Indian in the Cabinet*, will also be included. In assessing the stated personal experiences of Indigenous volunteers, candidates, and MPs, this chapter will argue that while there may have been some victories, any victory made meant that "reconciliation" was Indigenous peoples having to reconcile with the slow pace of the Canadian state and the Trudeau government. In coming to such a conclusion, it is important to understand personal experiences and how such involvement influenced the research questions that contribute to understanding first-hand accounts of Indigenous involvement.

6.1: Climbing the LPC Volunteer Ladder (2005-2018): An Indigenous First-Hand Account

Understanding the views and feelings of Indigenous peoples within not only the House of Commons, and also election campaigns is not only an area that needs deeper analysis, but also reflects my own personal experiences. The consideration and questions surrounding Indigenous participation in Canadian federal politics, as explained in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, have been ones I have assessed and researched throughout much of my academic career. Not only have I assessed and researched questions surrounding Indigenous participation, but I have also had to consider them personally. As someone who is Indigenous and was involved in federal electoral politics between mid-September of 2005 to late-April of 2018, I wrestled with similar questions and many of the complications, issues, and reservations I had about involvement as an Indigenous person.

My experience climbing the LPC volunteer ladder began in 2005 at the age of twenty-one. Prior to 2005, the importance of voting as a Canadian had been impressed on me from the experiences of my mother, from whose lineage my Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg background and understandings descend. My mother, besides being someone who was born and raised in the community of Pamitaashkodeyong, also opted to join the Canadian Military in 1975. Through her experiences as a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, as a military police officer and a peacekeeper, she had voted in Canadian federal and provincial elections from 1975 until her passing in 2018. Her participation in Canadian federal elections reflected her place in the Canadian military, as well as her Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg identity. This was made clear in a conversation I had with her during the 2000 Canadian federal election.

The conversation with my mother began when I had come out of my room and saw her watching the leaders debate on an evening during the 2000 campaign. I was annoyed as I had planned to watch one of my shows. I expressed how boring and unimportant the debate was. My mother quickly corrected me and highlighted that it was, in fact, very important. She went on to warn me about becoming complacent and not paying attention to things like elections since elections, and by extension, their winners, would have direct impact on my life and my rights. Reinforcing the point, she pointed at Stockwell Day, the leader of the Canadian Alliance, and stated that that people like him and his party wanted to see us as Indigenous peoples cease to exist – that we should have our rights taken away. Additionally, she observed that it is these leaders who, by becoming Prime Minister, can decide rules, laws, and wage war. At the time, I took what she said very seriously, and it resonated with me. I know now that her conversation with me laced much of what I know and understand today, but it was impactful enough to

influence my decision to not only vote once I turned 18, but was also a foundational element in my decision to get involved in Canadian electoral politics.

My involvement in Canadian electoral politics began (with the LPC) following the 2004 Canadian federal election and my growing support for Paul Martin. During my first year at Western University, I came across the Western Liberals club table during Clubs Week and opted to sign up as a member. It was through my participation in the Western Liberals, alongside my own personal growth with respect to my Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg lineage, that I sought to become further involved and volunteered for the LPC from the 2006 Canadian federal election and up to mid-April 2018. Although my political participation was interwoven with my education and growing understanding of Indigenous rights and history, I began to face questions from other Indigenous people about why I was involved with political parties and, by extension, the Canadian state. As I continued to climb the LPC volunteer ladder, I also faced questions from within the party structure about the importance of including Indigenous peoples or reaching out to them. I struggled with these questions, but also saw myself as someone who was gifted with the ability to exist in both worlds and thus could assist in educating and understanding not only Canadians and the political structure, but also Indigenous peoples on the political and institutional structures of Canada.

Through my pursuits and volunteerism, I was able to secure a delegate spot for the 2006 LPC leadership convention, which was also when I learned of the Indigenous wing of the party. Despite learning of the Indigenous wing, my focus for involvement continued to connect with the youth wing, the YLC. Through the YLC, and specifically the Ontario Young Liberals, I was able to obtain support for a policy I had formulated and submitted for the 2009 LPC biennial convention. Other active Indigenous Liberals had found out and that led to them approaching me

to run for the Indigenous Youth Representative position for both the IPC and the YLC. I took such a request seriously and agreed to do so, securing the position from May 2009-January 2012. During this period of involvement, I worked as a researcher for the Chiefs of Ontario, and also had the opportunity for much outreach, discussion, and work with First Nations communities that share territory with that province and different sections of the LPC. I understood my responsibility and viewed my involvement as a way to both bring more understanding between Canadians and Indigenous peoples, and to press for better relations for the generations to come.

It was during my time as the IPC and YLC's Indigenous Youth Representative that I bore witness, internally and externally, to the collapse of LPC support and its drop to third party status in the 2011 Canadian federal election. Despite the LPC's downgrade to third party status, as well as its worst electoral showing since prior to confederation, I opted to stay involved. My reasoning for continued involvement was that I felt more trust with the LPC and those involved within it at this time – I had had the opportunity to work with many MPs, such as Carolyn Bennett and Todd Russell. I also had the chance to work with many Indigenous volunteers within the party who helped me in my own political growth. I firmly believed that having a voice at the political decision-making table, or at least having an opportunity to influence, was essential for change and reconciliation. In turn, when the Co-Chairs of the IPC, whom I had worked alongside as the Youth Representatives, could no longer continue their involvement and approached me to run for Co-Chair (Male), I was honoured.

My predecessor had taken a high-profile position with the AFN, assisting National Chief Sean Atleo. The other Co-Chair was trying to finish Law School and also had to tend to her family and community. After discussions with my community, those whom I considered knowledge holders, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous Liberals, I agreed to do so alongside

Cherish Clarke. Our decision to run for Co-Chair together was based off of similar views as young Indigenous people at the time. Cherish, a member of the Tlingit nation, and I saw our involvement as a way to support better understanding, building relations, educating Canadians and Indigenous peoples about each other, and effecting change through the political party structure. We considered ourselves, alongside the rest of those running for IPC executive positions with us, to be of the next generation of Indigenous involvement. All but one of us were below the age of 30. It was evenly divided between male and female; two were LGBT, we had First Nations and Métis running on the same slate, and there was regional representation across the territory shared with Canada. Lastly, almost all those running alongside Cherish and I were brand new volunteers. It was a new generation of Indigenous peoples becoming involved and thus a new generation to assist with rebuilding.

Upon being elected and acclaimed to our positions for the 2012-2014 period, our abilities to help rebuild and expand the party from its all-time low were consistently challenged in various ways. During the first year of our term, we faced issues that included budgetary constraints, the dominance of the provincial wings of the party, as well as increasing frustration from Indigenous peoples towards both the Canadian state and government. In relation to budgetary constraints, the IPC was left with very little funds allocated to assisting with rebuilding the party and the IPC itself. This had tremendous impact on the ability to effectively conduct outreach and hold events and fundraisers. In turn, the IPC executive focused much of its presence to online engagement and for members of the team to attend events and outreach sessions in their home territories or the provinces in which they resided. Other wings of the party, such as the provincial executives and the YLC were considered, in my view, more valuable and thus more deserving of the limited available funds. When the IPC pressed back on the fact that we were being prevented from

rebuilding to the full extent we could due to a very meager amount of funds being offered, we were notified that the limited funds were a direct result of a lack of activity from the IPC in previous years.

Despite such a statement and consistently being overlooked by other more robust structures and wings of the party, the IPC executive reconciled such views and pushed forward – seeking to show that we could do the work, grow the IPC, and prove the need for an increase in budget allocation. Over the first year, the IPC held many events over social media or in the respective towns or cities in which each executive member resided. The impact of the budgetary restraints, and feelings that the Indigenous wing was being used more as a form of tokenism, led some executive members to resign. We worked hard to refill vacancies in order to prevent turnover in the executive team from impacting our end goals: to help rebuild the LPC, rebuild and grow the IPC, to assist with improving Indigenous/Canadian relations, recruiting candidates for 2015, and increasing the number of Indigenous voters and in particular, Indigenous LPC voters – in order to effect change and reconciliation from within. The IPC executive’s online presence during that first year, and into the second year, would be of importance when social media became a key tool for #IdleNoMore.

Many involved with the IPC, myself included, quickly became involved with the Idle No More movement. Not only did each executive member assist with events in their locations, but also with teach-ins, protests, round dances, and info sessions. We, as the IPC executive at the time of Idle No More, also pushed for others in the LPC to become involved and show solidarity. This may be a key reasoning that at the height of Idle No More, the LPC was the most supportive political party of the movement – with countless of MPs, provincial wings, and other commissions writing letters of support and attending events. Doing so also assisted with

Trudeau's messaging at the time of doing politics differently and the importance of hope and hard work. This could have, I believe, contributed to the increase in support as well as the increase in Indigenous peoples seeking LPC nominations during selection meetings in electoral districts across Canada. As Indigenous peoples we were seeing a need for change and that echoed Trudeau's call for new voices and new understandings. Despite all this, the IPC executive still had to reconcile with the slow pace the party structure took or its unwillingness to think long-term for relationship-building.

The excuse of previous years of little activity from the IPC continued to be utilized for preventing some items that the IPC wanted to assist with from occurring. Trying to re-establish provincial IPCs were delayed, or depending on the province, effectively prevented from happening. Additionally, rapid change and the election of new executives in different provinces or commissions every two to three months, made it difficult to not be a skipping record player. Lastly, the IPC executive consistently had its credibility, credentials, and understanding of our peoples and history questioned by non-Indigenous volunteers within the party, high-profile individuals who worked in the party office, who worked for MPs, or who were MPs themselves. In turn, many of executive members had become quite frustrated by the end of that term (by the LPC convention of 2014). While I did step away to focus on my schooling, I continued to be involved in other ways – I believed involvement was still important and I wanted to make sure that what we had achieved in that 2012-2014 term continued to grow. I believed helping the LPC win 2015 would show that involvement by Indigenous peoples did not delegitimize our own nations – that the LPC was charting a new path of politics in Canada.

While I was active up to and during the 2015 Canadian federal election, I did not hold a position or title other than as a volunteer. On election night, and the days to follow, I learned of

the historic turnout of Indigenous people to cast a ballot, as well as that a record number of Indigenous MPs had been elected. I could not help but feel vindicated about all the effort put in and that, in in some small way, it had to have helped with making this a possibility – that those I worked with had contributed to making such history happen. Thus, when I was approached by various Indigenous Liberals to return and seek a second term as Co-Chair (Male), I agreed to do so. I believed that the party I had helped build would honour what it promised to do during Idle No More and during the election writ. Upon reaching out to begin the process to secure a second term as IPC Co-Chair (Male), it slowly became noticeable that despite a large proportion of active Indigenous Liberals supporting my return, some in the LPC and in the governing benches did not.

Although I was acclaimed, and heavily supported by many key individuals who were Indigenous and involved with the LPC, the path of assisting with reconciliation and change proved more difficult than during my previous term. Although Prime Minister Trudeau himself had told the newly elected IPC executive in May of 2016 that not only should Indigenous peoples should feel welcomed in the LPC, and not have to choose between being Indigenous or a Liberal, internal actions and the approach of the Trudeau government made some feel differently. Over the next two years, I personally found it difficult to continue maneuvering through the system, especially for the reasons highlighted in Chapter Five of this dissertation: the Trudeau government's Canadian centric approach, financial support mostly being offered near the 2019 election, slow, or lack of, movement on legislation and policy that reflected Indigenous nationhoods, as well as the treatment of Indigenous peoples such as Hunter Tootoo, Jody Wilson-Raybould, and Cindy Blackstock. Additionally, I found difficulty in raising input and feedback from Indigenous supporters and people in general when it did not follow the LPC or the

Trudeau government's messaging. Over time, I was labelled as difficult to work with and not a team player due to pushing back on party and government decisions when it was opposed by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit – especially when the IPC executive came to a consensus on how to move forward or respond to ongoing and pertinent matters.

I had become quite dismayed with the process and being involved in Canadian party politics and eventually did end up needing to make a personal choice between being Indigenous and being a Liberal. In April of 2018, the day following the LPC's Biennial Convention in Halifax, I chose my Michi Saagiig Nishinaabeg identity over my place and involvement in the LPC. Although I had decided months earlier that I would leave the LPC, I believed it was important to honour Indigenous peoples who had asked me to return as Co-Chair (Male) of the IPC and thus finish my term before doing so. My decision to fulfill my term was not a duty to the LPC but my duty to the Indigenous peoples who had asked me to run and supported me through my term – which is how I have been taught to approach such positions of leadership. If you are asked by those from the community or nation to become involved, and you can fulfill the request, you do so. I was also struggling, throughout this period, with concerns of whether my involvement was helpful or not due to own experiences in the LPC. For instance, questions I found myself asking included: Did I contribute to the problem or keep the party accountable? Did my involvement mean further assimilation and undermining of Indigenous nationhoods or not? Did the work that I and other Indigenous volunteers sought and advanced matter? Did our involvement assist with change and reconciliation? It is this struggle and my own experience as an Indigenous person who volunteered that influenced the research questions that I proposed to interviewees for this research.

6.2: Does Indigenous Involvement Matter? What to Ask and Who to Ask?

The formulation of the research questions that were put to interviewees comes from personal experience through involvement and being Indigenous. Furthermore, due to the high turnout of Indigenous peoples casting a ballot in 2015, and the number of Indigenous candidates seeking office under the banner of Canada's major political parties, the focus on involvement, participation, and seeking change influenced the need to specifically consider the 2015-2019 period. Additionally, extant research traditionally has assessed MPs and candidates, not necessarily volunteers – despite their critical importance in assisting with party outreach, recruitment, and potentially being a stepping-point for a future candidate as well. Thus, the experiences of Indigenous volunteers, alongside candidates, former MPs, and sitting MPs, not only assists with giving a more comprehensive view, and understanding, of Indigenous participation but also the differences in experiences, support and views.

In turn, the formation of ten questions utilized for interviews were specific to Indigenous peoples but broad enough to all for the different groups of participants to answer. The questions approved by the ethics review board at University of Alberta, are as follows:

1. What led you to becoming involved in a Canadian political party? Additionally, if you sought the nomination of a federal political party and/or election to the Canadian House of Commons, what led you to do so?
2. As an Indigenous person, describe your feelings and views of being involved in the Canadian politics.
3. What was the process like seeking elected office as an Indigenous person?
4. How did your Indigenous background influence the perception of you as candidate for office? For example: Did you find some party volunteers unwilling to become involved? Did voters tell you they couldn't vote for you because you were Indigenous?
5. As an Indigenous person, did running for office, or as elected official, make you feel you had to also be a voice for Indigenous peoples? Why or Why Not?
6. Did the political party of your choice show support and assistance

- in your candidacy throughout the process and election(s) that you sought office for?
7. Did your involvement make you feel like the political party and electoral system was supportive of Indigenous peoples? Why or Why not?
 8. In relation to the structure of the political party in which you sought to represent, have your views on inclusivity and representativeness of Indigenous peoples and views within the party changed? Why or Why not?
 9. Do you feel your involvement has impacted and assisted with bringing change not only to Canadian/Indigenous relationships but also your political party of choice?
 10. In your view, does/did being involved (as an elected/former Member of Parliament, as a candidate, as a volunteer within a Canadian political party) bring forth change between Canada and Indigenous peoples? Why or why not?

Following the formulation and ethics approval, the next step was to reach out to various individuals who were listed as Indigenous MPs, candidates for the 2015 Canadian federal election, former Indigenous MPs who were not elected in said election, as well as volunteers who were noticeably active with their respective political parties of choice.

Beginning in the Autumn of 2018, thirty-four individuals were approached via email for in-person or phone interviews. The breakdown of those approached included:

- All twelve sitting Indigenous MPs (9 LPC, 2 NDP, and 1 Independent originally elected as an LPC MP);
- Sixteen Indigenous candidates (4 CPC, 4 GPC, 4 LPC, and 4 NDP);⁷⁶² and
- Six Indigenous volunteers (4 LPC and 2 NDP).

When assessing the gender of the thirty-four contacted, fifteen identified as female and the other nineteen as male. Additionally, three who identified as male also identify as LGBT2S. In turn, when considering party affiliation, the following were approached:

- Four who affiliated with the CPC;
- Four who affiliated with the GPC;

⁷⁶² Note: Of the sixteen Indigenous candidates, four were seeking re-election but lost in 2015 (3 CPC and 1 NDP).

- Seventeen who affiliated with the LPC;
- Eight who affiliated with the NDP; and
- One Independent who originally affiliated with the LPC.

The reasoning for the higher proportion of LPC and NDP interviewees relates to how active both parties were recruiting Indigenous candidates and volunteers, and to the fact that both parties far outnumbered the CPC and GPC in terms of Indigenous involvement. Such impact also reflected those who responded to requests for interviews.

Out of the thirty-four contacted for research interviews, seventeen responded. Of the seventeen responses, two sitting MPs said no. Additionally, another five of those who responded originally had agreed to interviews but such interviews ended up not being finalized or cancelled. Therefore, the remaining ten who responded agreed and were interviewed between November 25 2018 to February 21 2019. Of the ten interviewees:

- Eight affiliated with the LPC (Two MPs, 3 candidates, and 3 volunteers);
- Two affiliated with the NDP (One candidate and former MP as well as One volunteer);
- Five identified as female (all affiliated with the LPC);
- Five identified as male (3 LPC and 2 NDP);
- Two identified as LGBT2S (1 LPC and 1 NDP),
- One identified as Inuk (LPC);
- Two identified as Métis (LPC); and
- Eight identified as First Nations (6 LPC and 2 NDP).⁷⁶³

In relation to regional location, those interviewed included:

- One from British Columbia;
- Two from Alberta;
- One from Saskatchewan;
- Two from Manitoba;
- Two from Ontario;
- One from Quebec; and
- One from Newfoundland and Labrador.

⁷⁶³ Note: of those First Nations who were interviewed, three identified as Anishinaabeg, two as Cree, as well as one each as Innu, Sauteaux, and Dene.

Thus, when considering those interviewed, it is important to note that a strong mix of region, Indigenous background, as well as gender was represented. That said, it is also important to highlight those respondents who participated, as shown in the breakdown of who was approached and responded, were in the LPC and NDP. Such skewing to the LPC and NDP are due to no responses from those approached in both the CPC and GPC. Additionally, no volunteers from the CPC and GPC were approached as neither party has an Indigenous wing that allows for easily accessible information and contact information in relation to Indigenous volunteers.

Although the responses and agreement to interviews came solely from those involved in the LPC and the NDP, what was shared is still significant and important to understanding Indigenous participation and their views on participation. In addition to sharing the responses from those who agreed to be interviewed, and agreed to be named, Jody Wilson-Raybould's experiences will also be included. Since the conclusion of the interviews, Wilson-Raybould has written and given insight to her time and experience within Canadian federal politics, as well as experience in Canadian party politics. Due to Wilson-Raybould's writing, it is important to include her work alongside that of those interviewed in order to include one of the most public experiences of a former Indigenous MP. In turn, not only is what Wilson-Raybould shares in *Indian in the Cabinet* significant, but also compliments and adds to what has been shared by some of her former colleagues and those who also participated during the same period.

6.3: Indigenous Participation: A Victory or a Reconciliation with Slow-Paced Action?

As highlighted in the previous section, ten respondents opted, and were able to, participate in interviews relating to the research questions put forth. Additionally, with the release of Wilson-Raybould's *Indian in the Cabinet*, her experiences are also able to be included

as much of what she shares with the public does connect with the questions put forth. Alongside Wilson-Raybould’s own words, the following respondents, who agreed to having their name shared, are included:

Name:	Position:	Self-Identification:	Interview:
Michelle Robinson	LPC Volunteer	Dene	11-25-2018
Bangishimo (Shawn) Johnston	NDP Volunteer	Anishinaabe	11-27-2018
Jonathan Genest-Jourdain	Former NDP MP	Innu	12-01-2018
Tanya Wastesicoot	LPC Volunteer	Cree	12-01-2018
Jeffrey Copenace	LPC Volunteer	Anishinaabe	12-07-2018
Louis De Jaeger	LPC Candidate	Métis	12-07-2018
Della Anaquod	LPC Candidate	Saulteaux	01-24-2019
Robert-Falcon Ouellette	LPC MP	Cree & Métis	01-24-2019
Rebecca Chartrand	LPC Candidate	Anishinaabe	02-04-2019
Yvonne Jones	LPC MP	Inuit	02-21-2019

Those responded offered insight into their experiences within the structures of not only their political party of choice, but also into their experiences as Indigenous people within Canada’s electoral political structure. In order to showcase such responses, the ten questions will be broken down into three areas of focus: 1) Volunteer Responses; 2) Candidate Responses; and 3) MP Responses.⁷⁶⁴

6.3.1: Volunteer Responses:

The experiences of volunteers who self-identify as Indigenous offer a unique experience that has traditionally been ignored. Consideration of party volunteers has been studied in Canadian political science, but no consideration or inclusion specifically of Indigenous volunteers has been broached. Indigenous volunteers are as important as other volunteers when it comes to outreach, recruitment of other Indigenous volunteers, sharing policy ideas for the party

⁷⁶⁴ Note: Some respondents may show up in more than one category due to the breadth of their previous experience encompassing more than one category.

with which they are affiliated, and recruitment of Indigenous candidates. Such points are highlighted in responses that Indigenous volunteers offered in relations to questions 1-2, and 6-10. The specific Indigenous volunteers that were interviewed included Michelle Robinson, Bangishimo (Shawn) Johnston, Tanya Wastesicoot, and Jeffrey Copenace.

When asked the first question: “What led you to become involved in a Canadian political party?”⁷⁶⁵ all four respondents highlighted the feeling of needing to do something – that by becoming involved they could contribute to changing the Canadian political structure from within. All four respondents had highlighted involvement, whether grassroots movements, their communities, their education, or a combination of all three. Robinson expressed that she “felt isolated in Calgary [by] disagreeing with the direction the Conservatives were going ... I had previously gone to the NDP and Greens ... I [originally] got involved in 2011 because of a Liberal candidate that I really liked ... the LPC also had the [IPC} structure.”⁷⁶⁶ Johnston expressed, in relation to why he became involved, that his “mother was active and friends with former ONDP Leader Howard Hampton ... [I got further involved] because of the Harper government ... [and because of] the Idle No More movement in opposition to Harper government policies ... I gravitated to the Federal and Provincial NDP during Idle No More, more so than [due to] disagreement to the Liberals and the Greens.”⁷⁶⁷ Similarly, both Wastesicoot and Copenace got involved in order to press for change. Wastesicoot expressed that “being from Treaty 8 and Northern Alberta [meant] there was a chance for influence by the Indigenous population ... to remind people that Indigenous peoples exist ... I focused on the

⁷⁶⁵ Note: For Volunteers, consideration is only given to the first half of question one.

⁷⁶⁶ Michelle Robinson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (November 25 2018).

⁷⁶⁷ Bangishimo (Sean) Johnston, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (November 27 2018).

federal aspect because that is who the primary relationship is with.”⁷⁶⁸ Lastly, Copenace stated that his “roommate was involved ... I learned there were positions within the Liberal party specific to Indigenous peoples ... I [wanted to also bring] change from within.”⁷⁶⁹

Question two focused on their feelings and views of being involved in Canadian politics as an Indigenous person. In relation to question two, the answers given by all four volunteers highlight the difficulty and discrimination that they faced. While all agreed they have had the chance to meet people whom they call friends today and continue to work with, they also highlight the many who were not. All four respondents expressed that there was difficulty and being/continuing to be involved was not/is not easy.⁷⁷⁰ More specifically, Copenace expressed that “it is not popular amongst Indigenous peoples,”⁷⁷¹ while Wastesicoot shared that she was “surprised by the willingness of many others involved to open their minds. However, there wasn’t enough people open to changing their mindset. This is why over time I began to distance myself from the [Liberal] party and why I eventually left it all together.”⁷⁷² In Johnston’s response, he highlighted that “Sometimes I feel like a fence sitter [because] one side of me wants to be more involved ... but my grassroots side makes me second guess being affiliated ... [I do] face calls of being a traitor for being involved [from other Indigenous peoples]. [I also acknowledge] the Aboriginal Commission of the NDP is not well known or spoken about.”⁷⁷³

⁷⁶⁸ Tanya Wastesicoot, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (December 1 2018).

⁷⁶⁹ Jeffrey Copenace, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (December 7 2018).

⁷⁷⁰ Robinson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Johnson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Wastesicoot, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Copenace, “Does Indigenous Involvement Metter.”

⁷⁷¹ Copenace, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁷² Wastesicoot, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁷³ Johnston, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

Lastly, Robinson's response is not only blunt but telling of experiences for many Indigenous peoples who have and do volunteer – through a Canadian lens and an Indigenous lens:

It is very difficult being in Canadian politics because the concept of Canada, their laws, and governance system isn't going to have buy-in from Indigenous peoples in all cases. In some cases, I'm looked at as a traitor or an 'apple,'⁷⁷⁴ so I am left open to internalized racism and lateral violence. On the flip side, many Canadians feel validated in Indigenous [peoples] joining the system ... Many Canadians see us with a bias view of less human or savage so their idea of me as a Dene woman joining, [they] see a new 'civilized' native, instead of a community member [and] neighbour with longstanding history to this land ... I deal with constant conflict from within. I do not judge those who cannot or will not participate. I have a feeling of privilege for continuing to be involved as I was raised within white society... I have an obligation to try to bring change through the Canadian structure – it is honouring my ancestors on both sides.⁷⁷⁵

This assessment by Robinson is important to highlight, especially when reviewing the answers of all four Indigenous volunteers to questions 6-10.

Questions six and seven gauged whether Robinson, Johnston, Wastesicoot, and Copenace found support from within the party structure as well as if they felt the political structure was supportive of Indigenous peoples. While Copenace expressed that he did feel supported and there could be more support for Indigenous peoples, Wastesicoot, Johnston, and Robinson thought there was a lack of support and unlikely to fully change. More specifically, Copenace answered: “yes, in terms of candidates ... in terms of processes and fairness towards Indigenous involvement and voices being heard it continues to be an uphill battle ... I worry that what remains is that many Canadians still continue to have the mentality of individuals like Senator Lynn Beyak.”⁷⁷⁶ In Wastesicoot's response, she highlighted that “The UPC was stellar in its

⁷⁷⁴ Note: The term 'Apple' is slang amongst Indigenous peoples, more so First Nations, in reference the view of someone who is red on the outside, and white on the inside.

⁷⁷⁵ Robinson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁷⁶ Copenace, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

support ... the [LPC] not so much ... [The LPC] were supportive of Indigenous peoples joining the process – only so far as it makes their profile look better [and making it look like] they are inclusive.⁷⁷⁷ Both Johnston and Robinson were blunter and answered simply with “no.”⁷⁷⁸ In relation to question seven Johnston expressed “I am still on the fence,”⁷⁷⁹ Robinson, on the other hand was again more specific and highlighted that “... neither were. Systematic racism within the [LPC] has an impact on this ... This is partially because of the underfunding of the IPC and a lack of support of the IPC by the party structure”⁷⁸⁰ Such responses thus give a sense of background for the answers all four respondents also offered for question ten.

Questions eight to ten focus on the impact that each felt they had from being involved. While Robinson, Johnston, and Wastesicoot did not necessarily see that the structure of the political parties they were involved with fully equated with inclusivity, Copenace differed and stated his party of choice did.⁷⁸¹ Although Copenace stated that the LPC did show inclusivity, he did add that “this does not mean there have not been cases of some people to cause you to think of why you are involved but the need to be involved continues to override those negative voices.”⁷⁸² When it came to whether they felt their involvement impacted and assisted with change, both Copenace and Robinson did believe that this was the case. For Robinson, she highlighted her push in the party in relation to MMIWG and 2 Spirit individuals as an example of such, adding that “it takes time and is gruelling, but it is an example of my impact on the party

⁷⁷⁷ Wastesicoot, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁷⁸ Johnston, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Robinson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Metter.”

⁷⁷⁹ Johnston, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁸⁰ Robinson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁸¹ Robinson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Johnson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Metter;” Wastesicoot, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Copenace, “Does Indigenous Involvement Metter.”

⁷⁸² Copenace, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

structure and communication from the party.”⁷⁸³ Similarly, Copenace also highlighted influence on party and Canadian policies:

Yes, very much so. I have watched people learn to move past their bias and ignorance relating to Indigenous peoples. I have helped influence ideas, policies, outreach, and movement forward not only between the Liberals but also between the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples. A key example of this is my involvement with the Kelowna Accord when I was a Senior Policy Advisor to Paul Martin.” Another key example is my current position and work with Minister Philpot.⁷⁸⁴

Unlike Copenace and Robinson, Johnston expressed that it was difficult to fully answer due to him not being as active as he could be within the structure⁷⁸⁵ and Wastesicoot simply replied that “no, I don’t find that my involvement brought forth change.”⁷⁸⁶

In relation to Wastesicoot’s response, she also expresses a similar view in relation to whether Indigenous people being involved brings forth change between Canadian and Indigenous peoples. More specifically, Wastesicoot states “no, I don’t feel being involved in the current party system brings forth the change that is needed for Indigenous nations, communities, and peoples ... The changes happening now are the changes Canada has always wanted ... the process is still a top-down approach.”⁷⁸⁷ While Wastesicoot offered a no in her final answer, the other three respondents were more willing to express that involvement does bring forth change. Both Robinson and Copenace again expressed a yes and again added how their involvement has assisted with changes within the structure – even if the pace of change is slow and at a pace preferred by Canada. For instance, Copenace stated that “every small bit of change that is

⁷⁸³ Robinson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁸⁴ Copenace, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁸⁵ Johnston, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁸⁶ Wastesicoot, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁸⁷ Wastesicoot, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

possible [is important] ... it does make a difference.”⁷⁸⁸ She added, “politics is all about timing and when the volunteers join. Prepping for the new generations to take over from people like myself is important ... Additionally, the IPC being able to assist in preventing problematic policies from sections of the party at conventions has been helpful.”⁷⁸⁹ Johnston, in providing his answer, stated:

I would like to say yes. This is conducive of stronger representation of Indigenous peoples within the structure that is coming to existence ... I look and reflect on my knowledge on the Mana and Māori parties in New Zealand and how this has helped bring forth more voices. This makes me wonder if Indigenous peoples need to formulate their own party. I do acknowledge problems with this idea [such as] differences [of each nation], regionalism, and anti-Canadian involvement.⁷⁹⁰

Whether responding in a positive or negative view from their time being involved, those Indigenous volunteers who offered insight in relation to being involved in Canadian federal politics highlight that change is important, even if their experiences of being involved differ – they are seeking ways that allow for such change to occur. Similar views are shared by the Indigenous candidates who also agreed to be interviewed.

6.3.2: Candidate Responses:

In addition to the experience of Indigenous volunteers, the responses from Indigenous candidates and a former MP who partook in the 2015 Canadian federal election will also be presented specifically in this section. In each case, the four respondents who will be highlighted, each lost in their electoral district. Despite their election loss, their experiences as Indigenous candidates are critically important to assess. As other literature in Canadian political science has

⁷⁸⁸ Copenace, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁸⁹ Robinson, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁹⁰ Johnston, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

assessed former candidates that ran for office, the experience of Indigenous candidates is important to include in order to consider potential similarities and differences to Indigenous volunteers and Indigenous MPs at the time of this research. The former candidates interviewed included Jonathan Genest-Jourdain, also the NDP MP for Manicouagan from 2011-2015, Louis De Jaeger, Della Anaquod, and Rebecca Chartrand.

When reflecting on why they got involved and what their views were in relation to being involved and Indigenous, each also highlighted the need to do so to drive change. Additionally, their experience in community and municipal politics led to being approached by their respective political parties. Genest-Jourdain stated that “the NDP was non-existent in the riding⁷⁹¹ [in 2011, and] I was acclaimed ... there was no nomination. I had run municipally, this led Jack Layton to reach out directly to me.”⁷⁹² Additionally, Genest-Jourdain explained that “no one expected me to win the riding, including myself ... there is a lot of racism in [the riding of] Manicouagan ... 2011-2015 are not all good memories. I made some friends ... but I also made a lot of enemies, specifically in natural resource development.”⁷⁹³ De Jaeger, on the other hand, said that “I had been following Justin Trudeau’s rise in the party ranks and in 2013 I had the opportunity to meet him ... It was the Indigenous platform and inclusive foundation of the party that brought me to finally putting my name forward to run as a candidate.”⁷⁹⁴ When it came to views of being involved as an Indigenous person, De Jaeger’s answer was one that highlights having had to continually educate:

My first experience at this was at the National Candidate
Training sessions in Ottawa. In the first session there was the

⁷⁹¹ Note: The electoral district that Jonathan Genest-Jourdain references is Manicouagan.

⁷⁹² Jonathan Genest-Jourdain, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (December 1 2018).

⁷⁹³ Genest-Jourdain, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁹⁴ Louis De Jaeger, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (December 7 2018).

usual welcome by the organizers and then a comment of how this election brings us pride to both founding cultures from English and French Canada working together to form an inclusive Liberal government. I immediately raised my hand and kept it raised for at least 5 minutes during those opening comments. When I was finally recognized, I stood up and introduced myself and corrected the speaker and said that from my viewpoint there were 3 founding cultures that formed this country, we were just left out and that is why I am here.⁷⁹⁵

Similar reasoning for why they were involved, and running as candidates, were shared by Anaquod and Chartrand.

For Anaquod, her decision to become involved, and be a candidate for the LPC included her connection to the territory that forms Regina-Qu'Appelle – her home community was located within the boundaries.⁷⁹⁶ Anaquod also highlighted that she “saw running ... as a way to establish connection in my riding for a future election. For instance, if I ran in 2015 and didn't win then I could maybe do better and win in 2019. I also saw my involvement as a chance to deconstruct misconceptions about Indigenous people.”⁷⁹⁷ In relation to why she became involved, Chartrand shared that she “ran in the civic election for Winnipeg in 2014 because of my involvement with the push for dredging the Red [River].⁷⁹⁸ City Hall and the police were not interested ... I came in second place in Point Douglas⁷⁹⁹ ... [leading to] the federal Liberals approaching me to consider running for them.”⁸⁰⁰ Additionally, Chartrand expressed she also ran to empower others and to lead by example.⁸⁰¹ In turn, when highlighting her feelings as an

⁷⁹⁵ De Jaeger, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁹⁶ Della Anaquod, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (January 24 2019).

⁷⁹⁷ Anaquod, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁷⁹⁸ Note: Dredging the Red was a movement and organization of individuals in the city of Winnipeg for searching the Red River for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

⁷⁹⁹ Note: Point Douglas is a municipal district within the city of Winnipeg. It has a high Indigenous population and is divided between the federal electoral districts of Winnipeg North and Winnipeg Centre.

⁸⁰⁰ Rebecca Chartrand, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (February 4 2019).

⁸⁰¹ Chartrand, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

Indigenous person involved in Canadian politics, Chartrand states that although it is a western structure of governance and politics, “we must also see that Indigenous peoples have and can influence the structure of governance in Canada today.”⁸⁰² Thus while, there was a feeling of a need to get involved, and accepting that they were pushed to do so by their parties of choice, the process of becoming, and being a Candidate alongside them being Indigenous offers an understanding of such an experience.

In relation to what the process was like for the four respondents who were candidates, there is a sense of the need for more resources and a ‘thick skin’ in order to cope with racism. While both Genest-Jourdain and Chartrand were acclaimed and were supported by their parties, especially upon them each building the party structure in their respective ridings, both Anaquod and De Jaeger felt they had to fend for themselves and were looked at as candidates in unwinnable ridings.⁸⁰³ Additionally, while all four felt more of a positive connection with Indigenous communities and voters in their ridings, they did highlight that racism did exist with some non-Indigenous voters.⁸⁰⁴ In turn, all four candidates did highlight that as an Indigenous candidate, they felt that they did have to be a voice for Indigenous peoples while on the campaign trail, within their respective parties, as well as if elected to the House of Commons.⁸⁰⁵ Despite feeling the need to be that voice of Indigenous peoples, all candidates, excluding Chartrand, did not feel that their respective parties were fully supportive of their candidacies during election time – with Genest-Jourdain highlighting that NDP support came more so in 2015 rather than in 2011 as he was now an incumbent.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Genest-Jourdain, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Chartrand, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Anaquod, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” De Jaeger, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid; Note: Chartrand did not answer question six to ten.

Questions seven to ten provided similar answers to those of the Indigenous volunteers interviewed. While Genest-Jourdain and De Jaeger found that their involvement in their respective parties did reflect a form of support for Indigenous peoples, there seems to be agreement with Anaquod that the electoral system itself was less supportive – Anaquod, unlike De Jaeger and Genest-Jourdain, also found that there was no support from her party of choice, the LPC.⁸⁰⁷ Regarding whether the political structure and party each candidate chose to represent allowed for inclusivity and representativeness, the answers provided from Anaquod, De Jaeger, and Genest-Jourdain range from no to somewhat cryptic. While Anaquod believes that “inclusivity and representativeness in relation to gender equality is making great strides forward ... [it is questionable] in relation to Indigenous peoples.”⁸⁰⁸ De Jaeger, on the other hand, stated that he believed there was inclusivity and that by “being in government and having the largest participation of Indigenous peoples in history, the LPC is learning from those it invited to the table as partners, friends, and colleagues.”⁸⁰⁹ Genest-Jourdain’s response is especially of interest to note as he specifies that “When I first got involved in 2011 I felt it was inclusive to Indigenous peoples and views ... [Since losing in 2015], I am no longer involved today, and I don’t know how it has been since.”⁸¹⁰ Such responses also add to how each candidate responded in relation to their personal impact from being involved and, overall, the importance of Indigenous peoples being involved in the Canadian electoral process.

In relation to whether they felt their involvement had impacted and assisted in bringing change, Anaquod stated “kind of, it depends on a few things ... it shows other Indigenous peoples that they can do it too. This allows for getting a foot in the door and eventually more of us

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Anaquod, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸⁰⁹ De Jaeger, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸¹⁰ Genest-Jourdain, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

getting our foot in the doors.”⁸¹¹ Responses from De Jaeger and Genest-Jourdain were in the affirmative. For De Jaeger, he highlights that although he did not win, that “the process of involving Indigenous peoples is becoming normal.”⁸¹² Genest-Jourdain added that he “likes to believe that my time in parliament did assist with some change – whether in the riding or in parliament; whether through questions on policy or by simply speaking out. Some of the changes that have occurred since 2015 relate to items I talked about for four years in parliament.”⁸¹³ In turn, all three expressed that being involved can bring forth change between Canada and Indigenous peoples. While both De Jaeger and Anaquod highlighted that by being involved it can increase input from Indigenous peoples, the parties and structure must also be willing to listen to Indigenous peoples who not only get involved but to Indigenous peoples in general.⁸¹⁴ An additional point made by Anaquod was that “the higher numbers [of involvement] also means less burnout for the few who are or have been involved before.”⁸¹⁵ Genest-Jourdain, in looking back on his time as a candidate and MP, gives a more nuanced answer:

I didn't find parliament that welcoming to the discussions on Indigenous peoples ... In relation to being involved [and bringing forth change between Canada and Indigenous peoples], to an extent yes. I have witnessed more of a vocalness from Innu in my territory; municipal governments in my area are now being more inclusive of Innu ... It is noticeable that the Innu exist ... I see more of a willingness from Innu to become engaged in Canadian politics than I did before.⁸¹⁶

Genest-Jourdain's response is especially of interest and leaves one wondering if other Indigenous MPs hold similar views.

⁸¹¹ Anaquod, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸¹² De Jaeger, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸¹³ Genest-Jourdain, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸¹⁴ De Jaeger, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Anaquod, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸¹⁵ Anaquod, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸¹⁶ Genest-Jourdain, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

6.3.3: MP Responses:

Alongside the responses from candidates and volunteers, sitting MPs who are Indigenous during the 2015-2019 period are also important. For the MP responses, there is a noticeable similarity to the responses candidates gave as they each were seeking to represent their respective electoral districts. In addition to considering the responses of Robert-Falcon Ouellette and Yvonne Jones to one-on-one interviews, Jody Wilson-Raybould is also included as she shares her own experiences in her own words on the experience of being not only involved during the aforementioned period but also as an Indigenous MP who was in Cabinet and, thus, at the decision-making table.

In relation to their responses to the questions put forth, both Ouellette and Jones answered in similar ways and in support of their party of choice – Wilson-Raybould’s own words were, of course, quite different and showed a different view of being an Indigenous MP between 2015 to 2019. While all three highlight that they were approached to run for the LPC, and approached by Justin Trudeau himself, they also expressed, like the other respondents, that they wanted to bring forth change and make a difference for the geographical areas they sought to represent and for both Canada and Indigenous peoples.⁸¹⁷ This is only one of two questions where Ouellette, Jones, and Wilson-Raybould share a similar answer. While both Ouellette and Jones expressed positive feelings for being involved and that it is important to influence decisions and policies in their responses,⁸¹⁸ Wilson-Raybould’s words show how her views and

⁸¹⁷ Robert-Falcon Ouellette, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (January 24 2019); Yvonne Jones, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter: Interview and Questions,” by Chadwick Cowie (February 21 2019); Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*.

⁸¹⁸ Ouellette, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Jones, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

thinking of being involved developed and how she processed such understanding while as an MP. In compiling some of Wilson-Raybould's written experience, she explains that:

We live in an amazing country. But it is a country that is still riddled with implicit bias, discrimination, and even outright racism ... I knew why I was [getting involved] ... It was carrying on the leadership role I had been raised to take ... I knew well that a main distinction between these two political worlds was that in Indigenous politics there are no political parties, unlike in the federal system. Indigenous politics does not divide along partisan lines, although there can be factions ... As the Liberal Party brought me into this world, I could feel this difference right away ... In the Indigenous world of politics, we would certainly foster and encourage team building, but the dialogue was always focused on how to build momentum to achieve a social outcome, to address wrongs, and to better the lives of people.⁸¹⁹

For Wilson-Raybould, because she was considered a star candidate and was acclaimed for Vancouver-Granville, she found many on the Liberal electoral district board were unhappy. While some warmed up to her as the candidate eventually, others did not – no matter the effort she put in to work with them.⁸²⁰ Regarding her identity as an Indigenous person, Wilson-Raybould wrote that:

In the midst of this excitement and expectation of what might be accomplished with our team was some general skepticism that an Indigenous woman could win in Vancouver Granville. In fairness, I think many held this view just as a matter of pure demographics ... I remember talking to a prominent community leader who expressed concern to me that he did not think an Indigenous person could win in this neighbourhood.⁸²¹

In comparison to Wilson-Raybould's experience in her electoral district, both Ouellette and Jones expressed that their Indigenous background had a positive effect. For Ouellette, the main

⁸¹⁹ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pps. 56-57, & 137.

⁸²⁰ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pps. 61 & 241

⁸²¹ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pps. 61-62.

issue was “with getting volunteers because [the riding] was the downtown core of Winnipeg.”⁸²² Jones, in her response explained that Labrador “is almost half Indigenous. [Being Indigenous] was more of an asset to me when running – I was one of them. There was more or less concern on if I could represent all of Labrador since I was only from a section of it.”⁸²³ In turn, all three MPs, like the four candidates interviewed, felt they had to be a voice for Indigenous peoples.⁸²⁴

The responses and writings shared by Ouellette, Jones, and Wilson-Raybould thus offer background into their own experiences in relation to support from their party of choice, the political system, and their views of inclusivity and representativeness of Indigenous peoples. While Ouellette expressed that support from the LPC was minimal at the beginning of the campaign, it did grow as election day got closer and polls were showing he could potentially win.⁸²⁵ Both Jones and Wilson-Raybould did express they felt they had support – likely due to their star-power in running.⁸²⁶ Despite their star power, both Jones and Wilson-Raybould expressed that while they did have some support there are still issues with the system – a system that could be revamped to better include Indigenous peoples.⁸²⁷ Ouellette, on the other hand, didn’t find the system disfavoured or favoured him more than any other candidate.⁸²⁸ Thus, in relation to inclusivity and representative, Ouellette as well as Jones, found their party of choice and their place at the decision-making table was inclusive and representative. More specifically, Jones expressed that:

I feel represented and listened to in the party and I believe others are too. In the last five years while I have been

⁸²² Ouellette, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸²³ Jones, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸²⁴ Ouellette, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Jones, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pps. 52 & 59.

⁸²⁵ Ouellette, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸²⁶ Jones, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;” Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pps. 60.

⁸²⁷ Ibid.

⁸²⁸ Ouellette, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

involved, I have seen the government relationship shift drastically in a positive way. By people like me being involved, it has influenced the way the PM is moving forward and has created a fundamental shift that he has actively supported.⁸²⁹

For Wilson-Raybould, she did at first feel that the party was inclusive and representative, despite the fact that she had felt from the beginning there was a form of tokenism that existed in relation to her candidacy, campaign, and time in office. Wilson-Raybould expressed that a turning point came when she realized that “it became clear that what was in the platform did not really matter that much. The platform was simply to get elected ... the vision and commitments that had attracted me to Justin Trudeau and his Liberal Party in the first place were now distant glimpses in the rear-view mirror.”⁸³⁰

Despite this realization for Wilson-Raybould, she, like Jones and Ouellette, did, and do, believe that being involved and holding a seat in parliament did impact and assist with forms of change. For Ouellette, he explains that “I was allowed to speak in caucus and bring forth a voice that would not be there if I had not been elected ... [For instance] my role as Chair of the Indigenous Caucus [helps to] bring forth change.”⁸³¹ Jones explained that she did not even need to reflect – that she knows her involvement “has allowed me to influence policy, shape policy, and also influence my fellow politicians in relation to their understanding of Indigenous peoples and the North.”⁸³² In a response to the media when being questioned if she had been shuffled from Justice reflected having achieved many of the goals set out when she first became Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Wilson-Raybould explained:

We accomplished essentially my mandate letter, plus, I was very proud to introduce thirteen pieces of legislation ranging from issues, complex issues, of Medical Assistance in Dying

⁸²⁹ Jones, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸³⁰ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pps. 66 & 187.

⁸³¹ Ouellette, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

⁸³² Jones, “Does Indigenous Involvement Matter.”

to cannabis, to impaired driving to incredibly broad and bold reforms to the criminal justice system and family law, the latter two currently in the Senate. And I am very much looking forward to seeing the new minister shepherd these through to become law ... I had the pleasure to appoint 250 judges to the superior courts, extraordinarily meritorious and diverse judges, and I had the pleasure to appoint more judges than any justice minister in the past two decades and create seventy-five new judicial positions ... I am confident in terms of releasing a directive on Indigenous litigation, as the previous minister, releasing principles about how as the attorney general I engaged in Charter litigation – has opened up the role of the attorney general and provided a window into how attorneys general make decisions, in particular around Charter and in particular Indigenous litigation ... I am incredibly proud of the work I have been able to do.⁸³³

In turn, like the responses of most other respondents who volunteer and were candidates, Ouellette, Jones, and Wilson-Raybould believed, and continue to believe, their involvement has mattered – that being involved is key for change, no matter how difficult and slow the change may be.⁸³⁴

6.3.4: Indigenous Involvement: Did It Matter?

These interviews offer many interesting insights from those who offered input on their experience of being Indigenous and involved in Canada's federal electoral process. As is noticeable in the responses from Indigenous MPs, candidates, and volunteers, it is clear that their answers can vary significantly in certain contexts but that there are also strong similarities. In assessing responses from those who were interviewed, as well as Wilson-Raybould's memoir, there is a noticeable difference between those who, at the time of the interviews, were still actively involved in the structures of their political party of choice and those who no longer were.

⁸³³ Wilson-Raybould, *Indian in the Cabinet*, pps. 195-196.

⁸³⁴ Ibid; Ouellette, "Does Indigenous Involvement Matter;" Jones, "Does Indigenous Involvement Matter."

In relation to those who were still involved in their political party of choice at the time of the interviews,⁸³⁵ there is a noticeable abundance of caution in criticizing the party structure. Robinson is an outlier here who did delve into concerns and experiences of racism and anti-Indigenous structural issues in the LPC. While Robinson did express concern, her answers do offer hints and signs that she still has hope and believes that involvement is still an important option that is key in order to be able to influence the party structure, party policy and education within the LPC. Although five of the six who were still involved at the time of the interviews did not necessarily criticize the party as a whole, there is noticeable agreement that many did face some forms of anti-Indigenous views in their respective journeys of being involved, whether as a volunteer or candidate. For those who had served as an MP, whether up to 2015 or after the 2015 Canadian federal election, there is a clear divide between those who are still sitting as MPs within a political party and those who are not. In the cases of both Wilson-Raybould and Genest-Jourdain, they both express the frustration and, in many ways, the unfriendliness of the House of Commons to Indigenous voices that did not fully integrate into how the executive and the legislative institutions operated in the Canadian state. Both Jones and Falcon-Ouellette, stated that having a seat in the House of Commons, and also in the LPC caucus, allowed for influence – especially relating to their electoral districts and positions they held within their caucus. It should be noted that further research, and a follow-up interview with Ouellette would be of interest as he lost his re-election bid in 2019; would Ouellette still agree with his answers today now that he no longer is an elected MP under the LPC?

In response to the impact they had by being involved, the majority of respondents, and Wilson-Raybould, highlight the strong belief that their involvement did bring impact in some

⁸³⁵ Note: Those still involved in their political party of choice included: Robinson, Copenace, De Jaeger, Chartrand, Ouellette, and Jones.

shape or form. For volunteers it included influencing their political party of choice as well as discussions on and development of party policy. For candidates, their involvement assisted with interactions and education of the general public in their own electoral district as well as within the structure of their political party of choice. Their involvement, as many candidates highlighted, also included party policy and, in turn, the party platform for the 2015 Canadian election. As with the candidates, the responses from sitting MPs also highlighted similar impact not just within the party but also the belief that such impact permeated into their time in government. Although there is belief of the positive impact within the Trudeau government by those who were Indigenous MPs, Wilson-Raybould's own experience shows that even as an MP, Indigenous peoples have to reconcile where they come from, who they are, and what, as an Indigenous person, cannot be given up. For her, a choice had to be made, and certain lines in relation to who she was could not be crossed in favour of the partisan orthodoxy that is endemic in Canadian politics. Despite Wilson-Raybould's removal from her role as Minister of Justice and Attorney General (MoJAG), and removal from the LPC caucus, she did summarize the achievements made while she was MoJAG – as the first Indigenous person, and First Nations person, to hold the role.

Additionally, the responses by those interviewed, alongside Wilson-Raybould's writing in *Indian in the Cabinet*, also show the importance of resilience and the level of patience that is shown by all eleven individuals. The willingness to be involved as Indigenous peoples in order to push for change from within and have their voices included is both evident and admirable. In all cases, each became involved to raise up a voice from their regions and to push for change. The majority of respondents highlighted that they became involved directly because of frustration with the Harper government and its policies, while others because they were approached to assist

with such change as influential individuals in their party of choice. In all cases, each respondent, as well as Wilson-Raybould, became involved in order to impact the Canadian state in some shape or form through involvement in Canada's electoral process. The complexities that face Indigenous peoples face for being involved are prevalent. However, as they all had to push back on stereotyping of Indigenous peoples and also on the assumptions on whether they could either win in their electoral districts or would face additional barriers for being Indigenous. For many, they found themselves as having to be a voice for Indigenous peoples alongside their role as representatives for their regions. In many cases, the respondents found themselves having to, like Wilson-Raybould, draw a line they were not willing to cross because of their Indigeneity, while those still involved felt they had not come to such a line. In other words, more than half of the respondents felt that they had to keep some of their Indigeneity in check, faced forms of tokenism, and had to, if possible, employ patience while navigating the structures within which they were working.

While some respondents continued, and continue, to patiently and diligently work within the structure,⁸³⁶ others are noticeably questioning their continued, or past involvement.⁸³⁷ For Wastesicoot and Wilson-Raybould, their time of party involvement came to a close as they found it not inclusive of them as Indigenous peoples.⁸³⁸ In turn, one could argue that when considering the push for change and reconciliation, what those involved show is a need to reconcile their expectations of how quickly change can be made within the structure as it currently exists rather than where the structure, and the institutions within it, meet them as equals of a nation-to-nation

⁸³⁶ Note: This includes, at the time of the interviews held, Jones, Ouellette, Chartrand, De Jaeger, and Copenace.

⁸³⁷ Note: This includes, at the time of the interviews held, Johnston, Robinson, Anaquod, Genest-Jourdain, and Robinson.

⁸³⁸ Note: Since said interviews have been completed, Da Jaeger, Chartrand, Johnston, Ouellette, and Copenace are also no longer involved in the political parties of their choice and additional interviews with them would assist in understanding if their views and responses in 2018/2019 are still their views today.

relationship. Not only do those involved have to consider their place as Indigenous peoples in a Settler-Colonial state, but also its institutions, if they seek to utilize items such as Canada's electoral institutions and its federal political parties. The respondents, including Wilson-Raybould, show their resilience and determination from their time of initial involvement, trying to effect change and reconciliation, no matter how slow and frustrating their experiences may have been. As highlighted in Chapter Five, upon assessing the first term of the Trudeau government, change and reconciliation still reflected a Canadian-centric approach; change and reconciliation reflected one of services and administration rather than resources, land, and nation-to-nations relations that was expected from many Indigenous peoples. Thus, it seems to be that the reconciliation utilized and that dominates Indigenous involvement, at least between 2015 to 2019, is as reconciliation of, and continued need to reconcile, the time in which is needed to make such change and claim of victories and progress made in relation to Indigenous peoples.

6.4: Conclusion:

Indigenous peoples who opt to get involved in Canada's electoral process face many questions from within themselves, the institutions with which they become involved, as well as from Canadians and other Indigenous peoples alike. As someone who was involved between 2005 to 2018, I often faced these questions, views, and struggles. My experience in Canadian electoral politics, as a party volunteer and longstanding member of the Liberal Party of Canada, had significant influence on my graduate studies. Questions such as why Indigenous peoples should get involved in the Canadian state, why Indigenous peoples may or may not vote, and why parties should reach out and include Indigenous peoples have long played in my mind. Such questions have influenced my interest in party involvement and participation in the electoral

process. Such questions also influenced my view of using the Canadian electoral process as a way to push for understanding and change from within. As my involvement evolved and grew over the years, and as I held higher roles within the LPC, other feelings and questions began to develop. Questions such as whether I was wasting my time, whether I was contributing to the problem, or did my involvement even matter? Upon delving fully into research on whether or not Indigenous involvement mattered and could bring reconciliation and change, I was also in the final couple of years of my time involved in the LPC.

As highlighted, I left the LPC in April of 2018 – realizing, in my mind, that I had given enough time and found it difficult to continue participating and giving my time within a structure that made me feel like I had to choose between my Indigeneity and the party of my choice. In turn, my experience as an Indigenous person involved with Canadian elections and the political party process, as well as my research expertise on Indigenous electoral participation, the ten questions put forth for research interviews were created. Upon development of the questions, the next step was contact and outreach to Indigenous peoples who were involved in the Canadian electoral process for the 2015 to 2019 period – the reasoning for the focus on this period was due to the high turnout of Indigenous peoples casting a ballot in the 2015 Canadian federal election. The pool of Indigenous peoples contacted for interviews represented an array of different Indigenous nations, including the Inuit, Métis, Anishnaabeg, and Cree, to name a select few. Two-Spirit, women and men were contacted, and included those who aligned with the CPC, GPC, LPC, and NDP. Those who responded and participated reflect ten individuals, equally represented by women and men, as well as reflect Inuit, Métis, and First Nations. Lastly, the inclusion of Indigenous peoples who either served as candidates and MPs, or as party volunteers, was important to offering a more complete and in-depth view of Indigenous involvement within

Canada's federal electoral processes in ways that reflect more than just casting a ballot.

In assessing and reviewing the answers given by Indigenous respondents to the ten questions proposed, there are some noticeable conclusions to be made, especially in relation to Indigenous involvement. For respondents, the 2015 to 2019 period reflects meaningful resilience and perseverance in their push for involvement and inclusion – to further assist with education, influence of policy, and change. While almost all respondents, including Wilson-Raybould [through her memoir], believe their involvement did have impact on making headway, when put alongside an assessment of the Trudeau government's first term it can be argued that what is being reconciled is the length of time and patience required to effect change. In other words, Indigenous participation, at least in the case of the research formulated in this chapter, reflects reconciliation not of the Canadian state with Indigenous nations as equals, but Indigenous peoples having to reconcile with the Canadian electoral and institutional structure – to reconcile that change and progress is not at the pace that Indigenous peoples want or expect. Such understanding and conclusions are poignant and reflective of the downturn in Indigenous turnout in the 2019 Canadian federal election, and of Indigenous peoples' trust in the Trudeau government itself.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion: The Reconciliation of the Long-Road of Indigenous Involvement and Participation

On September 11 2019, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited then Governor General Julie Payette at Rideau Hall in order to request for parliament to be dissolved, launching the 2019 Canadian federal election. The Trudeau government was seeking a second mandate from Canadians and looking to use their successes as reason for a return to government. Among the successes the Trudeau government claimed was its progress on reconciliation and nation-to-nation relations with the Indigenous nations upon whose lands the Canadian state is built. Although the Trudeau government claimed these successes as a push for further support from not only its traditional base, the use of reconciliation and nation-to-nation relations as a success for moving forward did not fully materialize into the same turnout and support from Indigenous peoples like their promises did leading up to, and during, the 2015 Canadian election. The number of Indigenous volunteers, voters, and candidates did not necessarily measure up to the level that was supporting the LPC and Trudeau. Such conclusions are noticeable when reviewing the results on election night: October 21 2019.

For instance, news sources have highlighted that the 2019 Canadian federal election saw another historic number of Indigenous candidates seeking seats in the House of Commons. The CBC, for instance, highlighted that, at least, sixty-two candidates had self-identified as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis.⁸³⁹ More specifically, of the parties for which the sixty-two Indigenous candidates were running, there is a decrease for the LPC. Although the LPC secured nineteen Indigenous candidates in 2015, the party only registered a total of eighteen for the 2019

⁸³⁹ The Canadian Press, "Federal Election Seeing a Record Number of Indigenous Candidates and First Nations Swing Votes: AFN." *CBC News* (October 10 2019), accessed November 1 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/assembly-first-nations-ridings-swing-votes-1.5316630>.

Canadian federal election.⁸⁴⁰ The increase in Indigenous candidates was specifically with the NDP and the CPC, which saw the number of Indigenous candidates running under their respective banners to be twenty-seven and seven each.⁸⁴¹ Additionally, Jody Wilson-Raybould opted to run again, doing so as an Independent candidate. The loss of Wilson-Raybould had impact. Whether that reflected the overall recruitment of Indigenous candidates to the LPC, or those who opted to not seek re-election, is unknown.

Although the impact of Wilson-Raybould's ejection from the LPC and the treatment she received over the SNC-Lavalin scandal did impact Indigenous support for the Trudeau government, it is less clear what its impact was on other LPC Indigenous MPs. That said, there were some noticeable losses in the 2019 election for the LPC Indigenous incumbents. Following the 2015 Canadian federal election, the LPC had 10 MPs who either self-identified as Indigenous or had Indigenous lineage. At the time of the 2019 Canadian federal election, the number of LPC Indigenous incumbents was down to eight – following the ejection of both Tootoo and Wilson-Raybould. Tootoo opted to not run again. In addition to Tootoo, Don Rusnak also opted to not seek re-election – little reasoning, other than wanting to focus on his family, is given for opting to not seek a second term. In turn, of the twelve Indigenous MPs in the House of Commons at the time of the 2019 Canadian federal election, nine opted to seek re-election; one as NDP candidates, one as an Independent, and seven as LPC candidates.⁸⁴²

Of the seven LPC Indigenous candidates that were incumbents, only five were re-elected on October 21 2019. Joining Yvonne Jones, Vance Badawey, Marc Serre, Michael McLeod, and Dan Vandal. On the LPC benches was Jaime Battiste, winning the LPC stronghold of Sydney-

⁸⁴⁰ The Canadian Press, "Federal Election Seeing a Record Number of Indigenous Candidates."

⁸⁴¹ Ibid; Note: The GPC saw a decrease and only registered seven Indigenous candidates, while the Peoples' Party of Canada (PPC), had at least two that were recorded.

⁸⁴² Note: Romeo Saganash opted to not seek re-election.

Victoria.⁸⁴³ The election win of the six Indigenous LPC MPs reflected a decrease from the ten who won in 2015. Joining these Indigenous MPs in the House of Commons was their former caucus member, Jody Wilson-Raybould, as well as two new Indigenous NDP MPs: Leah Gazan, who ousted Robert-Falcon Ouellette, and Mumalaaq Qaqqaq, who won in Nunavut and represented an electoral district loss for the LPC.⁸⁴⁴ The BQ and the CPC also each secured Indigenous representation with both Marc Dalton and Simon-Pierre Savard Tremblay winning their electoral districts on behalf of their respective parties. In total, eleven Indigenous MPs were elected to the House of Commons on October 21 2019 and reflected a representation of Indigenous peoples in four of the five major federal political parties with seats in the House of Commons.⁸⁴⁵

Although there was a drop from twelve Indigenous MPs to eleven, the noticeable loss of four Indigenous representatives in the LPC caucus is of importance to note, as is the significance of the result in Nunavut. The election of Qaqqaq as the MP for Nunavut is the first time Nunavut has sent an MP to the House of Commons who was not either in government or the party that formed the Official Opposition since Peter Ittinuar between 1980-1982. Additionally, the LPC caucus lost all representation from those First Nations who had sat as LPC MPs – Battiste’s election reflects a new First Nation MP that won in an electoral district that has traditionally been an LPC stronghold. The loss of Indigenous incumbents and a decrease in the number of Indigenous LPC caucus members is not the only decline worthy of note.

⁸⁴³ Mariam Matti, “Political Newcomers, Veterans Among 10 Indigenous MPs Elected to Parliament,” *CTV News* (October 22 2019), accessed November 1 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/federal-election-2019/political-newcomers-veterans-among-10-indigenous-mps-elected-to-parliament-1.4650885>; Note: Battiste’s election win was also historic as it marked the first time someone of L’nu descent was elected to the House of Commons, and also the first time an Indigenous person was elected from the Maritime provinces.

⁸⁴⁴ Matti, “Political Newcomers, Veterans Among 10 Indigenous MPs.”

⁸⁴⁵ Note: News sources cite only ten being elected in 2019, originally not including Savard-Tremblay.

As is well documented, the results of the 2019 Canadian federal election saw a minority government formed – the Trudeau government was returned to power but with only 157 seats. Not only did seats that the LPC were close to winning in 2015, which had a high Indigenous population, see a drop in LPC support but also seats that were a close call were lost. For instance, Edmonton Centre which was narrowly won in 2015, and has a high Indigenous population, saw Randy Boissonnault lose his seat – with support bleeding to the NDP and CPC. While media pundits and political scientists have focused on irritation with a backtrack on promises made by the Trudeau government, such as electoral reform, there is a need to fully unpack and review the impact of Indigenous voters. The forms of participation that Indigenous peoples have utilized - diplomacy, nation-to-nation relations and protests - over the centuries, as well as since 2015, are important and do, indeed, have impact. One can argue that the inability of the Trudeau government to fulfill promises made to Indigenous peoples to the extent expected by Indigenous peoples had an impact on Canadians who want progress on reconciliation and on Indigenous peoples who came out to vote for change in 2015. In fact, the approach taken by the Trudeau government, while not as aggressive as the Harper government, led to a decrease in support for the LPC and a decrease in overall participation by Indigenous voters. This decrease in LPC support, as well as some Indigenous peoples opting not to vote in 2019, likely benefited the opposition parties and their wins in districts such as Nunavut, Edmonton Centre, and even Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik.

In addition to the lack of cautious optimism from Indigenous peoples in the 2019 Canadian federal election, is a lack of discussion on Indigenous peoples and rights to the same extent as in 2015 – with focus mostly related to issues of clean drinking water on reserves. Additionally, with less focus on Indigenous peoples as was witnessed in the 2015 Canadian

federal election, the responses by Indigenous peoples involved between 2015 to 2019 highlight similar frustration and disillusion by some and a need to reconcile with the slow pace of change by others. Participation by Indigenous peoples, for all but one of the respondents highlighted in Chapter Six, is still seen as necessary and reflects a long history of Indigenous peoples utilizing multiple methods to seek further understanding by Canadians, and to remind Canadians of Indigenous histories, nations, diplomacy, and nation-to-nation relations.

In turn, from the onset of this research, focus has been to highlight whether Indigenous involvement matters and whether this involvement can effect change and reconciliation. In Chapter One, attention is given to understanding how Indigenous participation reflected the true understanding of a nation-to-nation relations. While Indigenous participation, prior to the formation of the Dominion of Canada, was consistent with norms from within their own nations and as international diplomacy with other Indigenous nations and European nations – it becomes evident that views and assumptions of Indigenous peoples as being inferior have a negative impact. With a review on Indigenous social, economic, legal, and political structures completed, it is important to be reminded that these were, and continue to be, carefully constructed and thought out – including, with respect to the previous point, diplomatic relations. As years passed, the nation-to-nation relationships between Indigenous nations and European nations, such as the French and British, slowly turned into a relationship of subjugation and settler-colonialism. Colonial laws such as the *Enfranchisement Act of 1857* sought to further restrict, and control territories of which Indigenous nations considered themselves stewards and upon which they had lived since time immemorial. Further encroachment, through the formation of the Dominion of Canada, sought to relegate Indigenous participation from nation-to-nation standing, to a relationship of control, forced enfranchisement, and, in many cases, death.

Following the formation of the Canadian state, and up to 1991, there were major changes not only relating to the Canadian state but also regarding Inuit, Métis, and First Nations. As concluded in Chapter Two, the interactions between Inuit, Métis, First Nations, and Canada showed significant changes during this period. Canadian and provincial governments sought control of Indigenous nations and territories, but also the complete submission and inability of Indigenous peoples to defend themselves. From First Nations and Inuit being legislated as wards of the state to settler society moving further West to outnumber the Métis, it is clear the Canadian state did not seek to make room for Indigenous peoples unless they assimilated. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, participation between 1867 to 1991 was an experience of violence, colonialism, and a settler-colonial mentality that dictated to them who they were, what they were allowed to do, who governed them, and who was allowed to represent them.

For First Nations, the election win of Len Marchand, their organization against the *1969 White Paper*, as well as the 1973 *Calder Decision* ushered in forms of participation through First Nations organizations, a Land Claims process, as well as First Nations participation in Canada's electoral process. Furthermore, Elijah Harper's actions in relation to the *Meech Lake Accord* was critical in preventing its ratification. With respect to the Métis, participation not only came from their return to electoral representation in the House of Commons, but also through their political and organizational structures. Such participation and representation related to the Métis assisted in their recognition in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and further recognition of their rights and the colonization they too have faced since 1869. Lastly, for Inuit, the changes in relation to their forms of participation are most noticeable during the 1970s due to their inclusion at the negotiation table for the JBNQA, the formation of the ITK, the inclusion of ballot boxes, and ballots for the 1979 election, as well as Peter Ittinuar's 1979 election win. Ittinuar's place as an

elected MP in the House of Commons was key for negotiations that would lead to the process of a land claim agreement for Inuit in the north, and specifically in relation to the lands that reflect the Territory of Nunavut. Additionally, the mega-constitutional debates and negotiations of the 1980s only fueled the different forms of Indigenous participation that had developed between the 1950s to the end of the 1970s. The anger from Indigenous peoples towards the *Meech Lake Accord* only added to frustration over the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Charter of Rights*. Lastly, the frustration and anger came to a head in 1990 – ushering in another period to reflect on Indigenous participation between 1991 to 2015.

Regarding the period between 1991 to 2015, Chapter Three offers some important insight for Indigenous participation. From the onset of consultations for the *Charlottetown Accord*, to the early days of #IdleNoMore, Indigenous participation, presence, political power was growing with the utilization of a variety of methods. The period between the *Charlottetown Accord* and *RCAP*'s findings and recommendations being introduced into the House of Commons, witnessed much input from Indigenous peoples but little movement on key items that were highlighted. While the Chretien years saw a similar standstill while the Canadian state reined in spending and made its priority fiscal austerity, the Martin years saw a change in approach with Indigenous-Canadian relations. More specifically, Martin sought to have Indigenous nations at the table as equals, and to increase Indigenous participation and representation in the House of Commons and in his government.

Following the election win of Stephen Harper and the CPC, another change relating to Indigenous-Canadian relations took place. The Harper government's approach to Indigenous-Canadian relations returned to a much stricter Canadian-centric and settler-colonial style of governing, eventually utilizing its increased share of the vote, number of seats in the House of

Commons, and the number of Indigenous MPs in the government, to move forward on policies and legislation that were heavily criticized and opposed by most Indigenous peoples. Following its majority win in 2011, the Harper government further sought to implement its Indigenous policies and utilized its status as a majority government to do so. For many Indigenous peoples, the breaking point was the unilateral imposition of policies by the Harper government which took place following the introduction of the Omnibus Bill C-45 – ushering in another avenue of Indigenous participation: the #IdleNoMore movement. The #IdleNoMore movement itself would not only lead to Indigenous responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but also the formation of Indigenous grassroots organizations which sought to increase Indigenous participation in the 2015 Canadian General Election.

In Chapter Four, the analysis turns to the #IdleNoMore movement and its interrelation with forms of Indigenous participation but also the 2015 Canadian federal election itself because of its historic turnout for Indigenous voters and it being an election that had much focus on Indigenous peoples and relations. Rather than feeling a sense of duty as Canadian citizens, the formation and emergence of the #IdleNoMore movement encompassed frustration, irritation, and forms of re-educating in relation to Canada, Canadians, and the Canadian government. The consistent unilateral approach taken by the Harper government led to increased frustration amongst Indigenous peoples and, following the introduction of Omnibus Bill C-45, saw Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples pushing back. As #IdleNoMore grew, the Harper government continued with a unilateral approach towards Indigenous peoples. In turn, through #IdleNoMore, grassroots organizations began to develop to assess ways to effect change to the leadership of the federal Canadian government. Participation in the 2015 election took many forms. Interaction, support, and discussion with Canadians federal political parties indicated a

willingness from the opposition parties to listen to, discuss, and consider Indigenous peoples as a potentially important set of voters that were important to engage with.

As a result of their outreach, the GPC, LPC, and NDP had a record number of Indigenous candidates seeking election to the House of Commons under their respective banners.

Additionally, such engagement and support for #IdleNoMore, and an increase in Indigenous volunteers within the party structures, also allowed for further engagement with Indigenous nations, organizations, and peoples. This engagement, alongside the increase in Indigenous candidates, encouraged policy platforms of, in particular, the LPC and NDP to have clearly marked sections that reflected Indigenous peoples on topics such as culture, infrastructure, and nation-to-nation relations. In turn, factors such as #IdleNoMore, and the creation of grassroots organization to foster Indigenous engagement, increased inclusion and focus on Indigenous peoples by the GPC, LPC, and NDP. The end result was to bring about the end of the Harper government lose and the potential start of an approach to Indigenous peoples as equals – on a nation-to-nation basis, and to hopefully reconcile, and bring change, to the Canadian/Indigenous relationship.

The question of whether such change and reconciliation to the Indigenous/Canadian relationship was pursued at the level expected by Indigenous peoples was the focus of Chapter Five. Despite promises of a renewed relationship and progress on reconciliation, the first term of the Trudeau's government came to an end with less enthusiasm, trust, and belief in his government from Indigenous peoples, and, arguably, among Indigenous allies and supporters. The 2015 Canadian federal election witnessed a historic twelve Indigenous MPs elected to the House of Commons – with ten specifically sitting in the LPC caucus and therefore with the Trudeau government. Alongside a record number of Indigenous MPs, was a record turnout by

Indigenous peoples casting a ballot – with the LPC, and thus the newly elected Trudeau government, benefiting greatly. Despite the benefit the Trudeau government received from this turnout, and the promises made, the appointment of two Indigenous people to prominent and critical Cabinet roles, and stating the importance of reconciliation, the cautious optimism of Indigenous peoples began to dissipate.

The release of the 2016 budget and the plans for the following four years were met with worry, frustration and the view that Indigenous rights and obligations were being used to try and obtain votes for the 2019 Canadian Federal Election. For many Indigenous peoples, the delays in critical funding had been in existence for decades if not well over a century. Indigenous peoples expected promises and actions to be dealt with expediently. Similar dismay and frustration spilled over and grew in relation to policy implementation, the nature of the so-called nation-to-nation relationship building, and the promises around reconciliation. As policies, negotiations, and legislation were introduced and implemented, it was clear that the Trudeau government did have some positive momentum forward. That said, such progress, as was highlighted, was mostly in areas of administration and services and the expansion of Métis rights. Unfortunately for First Nations and Inuit, reconciliation and nation-to-nation relations continued in more of a Canadian centric lens. As such developments were occurring during the Trudeau governments 2015 to 2019 mandate, the impact on Indigenous support grew increasingly clear. High-profile Indigenous experts who had been applauded by the LPC during #IdleNoMore were now being pushed aside by the Trudeau government due to their opposition to the Trudeau government's inaction and their calling out of the Trudeau government on its failure to fulfill its commitments. Additionally, the decline in activity of the LPC's IPC and others during the Trudeau government's first mandate becomes more noticeable upon assessing the implementation, action,

and approaches taken in relation to Indigenous peoples. Lastly, the treatment of Indigenous Cabinet Ministers, Tootoo and Wilson-Raybould, as well as well-respected Indigenous experts, such as Cindy Blackstock, only further eroded the support, and likely the participation, of Indigenous peoples in the Trudeau government.

Although such assessment can be made on the downturn in Indigenous support for the Trudeau government, questions, and consideration of those who opted to become more intertwined, and directly, involved in the electoral process is also vital in relation to questions about whether Indigenous peoples can bring change and reconciliation through the utilization of said system. Indigenous peoples who opt to get involved in Canada's electoral process face many questions from within themselves, the institutions with which they become involved, as well as from Canadians and other Indigenous peoples alike. As someone who was involved between 2005 to 2018, I too faced such questions, prejudices(?), and struggles. My experience in Canadian electoral politics, as a party volunteer and longstanding member of the Liberal Party of Canada, had significant influence on my graduate studies. As highlighted in Chapter Six, I left the LPC in April of 2018 – realizing, in my mind, that I had given enough time to the party and found it difficult to continue participating and volunteering my time in a structure that made me feel like I had to choose between my Indigeneity and the party. In turn, my experience as an Indigenous person involved with Canadian elections and the political party process, as well as my research expertise on Indigenous electoral participation, the ten questions put forth for research interviews were created. Upon development of the questions, the next step was contact and outreach to Indigenous peoples who were knowingly involved in the Canadian electoral process for the 2015 to 2019 period.

Those who responded and participated in the interviews reflect ten individuals, equally represented by women and men, as well as reflect the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations. In assessing and reviewing the answers given by Indigenous respondents to the ten questions proposed, there are some noticeable conclusions to be made, especially in relation to Indigenous involvement. For respondents, the 2015 to 2019 period reflects significant resilience and perseverance in their push for involvement – to further assist with education, influence of policy, and change. While almost all respondents, including Wilson-Raybould’s views from her memoir, believe their involvement did have impact on progress, when putting this alongside an assessment of the Trudeau government’s first term it can be argued that what is being reconciled is the length of time and patience required in order to effect even small changes. In other words, Indigenous participation, at least in the case of the research formulated from Chapter Six and all previous chapters, one could argue, reflects reconciliation not of the Canadian state with Indigenous nations, as equals, but Indigenous peoples having to reconcile with the Canadian electoral and institutional structure. More specifically, it reflects Indigenous peoples having to reconcile that change and progress with both the Canadian state and the Trudeau government is not at the pace that is expected for, and by, Indigenous peoples.

Upon understanding that Indigenous participation in Canada’s electoral institutions reflects one of reconciling with the slow pace of the Canadian state, one can make connections to a distrust of the system, and a view of yet another set of promises not kept – whether by previous governments or the Trudeau government. Additionally, by fully considering the research highlighted in this dissertation, better understanding of Indigenous frustrations, pushback, and different methods of participation can be further delved into and understood when looking at the 2019 and 2021 Canadian federal elections.

In 2019, there was a noticeable dip in the number of Indigenous LPC MPs, while there was a drop by one Indigenous MP overall. Although this is documented in news sources, there is little to no research by Canadian political science specialists into Indigenous turnout, participation, or the level of outreach utilized by the federal political parties during the 2019 Canadian federal election – unlike in 2015. In relation to the 2021 Canadian federal election, the edited series by Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan mark a change in such a lack of inclusion. Chadwick Cowie and Liam Midzain-Gobin’s chapter, “Progress or Status-Quo: Indigenous Peoples in Election 44,” fully assesses the 2021 Canadian federal election in relation to Indigenous peoples. Assessment includes party platforms, turnout, and the fact that 2021 reflected a record number of Indigenous peoples elected to the House of Commons. Although the number of Indigenous MPs jumped to thirteen, the number of LPC Indigenous MPs only rose by one with the win of Randy Boissonnault, who sought to win back Edmonton Centre, and the former seat he represented from 2015 to 2019, as the LPC MP. Unlike the increase in the number of Indigenous MPs, Indigenous turnout for casting ballots was still not at the same level as in 2015.

The continued drop in turnout from Indigenous peoples reflects the dismay with the Trudeau government and a long history of Indigenous peoples witnessing the Canadian state not fulfilling its promises to them – a participation that reflects them having to reconcile with the slow or non-existent pace of a settler-state that continues to utilize approaches focused on legitimizing itself since its formation. In turn, the research, analysis, and assessment presented in this dissertation adds a strong understanding of Indigenous views of participation, as well as the different methods of participation that have been utilized – within and outside of the Canadian state. Such research also offers further understanding in the realm of electoral participation as it

gives much-needed consideration on Indigenous views and experience in Canadian electoral politics and further adds to literature on citizenship and how it can be used as a colonial tool for sovereignty and erasure by a settler-state such as Canada. Additionally, the research presented not only assesses the process of reconciliation being taken by the Canadian state, and by a government that made it a key promise of their mandates, but also the fact that, one could argue, reconciliation in the Canadian sense is more to do with when and how Canada wants to implement it, and what the Canadian state is willing to implement. In turn, the research presented not only offers further components and understanding to various components of Canadian Political Science, and Political Science in general, but also Indigenous studies and the recent emergence of Indigenous politics – a developing component in many Political Science, and Studies, departments across many Canadian Universities.

Lastly, with the completion of the research analyzed herein, there is strong potential for future research that can continue from where this dissertation ends. Not only does the 2019 Canadian federal election need full assessment, but additional focus on the 2021 Canadian federal election could be more fully understood and considered. Questions surrounding why Indigenous turnout was lower as well as further interviews with new MPs and volunteers would be of value for comparing to remarks offered for this dissertation. Additionally, returning to some of the respondents who are no longer elected or involved would also be an additional research option in order to see if their previous responses are still in line with how they would respond today. Furthermore, there has been an ever growing list of Indigenous provincial MPPs, MLAs, MNA's, and MHAs who have been elected into provincial legislatures since the 2015 Canadian federal election. In addition to the aforementioned point, there are currently three, of

thirteen, Premiers of Indigenous lineage: Caroline Cochrane,⁸⁴⁶ P.J. Akeeagok,⁸⁴⁷ and, as of October 2023, Wab Kinew.⁸⁴⁸

Such representation of Indigenous peoples in the role as Premier, as well as the increasing number as members of a provincial legislature, also warrant further assessment and consideration. What led this wave of Indigenous peoples to participate provincially and how is their inclusion impacting provincial politics and intergovernmental affairs – if it is at all? Is the participation in provincial politics directly related to frustration with the Canadian federal government, and the approach the provinces and territories have taken towards Indigenous peoples since 1867? Additionally, further research could also branch into gender and politics by assessing the impacts and approaches taken that may be similar or dissimilar, between male and female Indigenous peoples in relation to electoral participation and amongst First Nations, Métis, and Inuit themselves. The ability to be able to differentiate and also assess the approaches taken, and differences between, all three sub-groups of the term Indigenous is of utmost importance when considering Indigenous peoples because it also assists with a key component of decolonization and reconciliation, especially in academia: that not all Indigenous people are the same and nor do all Indigenous peoples speak for, and represent, one another. Such consideration and realizations are not only important for understanding Canadian/Indigenous politics and relations, but also participation within, or alongside, the Canadian state – for discussions and debates relating to Indigenous resurgence, social movements, and even on institutional change in order to better reflect, and encompass, Indigenous understandings of change, reconciliation, and nation-to-nation relations.

⁸⁴⁶ Note: Cochrane is Métis and the Premier of the Northwest Territories. Cochrane was named Premier in 2019.

⁸⁴⁷ Note: Akeeagok is Inuk and the Premier of the territory of Nunavut. Akeeagok was named Premier in 2021.

⁸⁴⁸ Note: Kinew is Anishinaabeg and the Premier of the province of Manitoba.

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