

Unsettling Resistance: Decolonizing Social Movement Theory

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## **Abstract**

Social Movement Studies (SMS) is the primary academic field of theorizing political mobilization. On one hand, this rich body of literature has provided important insight into the social phenomenon responsible for collective action throughout history. On the other hand, the narrative produced from Social Movement Studies has reflected a dominant-Western political culture and interpretation of Indigenous resistance. For Indigenous resistance movements, the homogenization of political resistance within a Western framework coincides with long-standing colonial policies of assimilation in Canada. Most notably, SMS has traditionally taken the legitimacy of the state for granted, and has given remarkably little scholarly attention to movements that embody philosophies and strategies which fall outside of or contradict Western-political culture. Given this history, is SMS relevant to Indigenous theories of resistance or is the field as it currently exists merely perpetuating the colonial discourse(s) of Canada? By bringing Indigenous theories of resistance into conversation with contemporary social movement theory, this thesis demonstrates that while methodologically useful to the study of Indigenous social movements, social movement theories in their current form have not and are perhaps unable to adequately explain Indigenous social movements. The purpose of my research is thus twofold: firstly, to deconstruct Social Movement Studies using critical, decolonizing theory and secondly, to explore the implications of this critique for Indigenous resistance in Canada.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Preface	1
Introduction	4
Terminology	8
Scope of the Research	12
Chapter One: Social Movement Theory	12
New Social Movement Theories	15
Relative Deprivation Theory	17
Resource Mobilization Theory	19
Political Process Theory	21
Frame Analysis	23
Chapter Two: Indigenous Resistance Theory	26
Macro-lens: The Global Indigenous Movement	27
Indigenist	30
Summary	32
Chapter Three: Storytelling and Narratives of Resistance	34
Rethinking Resistance	35
Storytelling Methodologies	37
Chapter Four: Identity	40
Indigenous Social Movements	42
Mobilized Identities	44
Chapter Five: Land	48
Resource Mobilization Theory and Indigenous Movements	51
Resource mobilization within Indigenous movements	52
Resources in Indigenous Social Movements	55
Conclusion	57
Final Considerations and Recommendations	59

## Preface

In *Indigenous Methodologies*, Cree-Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2009) wrote, “we know what we know from where we stand” (p. 7). This line stayed with me as I wrote this thesis. I’ve given much thought to where I stand now and how I came to be here. It is not my intention to add to the superfluity of reflections on “the settler experience,” but it would seem counterintuitive to contribute to a conversation about decolonization without first addressing what I know and how I came to know it.

My extensive involvement in social justice campaigns led me to pursue a thesis on social movement studies. I have participated in countless rallies, protests, occupations, sit-ins, banner drops, and work stoppages for all manner of reasons: women’s rights; access to education; environmental justice; labour rights; and more. In the years I spent with activists, I was immersed in conversations about political opportunities, movement-building, narratives, and identities. Yet in all my conversations with activists, our good intentions were crippled by our collective frustration in overcoming the social inequalities within our own movements. I found this particularly evident in the roundabout ways we talked about inequities, and ultimately, our inability to escape them.

In Canada, social justice culture is articulated within interlocking colonial narratives of our collective history. Consequently, our solutions to inequalities have been prepared in an environment that perpetuates them. In Canada, social justice is built upon a political culture of politeness, peacefulness, accommodation, tolerance,

and acceptance. Yet counternarratives of unreconciled atrocities including cultural genocide and occupation have begun to enter mainstream consciousness. What if the tools we use as burgeoning academics reinforce the very structures and relations we hope to challenge? This thought has led me to revisit the ways in which I understand social justice in Canada. I, and arguably other Canadians, assume the legitimacy of the modern nation-state model and we believe in the power of human rights. Yet for many people residing within the borders of Canada, particularly Indigenous peoples, this assumption precludes self-determination, decolonization, and sovereignty. I learned from the work of Anner (1996), Bourassa, McKay-McNabb and Hampton (2005) and Stevenson (1998) that identity movements like Slutwalk and Occupy, which are dependent on a collective identity – e.g., women and “the 99%,” – are susceptible to the internal marginalization of Aboriginal peoples and ethnic minority groups. Although these movements have adopted a variety of strategies in addressing injustice, they are problematized by their drive for a single, universal goal; the common good. Indeed, for the most part, colonialism went unacknowledged within these movements and therefore, decolonization and Indigenous resistance has been invisible. This realization has motivated me to reassess what we consider social movement activity and social justice in Canada.

The ways in which social movements are perceived influences choices about which information to privilege. The study of social movements has historically privileged social movements that seek empowerment within the current social order. Indigenous social movements inherently threaten to destabilize Canada’s political structure and

consequently, the relationships among Canadians, all levels of government, and Indigenous peoples. Until recently, there has been remarkably little discussion of Indigenous resistance in Canada at all, despite its rich history. Social movement theories such as resource mobilization theory, political process theory and frame analysis, have been criticised for taking for granted identities, narratives and nationalisms (Simpson, 2011; Ladner, 2010). These assumptions have resulted in the marginalization of decolonizing discourses in the Canadian consciousness over the past several centuries. As mainstream theories of mobilization continue to prevail, Indigenous frameworks of resistance ought be considered within academia and the public consciousness.

Yet, Indigenous scholars have not been silent. A substantial body of literature exists and continues to emerge that contests the colonial narrative of Canada and calls for Indigenous frameworks of resistance to be honoured. A shift in the national narrative has fueled scholarly research on Indigenous resistance, what it means, what it is, who is involved, and what implications the study of these movements have for Canada (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, 2008; LaRocque, 2011; Borrows, 2010; Fagan, 2004). It is my hope that my project provides a starting point for people like me who are interested in social justice in Canada but are frustrated by the limits of our internal current conversation. We must first hone the tools, languages, and understanding of Canada's colonial history in order to ask better questions about a meaningful post-colonial future: a future that recognizes the existence of nations within the borders of Canada. Social movement studies stands as a gateway, not a barrier, to open the conversation about

Indigenous social movements and what the implications of these movements have for Canada.

### **Introduction**

*Cognitive imperialism ... rears its ugly head in every discipline every time a student is told that there is no literature or no thinking available on any given topic from within Indigenous traditions.*

- Leanne Simpson, 2010

Indigenous social movements have been doubly filtered out of Canadian consciousness: first, through legislation against physical movement, legal representation and other limitations historically imposed through the Indian Act, and then through omission of resistance in the historical record (Feldman, 2010). The absence of Indigenous social movements within social movement studies (SMS), the primary academic field for theorizing political mobilization, has fostered this culture of denial. In part, this oversight can be explained by the conceptualization of social movements as “collective, organized, sustained and non-institutional challenges of authority, power holders or cultural beliefs and practices” (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003). This definition offers little insight into the mechanisms that have maintained languages, nationalisms, and traditions despite centuries of colonial violence. Non-Indigenous Canadians are well positioned to dismiss political events involving Indigenous peoples as isolated, radical and unprecedented.

The goal of this thesis project is to explore the use of social movement theories to study Indigenous social movements. The field of social movement studies has been described by some Indigenous scholars as irrelevant or incapable of adequately



explaining Indigenous resistance altogether because of fundamental differences between Indigenous/Non-Indigenous world views (Simpson, 2011, Ladner, 2008). By bringing traditional social movement theories into conversation with resistance movements like storytelling, identity and land, I will address these criticisms and propose possible solutions. This project is timely, particularly in light of the ongoing conversations about reconciliation in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015). As Leanne Simpson argues in *Dancing on Our Turtles Back* the process of reconciliation has many meanings: for Canada, it may be about turning a metaphorical page, but for Indigenous movements and nations it is a renaissance of Indigenous political culture. For social movement studies, reconciliation may mean having a fuller understanding of political resistance.

The discussion in Chapter One opens with a critical overview of social movement theories (SMTs) – the analytical frameworks of political mobilization. Using Indigenist criticisms, I interrogate the strengths and weaknesses of four popular social movement theories. These theories were chosen because they are the most frequently used theories within social movement studies. On one hand, SMTs have legitimized collective action by establishing the significance of social movements in the shaping of states. Yet, social movement theories have also treated states as legitimate, monolithic entities which have assimilated histories, geographies, and cultures into a single, national metanarrative. Canada’s past and ongoing colonial legacy consists of interlocking narratives of diverse groups of peoples. An interrogation of social movement theories

using Indigenist criticism helps problematize the theoretical limitations of social movement theories.

Chapter Two engages specifically with Indigenous theories of resistance – the combination of ideas, methodologies, and theories used to explore local and globalized Indigenous political action. To date, there is no single theory of Indigenous resistance. Chapter Two builds on the conversation from Chapter One, but fleshes out the theoretical and methodological puzzles for explaining Indigenous resistance movements. This chapter summarizes the most urgent considerations in studying Indigenous resistance movements.

Chapter Three is the first of three Indigenous social movements in my thesis to be discussed in-depth. I chose storytelling as the first Indigenous social movement primarily because of its role in ensuring cultural continuity. According to Indigenous scholars, storytelling is intrinsically linked to resistance, because it contains the building blocks – or as one scholar put it “the seeds” – of culture (Simpson, 2011). I also chose storytelling, because oral histories and narratives have had profound implications for Canadian law and will likely continue to have significant implications for Canada’s future. Moreover, storytelling reveals important histories, values and goals that are unique to each nation and therefore movements. As such, storytelling is an excellent entry point into conversations about broadening the definition of social movements.

Chapter Four focuses on the concept of a mobilized Indigenous identity. Chapter Four begins includes a brief discussion of some of the complexities of an imposed, collective “Indian” identity. On one hand, identity has been used as a weapon against

Indigenous peoples as a means of stripping peoples of traditions nationalism and culture. However, collective identity has served an important role within Indigenous social movements, particularly inter-nation movements, in fostering unity and a sense of solidarity. I discuss how Indigenous identity can be used in complex ways, as a strategy to recruit or acquire political support and resources.

Issues of land are discussed in Chapter Five. In this chapter, I explore the both the political-material and political-conceptual implications of land. Control over land and its resources is the key determinant of political and economic self-sufficiency. Canadian colonialism, since its beginnings as the functional realization of European imperialism, has relied on the stealing and control of Indigenous lands in order to maintain and expand Western domination. However, land is also conceptually linked to language, culture and values. Yet, much of the literature has thus far treated these dual-meanings in exclusivity. Chapter Four considers the concrete and symbolic meanings of land together in the context of resource mobilization theory.

Chapter Six brings my discussion of Indigenous social movements to a close. Using the concepts of identity, stories and land I make the final case to broaden our understanding of social movements to better account for the diverse forms of Indigenous social movements that exist. This begins the process for settler students such as me for journeying beyond discourses and methodologies which perpetuate restrictive, understandings of justice in Canada.

## Terminology

Definitions of colonialism tend to be depoliticized. Dictionary definitions of colonialism are often vague descriptions of ‘colonies’ and ‘settlements’ without any reference to the actual occupation, violence or displacement experienced by the original peoples (Loomba, 2005). Instead, Loomba (2005) suggests that colonialism might be thought of as a recurrent and widespread historical phenomenon of “conquest of and control of other people’s lands and goods” through strategies of “trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellions” (p. 7). In consideration of Loomba’s alternative definition, Canadian colonialism can be understood on a basic level as the functional realization of European imperialism, with the attempted conquest driven particularly by natural resource exploration. Colonialism has resulted in the dismantling of many independent nations present in pre-contact North America, and the reassembling of these nations in the modern settler state, Canada (Tuhivai-Smith, 1999; Loomba, 2005). However, as forces such as globalization and migration continue to prevail in Canada and beyond, we must continue to revisit our understandings of the socio-political dynamics within Canada, particularly between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous is a word with its own limitations and controversies. I chose to use this term because “Indigenous” is widely used in resistance writings to refer to those peoples’ whose ancestors have lived in Canada since time-immemorial (Alfred, 2005; Sunseri, 2010). In Alfred and Corntassel’s (2005) oft-cited article, they describe Indigeneity as

An identity constructed, shaped and lived within the politicized context of contemporary colonialism. The communities, clans, nations and tribes we call *Indigenous Peoples* are just that: Indigenous to the lands they inhabit in contrast to and in contention with the colonial societies and states that have spread out from Europe and other centres of empire. It is this oppositional place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other people in the world (Pg. 597).

This definition of Indigeneity is the most appropriate for the discussion at hand; first, the authors make explicit contextualization of peoples within nations, clans, communities and tribes. This contextualization is becoming increasingly important in an age of growing globalization, when unfortunately; localization is often sacrificed to make room for generalized, pan-Indigenous analyses of colonial histories. Localized approaches respect the integrity of diverse Indigenous knowledges, which are necessarily place-based, and reject the notion of a monolithic Indigenous group with a uniform culture, tradition and history.

Next, Alfred and Corntassel's (2005) definition of Indigeneity includes *contentious* and *contrasted* existences. Indigenous peoples inherently challenge the social and political structures of Canada and the concept of nation and state in general. Alfred and Corntassel believe Indigenous peoples by virtue of being Indigenous

challenge the social order of Canada. The significance of this natural-contentious living is explored further in Chapter Four, but this element of Alfred and Corntassel's definition already distinguishes Indigenous resistance from other movements in Canada which do not fundamentally challenge the socio-political order.

Indigenous resistance theory is a complicated, divisive topic. Even to use the phrase "Indigenous resistance" forces one to make the uneasy assumption that "Indigenous" is a legitimate identifier of a diverse group of people. In truth, the term racially categorizes distinct nations and cultures into one group (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Simpson, 2011). If resistance is bound to a collective racialized identity, the distinct strategies and goals of hundreds of nations and peoples risk being melded into one. On one hand, this strategy is useful when talking about shared experiences of colonialism and decolonization (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999), but on the other hand, such a generalization can undermine the differing goals and objectives among Indigenous peoples by obscuring the specific political and material implications of decolonization. I reluctantly use the word "Indigenous" in the context of social movements only because of the current linguistic limitations and not because I feel that these movements necessarily share the same goals, processes or motivations.

Similarly, Indigenist has become an adjective used to describe a specific approach to doing research. Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) describe Indigenist research as foremost, being inseparable from the larger political struggle. The researchers also state that to be Indigenist, the research must be done by Indigenous peoples and also privilege Indigenous voices and knowledges.

Decolonizing movements inhabit specific tribal, community and/or national frameworks known in the literature as Indigenous knowledges (Kovach, 2009; Simpson 2008; Anderson, 2011). Broadly understood, these frameworks are founded upon “knowledge and values, which have been acquired through experience, observation from the land or from spiritual teachings, and handed down from one generation to another” (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2005, cited in Walsh, 2011). While some of these knowledges may be similar across nations and peoples, they cannot be transplanted or universalized precisely because they have been acquired through experience, observation, and relationships with the land.

Decolonization or anti-colonial resistance is the core of Indigenous social movements. In this thesis, either term refers to those actions, cultures, traditions, and lives which are perceived as counter hegemonic and anti-colonial. It is crucial to qualify decolonization as explicitly counter hegemonic, because of the ways in which Indigenous bodies, cultures, and histories are perceived as threats to the social order. This reality is unique to Indigenous nations. As McIsaac (2000) explains, these threats to the dominant culture are not necessarily demonstrated within social movements per se. Instead, “because what it [Indigeneity] is perceived to represent, necessarily challenges the social structures of Canadian society and thus represents a challenge to the power imbalances upheld by these structures” (McIsaac, 2000, 91). McIsaac’s words are very similar to those of Alfred and Corntassel (2005), who argued that Indigeneity automatically positioned Indigenous peoples to live contentiously and in opposition with the colonial system. Many social movements within Canada can exist within the

current socio-political structure, whereas movements predicated on decolonization cannot seek to alter and/or dismantle those structures.

### **Scope of the Research**

This thesis is a broad analysis of how Indigenous social movements in general are treated in social movement literature. Accordingly, this thesis is not a social movement history and does not spend a significant amount of time discussing critical events. This approach was chosen partly because the conversations about Indigenous resistance strategies – limited as they are in social movement studies – already focus on events such as those at Oka, Temagami, Elsipogtog, and Esgeoopetitj. Secondly, while these events are significant markers of broader movement activity, they often overshadow the ongoing efforts to maintain languages, traditions and other aspects of cultural continuity.

Similarly, this thesis deliberately does not take up an intersectional analysis. This decision was motivated by both practical limitations of what could be covered in a limited amount of space, but also because considerations such as gender, internalized racism, tensions among status/non-status, tensions/differences in the pathways of resistance among Metis/Aboriginal/Inuit, sexuality, poverty and many others deserves separate analyses, by those living these experiences.

### **Chapter One: Social Movement Theory**

Social movement studies became a distinct field of study following the 1960s protests in the United States. Within this field, theories on the causes and motivations



of movements have ranged from irrationality (Arendt, 1958; Kornhauser, 1959) to resource and economic need (McCarthy and Zald, 1973), to historical oppression (Tourraine 1977) and recently, to emotions (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001) and identity (Poletta, & Jasper, 2001). Presently, in the field of Social Movement Studies, the causes and motivations of social movements are often linked to resources (Jenkins, 1983; Oberschall, 1973; McCarthy & Zald, 1977) and political opportunities (Wilkes, 2006; Ramos, 2006).

The study of social movements is not limited to the field of social movement studies. Theoretical contributions from other disciplines including Critical Race Studies, Literary Studies, Gender Studies and Sociology are also used in tandem with social movement theories. For example, Wilkes, Brown and Ricard (2010) deconstruct the socio-political imbalances inherent with the narratives of mainstream media coverage of Indigenous social movements. Similarly, Wilkes, Brown and Myers (2010) explored the presence of Canadian nationalisms and Indigenous nationalisms in mainstream media coverage, represented through iconic pictures like the now-famous photograph, Face to Face, which captured the intense moment between Canadian soldier, Pte. Patrick Coultier and a Mohawk Warrior during the Oka Standoff. This work focuses heavily on race, gender and the relations of power. However, while this work is critical to the contextualizing of social movements, it is not considered social movement theory in the present paper. This thesis limits its conversation largely to social movement theories that attempt to systematically explain how and why social movements manifest and how they are structured. The reasoning for this specific focus is that this thesis is in

response to criticism of the study of social movements as a discipline (Simpson, 2010; Ladner, 2010)

Although this thesis deals almost exclusively with social movements, it is important to recognize that social movement studies considers various levels of political action. Within the scope of contentious political action are also protests or critical events, which are understood as individual acts or series of acts that intend to challenge authority, power holders or cultural beliefs. For example, Indigenous groups have often used barricades and road blocks to protest controversial policies or development proposals. However, this thesis deals almost exclusively with social movements, which are characterized by similar behaviours to those of critical events or protests, but are sustained over time (Goodwin et al., 2003). Social movement theories (SMTs) are the ways in which researchers attempt to explain how and why social movements exist. An important distinction is also needed here between social movement theories and methodologies; the former is a set of ideas about social movement theories and the methodologies are the tools used by researchers to find evidence for a theory. As you will see throughout this thesis and particularly within the discussion about storytelling, Indigenous frameworks often blend theory and methodology. This blending is critical, because it limits the risk of reductive thinking – a commonly cited criticism of social movement studies (Ladner, 2010; Simpson, 2011).

Social movements are distinct from revolutionary movements in that the latter seek to overthrow the government, while social movements work within current political structures (Goodwin et al., 2003). Indigenous social movements cannot be

unilaterally categorized into either group, because while they are structurally similar to social movements, Indigenous social movements are nested within decolonization and are therefore distinct from other social movements (McIsaac, 2001). However, Indigenous political movements are referred to as social movements within the literature and are therefore discussed within this context in the present paper.

At first, scholars interested in social movements were primarily concerned with *why* individuals participated in collective action (Jenkins, 1983). It was theorized then, and continues to be accepted now, that a collective grievance, a group's set of assumptions about the cause of a shared sense of disempowerment, is essential to the formation of a social movement (Jenkins, 1983). Although the boundaries between popular social movement theories, and particularly between old and new social movement theories, arise from different understandings of the methods and timing by which grievances are expressed. This thesis deals almost exclusively with New Social Movement (NSM) theories, since these are the most popular frameworks of studying collective political action, both now and retroactively.

### **New Social Movement Theories**

In the early twentieth century, social movement analyses described social movements as mob-like, dangerous, and irrational (Goodwin, et al. 2003). In these analyses, social movement actors were often depicted unfavourably as ignorant groups, lacking organization, structure and cohesiveness. Most of these early analyses focused on pre-World War II movements, such as the labour disputes of early 1900s England (Buechler, 1995).

The rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s sparked a great shift for social movement analysts who witnessed the use of organized and sustained strategies within the anti-Semitic movement (Della Porta & Diani, 2005). Nazism clearly demonstrated the potential capabilities of movements to reconfigure a state's political and social structure using organized networks and calculated strategies. Still, the study of social movements during this time took place within political science and sociology departments and did not yet develop into a field in its own right (Johnston, 2016). In spite of the shift in the 1930s, most scholars believed that movements like Nazism were the exception, and not the rule.

However, the 1960s witnessed unprecedented social movement activity across all social strata in the West. This surge in political activity began to challenge preconceived ideas of the motivations and processes of collective action. The widespread nature, structure and influence of movements like the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war movements in the United States, now collectively referred to as "identity movements" or "new social movements," became important to academic analyses (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015).

Within this new wave of thought, scholars argued that movement actors were not mobs or crowds, but organized, strategic political actors. New Social Movement Theories arose also as reactionary alternatives to classical Marxist analyses of collective action, which had previously focused solely on class-based and worker political mobilization in Europe (Buechler, 1995). Proponents of NSM theories attempted to move away from what they perceived as reductionist economic frameworks toward

comprehensive analyses of collective action that included forms of group identification other than class such as race and gender, and which also considered factors such as resources, political opportunities and group identification. New social movement theorists used the Civil Rights Movement, student movement and the women's movement to explain how movements premised on culture, ideology, and politics were taking place (Buechler, 1995). During this time period, access to citizenship and human rights became central concerns to the study of movements (Goodwin, et al., 2003). Of course, the grievances of these so-called "new" social movements were not actually new. It was their structure which made the movements "new." In the next section, I critically engage the first of the four most popular new social movement theories.

### **Relative Deprivation Theory**

Relative deprivation theory (RDT) is a theory of intergroup comparisons. According to RDT, an individual or a group will compare themselves to another individual or group to gauge that the relative fairness of their situation (Smith, H., Pettigrew, T., Pippin, G., & Bialosiewicz, S., 2015). The term was coined by Stouffer (1949), who was surprised by soldiers' responses during his post-WWII surveys. Stouffer found that a group of soldiers reported higher levels of frustration than military police over promotions and raise rates, despite being a higher rank. Since Stouffer's original analysis, relative deprivation theory has grown roots in political science, sociology and social psychology.

Within social movement studies, relative deprivation theorists maintain that resources and opportunities are unnecessary for movement actors to effectively

mobilize (Repin, 2012). Instead, the only impetus for a social movement is a grievance caused by perceived significant political, social and/or economic disparity between groups. The logic of relative deprivation theory then boils down to a simple cost/benefit scenario in which a group which sees itself as having little to lose will take large risks to reduce or destroy the discrepancy (Repin, 2012; Wilkes, 2004a).

There are variations in the explanations proposed by proponents of RDT explaining why Indigenous movements manifest. For example, Morden (2014) argues that value rationality, a grievance that is innately felt regardless of potential material gains accounts for Indigenous motivation. In short, according to Morden, morals and a sense of injustice, as well as the need to act on such injustice, outweigh material or political costs to Indigenous peoples. Repin (2012) points to high rates of protest participation among Indigenous peoples, despite the fact that Indigenous peoples constitute one of the poorest demographics in Canada, as further evidence in support of RDT.

Relative deprivation theory has been criticised for relying too heavily on descriptions and not enough on measurable evidence (Ramos, 2008). This has led to the application of resource deprivation to encompass a variety of experiences. The broad use of resource deprivation has risked rendering the concept meaningless (Walker & Smith, 2001). Moreover, its versatility requires several assumptions. For one, RDT assumes that the recognition of inequality between groups will always be interpreted as illegitimate or undeserved (Smith et al., 2015).

Accordingly, RDT descriptive nature makes it difficult for researchers to definitively draw conclusions about the causes, motivations and processes of movements. The characteristic in-depth ethnographies and other similar qualitative methods may provide key insight into the context of movement organizing, but it offers little explanatory power on their own (Morden, 2014). As Repin (2012) freely admits in her own work on relative deprivation theory and Indigenous social movements, “these theories can be useful analytical tools, but have little to offer in terms of predictive power and must be used carefully as explanatory tools” (pp 162). This was echoed by Smith et al. (2015) who argued that post-hoc descriptions hold little value if these methods did not include measurable variables. Resource mobilization theory has the opposite problem and is critiqued for its overemphasis on measurable variables.

### **Resource Mobilization Theory**

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) is another cost-benefit framework. Proponents of RMT believe that greater availability and acquisition of resources will result in higher participant engagement, and movement sustainability (Ramos, 2006). It is believed that the “variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements” determine a movement’s effectiveness (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 1214). The resources in question are usually capital and labour (McCarthy and Zald, 1977), but as discussed by Wilkes (2004a), resources can also include political support (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977) and intellectual leadership (Donati, 1996).

According to RMT theorists, a social movement's success is demonstrable by the movement's ability (or not) to articulate grievances to the state and to have these grievances formally acknowledged. This acknowledgement, which can be done only through the creation of a social movement organization, is theorized to trigger the process for social change (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Jenkins, 1983). For example, proponents of RMT studying Indigenous resistance movements might focus their analyses on organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Grand Council of the Crees or Pauktuutit whose roots stem from past social movements or political events and whom interact with various levels of Canadian governments. Interestingly, these studies have not yet been conducted.

Resource mobilization theory uses both qualitative and quantitative research to explain social movements. Methodological choices range from literature reviews (Repin 2012) to incentive-based cost/benefit analyses, much like those used to describe budding businesses and entrepreneurships (Jenkins, 1983; Oberschall, 1973). The mixed-methods approach has enabled scholars to glean both strategic and contextual information about social movement organizations.

The theory has been critiqued for its overemphasis upon formal, conventional social movement organizing which centres on polity members and market organization (Oberschall, 1973). The theory's emphasis on formal organizations – and the relationships these organizations have with the Government – restricts the theory's relevance to grassroots Indigenous social movements. Ladner (2008) argues that



Indigenous social movements extend beyond the realm of the state, rights and grievances and are instead nestled within nationalisms and nation-building.

### **Political Process Theory**

Political Process Theory (PPT) is one of the most commonly used frameworks in SMS. Political process theory contradicts RMT and questions the necessity of resources at all for a social movement to begin and to be sustainable. According to PPT scholars, social movements influence political culture regardless of movement actors' access to resources. Specifically, PPT proponents are interested in political opportunities, which they believe result from shifts in political structures, ideologies and political elites (Goodwin and Jasper, 2001). Accordingly, movement participants with little or no economic and/or political power will wait for shifts in the organized political sphere before acquiring the capacity to mobilize a social movement (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977). The changed political climate, and movement actors' ability to seize the opportunity, will determine the success of the movement

The 1951 amendments to the *Indian Act* are considered by some to have marked the beginning of a "new" Indigenous social movement. According to Ladner (2008), this "new" Indigenous social movement was characterized by increasingly politicized households and a growing educated Indigenous population with greater political, social and economic expectations and an increased capacity to organize. Other scholars have dated Indigenous resistance to the years following WWII (Ramos 2008) in which discussions of human rights in general, and state responsibility in protecting rights specifically, were at the forefront of public and political dialogue (Fleras & Elliott, 1992;

Cardinal, 1999). Still, others have traced collective Indigenous mobilization to the Indigenous backlash to Pierre Trudeau's 1969 White Paper (Wilkes, 2006; Ramos 2008).

The three events described above – the 1951 constitutional amendments, World War II and the 1969 White Paper – are all examples of what scholars have come to describe as political opportunities. Other examples that are specific to Indigenous movements include the Charlottetown and the Meech Lake Accord and more recently, the passing of Bill C-45 which sparked the Idle No More Movement in the winter, 2012. Each of these events represents a significant shift or change in Canada's policy, which may have been argued to have catalyzed Indigenous political mobilization. For example, the introduction of Bill C-45 was thought to have triggered the Idle No More movement in 2012. Interestingly, no research has yet fully tested the significance of political opportunities for Indigenous political mobilizations.

However, Ramos (2006) tested the importance of three factors, including political opportunities, on the rate of Indigenous political mobilization. Specifically, Ramos (2006) examined the possible relationship between resources, political opportunities and Pan-Aboriginal identity to Indigenous social movements. Using regression analyses, Ramos concluded that the most significant determinants of Indigenous social movements were the founding of new organizations, federal monies allocated to Indian affairs, positive media attention, and lastly, the successful resolution of land claims. In short: political opportunities and the availability of resources were found to be positively correlated with Indigenous political mobilizations.

Political Process Theory provides a useful analysis of the context in which social movements emerge, but it also explains how a lack of opportunities may contribute to non-participation of people who may share the grievance. Tarrow (1994) writes, “if social movement research has shown anything over the past two decades, it is that grievances are not sufficient to trigger collective action, that this requires someone who can take advantage of political opportunities, develop organizations of some kind, and interpret grievances and mobilize consensus around them” (Tarrow, 1992). This is a particularly compelling point for Indigenous movements because it provides insight into why Indigenous social movements have only recently manifested as they do now.

On the other hand, like resource mobilization theory, PPT’s assumption that social movement actors will respond to oppression through the state’s political system limits its ability to explain how nationalisms, languages and traditions are sustained over time (Simpson, 2011). Moreover, this assumption necessarily places the colonial structure of Canada as legitimate, absolute and perpetual. Of course, the study of social movements usually incorporates a combination of one or more frameworks. In fact, most theories of resistance also employ some type of frame analysis to expand on the structural perspective provided by PPT and RMT. Frame Analysis is the fourth and final framework I will cover.

### **Frame Analysis**

Frame analysis originated in Goffman’s (1974) book, *Frame Analysis*, to describe how narrative structure social movements including how narratives are manifested; how they are propagated throughout its membership, and what implications these

frames have for members and the movement itself. Interestingly, frame analysis arose from the same criticism which led to the birth of RMT and PPT; frame analysts were frustrated by the focus of prominent theories (i.e., RMT and PPT) and their emphasis on structural explanations for political mobilizations and the theoretical limitations for cultural analyses (Benford & Snow, 2000). Unlike RMT and PPT which focuses on factors external to social movements (e.g., resources and political opportunities, respectively), frame analysis focuses internally, and specifically on the ways in which movement actors interpret experiences and events (Benford & Snow, 2000).

According to frame analysts, narratives constitute the structuring of a social movement (Poletta, 1998). For example, Benford and Snow (2003) describe three core framing tasks of social movements – diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames - which respectively explain the problematic situation in need of change, who or what is to blame for the situation and who is motivated to participate in the challenge for change. The core framing tasks are essentially the building blocks to what Poletta (1998) describes as the collective frame of a movement. The collective frame is thought to recruit members, maintain solidarity among allies, and destabilize opposition (Poletta, 1998). The study of these frames constitutes a cultural analysis of the movement.

Unlike structuralist frameworks such as RMT and PPT, culturalist frameworks are much more focused, and privilege the interactional processes among individuals and groups (Johnston, et al., 2016). Inglehart (1990) and Johnston et al. (2016) argue that at surface level, a macroscopic view of the dominant culture of a society is misleading because it appears consensual and homogenous but in actuality, upon closer inspection,

there are outlying collectives which exist among fissures within dominant culture, creating movements or opportunities of change. Accordingly, through focused cultural analyses of movements, we can see the cleavages of the society in which these collectives must exist. In theory, if it is possible to study the ways in which collectives rub against dominant cultures we can potentially predict when and why collectivities will mobilize (Johnston, et al., 2016).

The emphasis on narratives and framing has foregrounded important subjective factors of movements, particularly for identity (Poletta and Jasper, 2001), emotions (Jasper, 1998; Goodwin, Jasper & Poletta, 2009), and movement culture (Johnston, et al., 2004; Poletta, 1998), which have been typically neglected by both RMT and PPT in favour of structural and strategic considerations. However, the representativeness of narratives may be too easily seen as representing a whole group. Poletta writes of her own experience, “my particular story is too easily seen as that of ‘women’ or ‘Latinos’ in a way that erases difference within the group” (p 425).” In the context of Indigenous movements, a broad ‘Indigenous framework’ or pan-Indigeneity has already been identified as a potential barrier to studying Indigenous-led movements (Simpson, 2011). As I have and will continue to argue throughout this paper: we are at a point now wherein generalized representativeness (pan-Indigeness) is not necessarily the most useful way of understanding the grievances, strategies and actions of various Indigenous movements.

Thus far I have briefly described four of the most common social movement theories applied to the study of political mobilization and their relevance (or not) to

Indigenous resistance movements in Canada. These theories are rarely used exclusively and are often used in combination with one another or others not mentioned in this thesis. In the next section, I will provide a brief overview of the literature that is available on Indigenous social movements in Canada.

## **Chapter Two: Indigenous Resistance Theory**

*To lose control of knowledge (and knowledge production efforts as research), is akin to having another tell one's own story. For too long, Indigenous peoples have had outsider research tell their story.*

– Kovach, 2015

Scholarly interest in Indigenous-led political events in Canada began in the 1990s following the events that took place in Oka, Ipperwash and Burnt Church (Wilkes, 2004; Morden, 2014). Initially, public and scholarly attention focused on the circumstances around the specific event, but a shift in the literature in the early 2000s turned scholars' attention to the possibility of a connected, networked movement against colonialism (Muehlebach, 2003; Niezen, 2000; Feldman, 2001; Morgan, 2004, 2007). This shift in social movement studies took place at the same time as Indigenous scholars were taking control of research processes in general, moving academia towards a recognition of the value in Indigenous research processes (Kovach, 2015). It is therefore timely to bring these separate theoretical conversations together now.

The freshness of studying Indigenous social movements means that scholars are primarily exploring and describing Indigenous social movement activity rather than explaining it. For example, scholars interested in understanding Indigenous resistance in

a global context generally use a macro lens approach. In the global context, Indigenous networking is predominantly situated within the context of formal, international organizations like the United Nations (Muehlebach, 2003; Niezen, 2000; Feldman, 2001; Morgan, 2004, 2007). Other scholars prefer to narrow their focus, and personalize their research through emancipatory research, a form of study used throughout the social sciences as a way of challenging positivist, objective study. Emancipatory research often involves the researcher's participation in the social movement as a way to acknowledge and privilege subjectivity as a legitimate method of inquiry. However the literatures in both bodies of work have been largely produced by non-Indigenous scholars in non-Indigenous contexts (Alfred, 2005). Consequently, several scholars have called for the use of Indigenist frameworks in the study of social movements. Indigenist research is a broad term used to describe research that is undertaken by Indigenous scholars, within or in partnership with Indigenous peoples and contributes to the decolonizing process (Maclean, K., Robinson, C., & Natcher, D., 2014).

The ensuing chapter fleshes out these three approaches to studying Indigenous social movements in more detail. Traditional social movement theories were covered in chapter one and critical events, though insightful works, are not classified as social movements and are therefore not taken up in this chapter.

### **Macro-lens: The Global Indigenous Movement**

Proponents of the macro-lens approach have given transnational Indigenous resistance a variety of names over the years including pan-Indianism (Hertzberg, 1971); Indigenism (Niezen, 2000; Ramos, 2001); the transnational Indigenous movement

(Feldman, 2001; Muehlbach, 2003); and the global Indigenous movement (Morgan, 2006; Minde 1996). Although the movement goes by many different names, the global movement is believed to be a world-wide, extensively networked decolonizing effort (Niezen, 2003). The macro-focus allows scholars to understand the global similarities and differences among decolonizing movements to contextualize domestic organizing efforts.

For example, a goal of the international Indigenous movement is to secure the recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights in formal, international institutions, like the United Nations, in order to empower local struggles against colonialism and specifically against resource exploitation (Niezen, 2000; Feldman, 2001; Morgan, 2004). As Ronald Niezen (2000) explains, "it [the movement] represents a new use of the international bodies of states to overcome the domestic abuses of states themselves" (p. 122). The use of the international organizations to address domestic state violence is the main strategy of the global Indigenous movement.

This strategy was born from the need of Indigenous peoples to gain political legitimacy within the United Nations (Feldman, 2001). To approach the United Nations as a delegation, Indigenous groups had to distinguish their concerns from the grievances of domestic, racialized-minority groups (Feldman, 2001). This realization came about after Deskaheh's<sup>1</sup> delegation's failed trip to the League of Nations, in which he had intended to bring global attention to Six Nations' disputes with Canada, in 1924

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<sup>1</sup> Deskaheh is not actually a name, but rather a title. However, as Niezen (2000) points out, Deskaheh was popularized incorrectly as a given name.



(Feldman, 2001; Drees, 1995). At the time, Six Nations' land disputes with Canada were dismissed as domestic issues, ones to be dealt with directly by Canada (Drees, 1995).

However, through the 1960s and 1970, growing interconnectedness among Indigenous peoples across the globe through formal organizations, and international networks, resulted in a growing awareness of a common experience (Niezen, 2000). International linkages fortified by a common experience of colonial violence and sheer numbers made it difficult for a state to dismiss the claims of its Indigenous peoples. Obtaining legal and political recognition in forums such as the United Nations added the platform and political legitimacy Indigenous groups needed to secure local claims. For instance, the Grand Council of the Crees' used the United Nations to gather international attention and criticism of Canada and Quebec's decision to construct the James Bay hydroelectric dam in Northern Quebec, without consulting with the peoples living in the area (Jenson & Papillon, 2000). Eventually, the Cree were successful in negotiating benefits, payments and specific land rights through the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (Adelson, 2000).

However, the emphasis placed on formal organizations has been criticised for overestimating the frequency and influence of international political mobilization and for possibly missing the point of Indigenous resistance altogether. A systematic study of Indigenous political mobilization in Canada suggests that most political events do not occur at the international level, but instead are more likely to occur at a local level (Wilkes, 2004b). Furthermore, the macro-level focus on the role of formal institutions may obscure the role of grassroots movements (Alfred, 2005). Ladner (2008) and

Simpson (2008) have both critiqued the state-centric analyses of Indigenous social movements and both scholars argue that the nation-state models must be put aside.

### **Indigenist**

Indigenous knowledge systems thus became part of the research discourse in the 1990s, on the heels of growing interest in critical and interpretive approaches within the social sciences (Kovach, 2009). Although Indigenist methodologies are new to academia, they are becoming increasingly more common across the social sciences and within political science, women's studies and sociology in particular.

Indigenist describes a research approach that emphasizes decolonization, locality and subjectivity. Lester Rigney (1999) was the first to apply the term to research and was the first to outline the main criteria. Rigney (1999) argued that to be considered Indigenist research, resistance should be the emancipatory imperative that any research must maintain political integrity, and the research must also privilege Indigenous voices (p 116). Since Rigney's (1999)'s influential work was first published, the field has Maori scholar, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) and Cree-Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2009) have also contributed to the foundation of Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies.

Indigenist methodologies stem from the desire to produce research "now want research and its designs to contribute to the self-determination and liberation struggles as defined and controlled by their communities" (Rigney, 1999). For example, an Indigenist framework might use Rotinohshonni knowledge systems, like Wasase, to both explore and contribute to Mohawk resistance movements.

Indigenist methodologies are typically characterized by three main features; first, the author's politico-social relationship to the material (e.g., settler/colonizer, Indigenous) is established at the outset. In so doing, positionality clarifies the goals and intentions of the work. Secondly, Indigenist models are almost always localized and speak to broader themes (e.g., colonialism). Lastly, Indigenist frameworks are intertwined with goals of decolonization (e.g., cultural and language specific concepts and terminology) (Maclean, et al., 2014).

Alfred (2005) is commonly cited in writings on Indigenous resistance and argues that Indigenous social movements must be concerned foremost with spiritual, cultural and political regeneration. Similarly, the research based on Indigenous social movements must be concerned with the same (McDonald, et al., 2014). The strength of this approach is its insider positioning whereby the researchers provide witness accounts of movement processes. Several Indigenist works have already contributed to the understanding of Indigenous movements; Kiera Ladner's (2000) discussion of Siiksikaawa (Blackfoot) nationalism; Fagan's (2004) exploration of Mohawk nationalism; Simpson's (2004; 2011) writings on Anishinabeg resistance and nationalism and Sunseri's (2010) work on Oneida nationalism all apply an Indigenist framework to their work.

The main criticism of the Indigenist approach lies in its descriptive, exploratory model. Morden (2014) succinctly summarizes this criticism, describing Indigenist and similarly descriptive frameworks as providing rich and important works which lack the necessary methodology to help address the theoretical and empirical puzzles within the

study of Indigenous direct mobilization (P. 25). Smith et al.'s (2015) warning for scholars in general is also useful here, particularly within a field that is dominated by very few voices. Smith writes, "if we eschew critical self-appraisal of our ideas and results, we fall into pretentious and useless expressions of our personal or national preferences and representations" (P. 750).

### **Summary**

In 2008, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln sought to create a "productive dialogue" between Indigenous and critical scholars by bringing Indigenous epistemologies into conversation with critical theories (p. 2). Through this dialogue, the contributors discovered critical Indigenous pedagogy (CIP). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), this pedagogy "understands that all inquiry is both political and moral. It uses methods critically, for explicit social justice purposes. It values the transformative power of Indigenous, subjugated knowledges. It values the pedagogical practices that produce these knowledges" (p. 2). In many ways, the present dialogue between social movement theories and Indigenous theories has resulted in similar conclusions.

Like critical theory, social movement theory must also be localized and culturally, politically informed (Denzin et al., 2008). This process requires a precarious balance between scholarly investigation and cultural protocol for Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars conducting researching within a territory or nation other than their own. For scholars belonging to and doing researching within their own nation, this process has been described as difficult, and conflicting. Grande (2008) wrote of this process in *Red Pedagogy* as a feeling that doing research in ones' own community

forced a choice between, “retaining his or her integrity (identity) as a Native person or doing research” (p. 234). It is necessary that social movement theories be centred on and centred by local, cultural and political values and traditions. This means that our positions as researchers and what we think of as social movements is politically relevant to our work and those we work with and/or for.

Secondly, for a theory to be useful to Indigenous social movements and researchers, it ought to be capable of explaining movements. The contemporary reality for many Indigenous groups’ seeking self-determination or sovereignty will consist of ongoing negotiations with universities, industries, colonial governments and other Indigenous nations who may all have an interest or a stake in the groups’ resources, land and political status. This is an issue that has been difficult to address within social movement studies generally and remains a priority among users of relative deprivation and frame analysis. This criterion might be the most challenging to address, because of the troubling relationship Indigenous peoples have had with this type of research. However, as Indigenous nations continue to enforce their own research ethics approval processes, and universities consider researchers accountable to communities, this relationship might be better improved.

The bulk of this thesis has thus far taken up a critical review of the literature on Indigenous resistance. It is evident that analyses of Indigenous social movements are lacking in the field of social movement studies and explanatory models in particular are glaringly absent. In the next chapter, this thesis begins to depart from what has thus far been a critical summary and instead, begins to explore the possibility of theories for

Indigenous resistance using the five criteria outlined here as a starting point. These hybrid frameworks are contextualized within four themes: stories, nationalism, land and identity. The next chapter covers the first of four possible avenues: stories as methodology.

### **Chapter Three: Storytelling and Narratives of Resistance**

*They [ancestors] resisted by simply surviving and being alive. They resisted by holding onto their stories. They resisted by taking the seeds of our culture and political systems and packing them away, so that one day another generation of Miichi Saagiig Nishnaabeg might be able to plant them. I am sure of their resistance, because I am here today living as a contemporary Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg woman. I am the evidence.*

- Simpson, 2011

Social movement scholars nest conversations about stories and storytelling within frame analysis. In social movement studies, stories or frames are used to describe the “character and course” of social movements, but are generally not thought of as movements themselves (Benford & Snow, 2000). Sium and Ritskes (2013) write that Western scholars must challenge notions of stories as “depoliticized acts of sharing”, and instead, recognize Indigenous oral stories as “acts of creative rebellion” (p. V). This process involves acknowledging stories as agentic, relational and transformative and not the “show and tell” forms that are typically associated with stories in social movement research (Sium et al., 2013, p. V). Storytelling may help scholars understand the processes that have fostered the continuation of histories, cultures and language despite centuries of colonial violence. This chapter explores the argument for storytelling as a social movement, and examines more closely the possibility of using storytelling within methodological frameworks beyond frame analysis.

## Rethinking Resistance

Methodology and theory are inextricably linked within Indigenous traditions (Kovach, 2009). Storytelling is both the method for ensuring cultural continuity and the theoretical framework for unravelling its meaning. The form and purpose of stories are determined by the storyteller and the audience who collectively transmit knowledge, language, traditions, values, etc. Accordingly, context and content are both critical to the study of stories. This observation is important because pan-Indigenous discourses tend to group various traditions into one when the opposite is true: Indigenous storytelling traditions are varied, and have evolved according to their own sets of norms, values and forms.

Leanne Simpson (Mississauga Nishnaabeg), Kim Anderson (Cree/Metis) and Margaret Kovach (Plains Cree/Saulteaux) all refer to significant moments in their decolonizing struggle in which elders helped guide them by telling them stories. In her book, *A Recognition of Being*, Anderson (2001) writes of the profound significance of storytelling for her. After Anderson listens to the stories of past trauma and violence shared by Indigenous women at Native Child and Family Services, Anderson is inspired by the shared stories to collect a history of Indigenous womanhood. Among the people Anderson interviews is elder, Lee Maracle, who offers Anderson guidance. Following her conversation with Maracle, Anderson concludes,

Perhaps my work can help dispel the suffering endured by the women at Native Child and Family Services who told me their stories of abuse... Whatever its course, I hope it will advance the decolonization of our womanhood (p xxviii).

By collecting women's stories of violence, Anderson seeks to channel collective action to both understand and challenge the processes causing this violence. In short, Anderson uses stories explicitly to further a goal of contributing to a decolonizing movement.

Within the same theme of continuity embodied in Anderson's work, Hilary Weaver (Lakota), Basil Johnston (Ojibway) and Thomas King (Cherokee) also use stories, as told to them by their elders, to illustrate important messages of resistance and survival for the next generation. In *The Manitous: The supernatural world of the Ojibway*, Johnston (1995) writes that the recollection and retelling of the stories of the Manitou ("the mysteries") is a central and necessary starting point for strengthening Anishinaubae contemporary culture. Johnston writes,

...should enough people care and recall Nana'b'oozoo into their midst by learning their ancestral language and espousing their old traditions, giving them new meanings and applications in the modern age, the spirit of Nana'b'oozoo and the Anishinaubae people will be restored to its rightful place in the lives of the Anishinaubae Nation" (xxiii).

Unlike Anderson (2001), who adopts a broader approach, uniting shared experiences of disempowerment to channel an international effort to confronting gendered violence, Johnston (1995) uses Anishinaubae-centred stories in a public forum to channel Anishinaubae cultural revitalization, and indirectly decolonization. Yet, for both writers, stories do not only carry the knowledges, traditions and values of a community, but also represent how culture and ways of being are restored. The cyclical relationship reflected in Anderson's and Johnston's words regarding storytelling –



between storyteller and audience, young and old generations, stories and culture – speaks to the possibility that storytelling may be linked to political resistance.

Storytelling as resistance makes practical sense considering the history of Indigenous resistance throughout Canada. Much of the scholarly interest in Indigenous movements centres on the post 1960s-period, which has been criticized for dismissing the process of decolonization which made 1960s protests possible (Simpson, 2011; Ladner, 2008). In addition to the blockades, standoffs, and boycotts which dominate the literature, decolonizing movements have been made possible because of cultural survival. For many years, storytelling may have been the safest, surest way of transferring knowledges and traditions to the next generation.

### **Storytelling Methodologies**

In the introduction of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's post-colonial literary work, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), they write, "one of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language... language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth,' 'order', and 'reality' becomes established" (pp 7). It is this dialogue – the narratives and counter narratives – within post-colonial Canada that are revealing of Indigenous resistance.

Emma LaRocque's (Plains Cree – Metis), *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990* (2010) is exemplary in its juxtaposition of historical writings from both empire and subjects, demonstrating the writing back process. LaRocque's presentation of the dialogic history of colonial oppression and resistance to

it through writing is an insightful possibility for the study of social movements. These resistance writings are summarily referred to as contrapuntal narratives and serve to both highlight and challenge the context and complexities of the political-social relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in North America.

LaRocque's work is a form of critical discourse analysis (CDA), a literary method used to identify and analyze the "opaque as well as the transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, 1995, pp 204). Like Indigenist methodologies, CDA assumes that socio-political issues like colonialism, racism and sexism are reflected in the nuances of discourse, and if drawn out, can be challenged. Literary-scholar Thomas Huckin (1997), well-known for his blueprinting of CDA, writes that discourse analysis is primarily concerned foremost with taking an "ethical stance on social issues" with the assumption to "improve society" (pp 78). Accordingly, critical discourse analysis is one of the strongest tools that might be used to identify and describe power imbalances in writing.

However, CDA does not necessitate cultural specificity. Although LaRocque identifies each of the artists, writers and scholars by their cultural or political affiliations, her analysis is otherwise pan-Indigenous. LaRocque, like many other scholars, uses storytelling and narratives of resistance to describe wide sweeping concepts such as colonialism, resistance and nationalism. These concepts are notoriously unspecific and difficult to pin down. The result is LaRoque's anthology of anti-colonial resistance writings, a powerful testament of the existence of Indigenous "writings-back," but not an explanation of resistance itself. As Morden (2014) writes, normative literature

focuses closely on the “moral questions about the legitimacy of the settler state and Indigenous resistance” at the expense of explaining the processes of Indigenous mobilizations (p 256).

However, the possibility of explaining Indigenous resistance using storytelling is being explored within the developing field of American Indian Literary Nationalism (AILN). Scholars within this field call attention to the potential risks of pan-Indigenous theories of resistance in relation to literary works and approach oral and written literature as windows into a nation’s struggle itself. Simon Ortiz (1981), who is credited with sparking AILN, theorizes that the writers (and possibly scholars) are propelled into politicised storytelling because of nationalist obligations. Ortiz (1981) writes,

It is not the oral tradition as transmitted from ages past alone which is the inspiration and source for contemporary Indian literature. It is also because of the acknowledgement by Indian writers of a responsibility to advocate for their people's self-government, sovereignty, and control of land and natural resources; and to look also at racism, political and economic oppression, sexism, supremacism, and the needless and wasteful exploitation of land and people, especially in the U.S., that Indian literature is developing a character of nationalism which indeed it should have (Pg. 12).

Indian literary nationalism, as described by Ortiz (1981) can be summarized neatly by Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), as a “firm commitment to understanding Indigenous literary expressions in part through their relevant Indigenous intellectual, cultural, political, cosmological, and historical contexts” (P. 24). The field is new, but its cultural specificity is compelling; comparative analyses between nations’ literary traditions may provide much needed insight to generate hypotheses of movements’ motivations, strategies and goals of movements.

Fagan (2004) uses the AILN framework in her analysis of Taiaiake's *Peace, Power and Rightness: An Indigenous manifesto*, which she locates specifically within the Kanien'kehake Nation (Mohawk Nation) and the Rotinohshonni (Iroquis Confederacy). Fagan's (2004) work explicitly moves away from what she describes as the traditional "lenses of culture and colonialism" and toward specific considerations of concrete political issues relating to law, land and government. Fagan's analysis ultimately provides the groundwork on which to build an analysis of Kanien'kehake centred motivations, strategies and processes. Fagan's specificity is important because it speaks to broader themes of colonialism and racism without losing track of Mohawk nationalism.

#### **Chapter Four: Identity**

*Being born Indian is being born into politics.*

- Taiaiake Alfred, 1995

Identity is not a static or neutral experience, but is shaped by the ways others perceive us or how others are believed to perceive us (Lawrence, 2005). Due to their changeable nature and transformative power, identities can be strategically used by movement actors to influence mainstream culture (Bernstein, 1997). Indigeneity has been described as an identity lived in "opposition," "in contention with," and "in a struggle against" colonialism and colonial societies (Pg. 597). In addition, Bonita Lawrence (Mi'kmaq-Mixed Blood) explains that resisting colonial relations begins by asserting an identity that rejects racialized categorizations imposed through colonial legislation (2003). Ladner (Plains Cree) sums up this sentiment in her description of

Indigenous social movements, which she describes as “contesting the very foundation of the Canadian state as a colonial construction” (Ladner, 2008, P. 228). Indigenous resistance through identity has been understudied. The following chapter is a discussion of how Indigenous identity is used to mobilize individuals to take action as well as the possible implications of this identity for Canadian mainstream culture.

Indigenous identity is a contentious topic partly because it has no consensus definition, but also because conversations on the topic frequently cross into discourses of authenticity and racialization. Weaver (2001) attributes a significant part of the discomfort of talking about Indigenous identity to confusion:

There is little agreement on precisely what constitutes an Indigenous identity, how to measure it, and who truly has it. Indeed, there is not even a consensus on appropriate terms. Are we talking about Indians, American Indians, Natives, Native Americans, Indigenous people, or First Nations people? Are we talking about Sioux or Lakota? Navajo or Dine? Chippewa, Ojibway, or Anishnabe? Once we get that sorted out, are we talking about race, ethnicity, cultural identity, tribal identity, acculturation, enculturation, bicultural identity, multicultural identity, or some other form of identity (P. 240)?

We can get around most of the problems associated with racialization by recognizing that there are multiple ways to identify as Indigenous. Identity may include all the possibilities Weaver mentioned or none of them. The ways in which people identify (tribal, national, Indigenous, multicultural, etc.) will vary among movement participants and will change overtime. A universal working definition of “Indigenous identity” is not necessary as long as an identity can be identified (i.e., described and operationalized) and its use as a strategy can be discussed in comparison with other uses.

This way of thinking is simply a return to the basic understanding of identity itself as merely recognition of a “common origin or shared characteristics with another person, group, or ideal leading to solidarity and allegiance” (Weaver, 2001, P. 242). It also makes room for the understanding that in the context of social movements, identities are performative (Bernstein, 1997; Gamson, 1995). Identity may look very different in public displays than in private settings. This is a particularly important observation in the context of racial, nationalist and ethnic social movements: what the public sees is a deliberate challenge to an ideology or culture and does not necessarily represent natural behaviours or discourses.

### **Indigenous Social Movements**

International networks among Indigenous nations were formed before contact with Europeans based on the groups’ needs and interests (Ladner, 2008). A nation’s interests in territory and resources motivated its pursuit of trade networks, treaties, political alliances and confederacies, until colonization transformed international relationships through the introduction of an Indian discourse. Bonita Lawrence (2003) writes that this discourse “forcibly supplanted traditional Indigenous ways of identifying the self in relation to land and community” and functioned discursively to “naturalize colonial worldviews” (P. 3).

Ladner (2008) also explains in detail the ways in which an essentialized identity impacted Indigenous social movements in the post-contact era:

with colonization, the Indigenous politics of contestation changed from a focus on national and sub-national issues and organizations to activities and

movements that were typically external to the nation, between nations, or between individuals or groups and colonial nations (Pg. 230).

This explanation provides key insight into the historical context of Indigenous identity, but it does not explain how these identities became mobilized. There are many theories which account for how and why group identities become politicized and mobilized. One common approach has been to adapt post-colonial literary theorist Edward Said's theory of orientalism, to explain similar processes of othering in North American colonialism.

Said theorized that the West came to understand (and therefore know) the East as "the Orient" through a process of imagining *the other*. Said argued that this dichotomization fostered the fetishizing of the East and consequently justified Western conquest. Steedman (1995) helpfully provides a simple, elegant description of the process of *othering*:

the notion of the Other assumes that there is This (a human subject), who encounters That (something which is not like itself, usually another person or group of people) and who thereby comes to a self-conscious understanding of the ties that bind those on this side of the border together (P 60).

Overtime, the conclusions of the dominant group of the Other become accepted and naturalized within a society. A passage from Hazel Hertzberg's (1971) book, *The Search for an American Indian Identity*, albeit dated, captures the sentiment of Said's work in how othering may have taken place during contact. Hertzberg writes,

The men who rediscovered America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had names for themselves which indicated some recognition of a common identity. Whatever part of the Old World they came from and however deep their divisions, they were Europeans, sharing a sense of place and differentiating themselves from men elsewhere. (P. 1)

Thus, challenging the notion of a homogenous grouping, a categorization that is devoid of cultural and political specificity understandably remains a significant part of decolonization work. Indigenous nations had (and have still) distinct languages, traditions, governance structures, social values, cultures and other such variability as one would expect to find among hundreds of nations. Yet, the point Hertzberg makes is that the European gaze changed this landscape in their search for and ultimate discovery of the European Other – a classification created by Europeans.

### **Mobilized Identities**

In Canada, the state uses the terms 'Indian,' First Nation,' or 'Aboriginal' as well as 'Inuit' or 'Métis' to describe the original peoples of this land, and yet the term 'Indigenous' refers collectively to these groups. However, unlike these terms, 'Indigenous' is not a concept that is defined or regulated by the state and so it retains a distinctly rebellious, grassroots feeling.

Building on Frantz Fanon's (1961) cultural-political theories, Alfred and Corntassel (2005) argue that colonial legislation has created an Aboriginal comprador class, a class of privileged, political elites who construct and are constructed by *Aboriginalism*, defined as a "legal, political and cultural discourse designed to serve an agenda of silent surrender to an inherently unjust relation at the root of the colonial state itself (P 307)." Howard Adams (1975) also described this sense of the cooptation of indigenous resistance in *Prison of Grass*, and refers to the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) and the Native Council of Canada (now the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples), as being extensions of the colonial government which form "the



Uncle Tomahawk establishment” (p. 185). Barker (2009) describes this group as an elite class who are cooperative in their oppression and “allow themselves to be oppressed” (P. 327). Barker and Alfred and Corntassel’s unflattering conceptualization of the Aboriginal comprador is contrasted with the revolutionary Indigenous class, an identity that reflects a “commitment to engage in conflicts with colonialism” (Barker, 2009; P 327). Although it is plausible that Indigenous identity can be used as a strategy to achieve social change, a method for studying the mobilization of Indigenous identity to explain Indigenous social movements remains elusive.

The research on Indigenous identities within social movements has provided mixed conclusions about identity as a social movement and/or its usefulness as a means of talking about Indigenous social movements. Scholars including Morden (2014) and Wilkes (2004; 2006) find little support for identity as a significant contributor to Indigenous collective action. Wilkes (2006) dismisses the idea of a Canada-wide Indigenous movement altogether.

In contrast, scholars such as Repin (2012) and Morgan (2004) argue that Indigenous identities provide interesting opportunities to study how identity is used within different social movements. Unlike Wilkes (2006), who predominantly focuses on pan-Indigenous analyses, Repin and Morgan use specific case studies to investigate nationalist identities. The only clear lesson to be learned is that additional work should be done to explore the potential usefulness of identity as a movement and as a framework.

Wilkes (2006) uses a comparative analysis between Canada and the United States' history of Indigenous protests to dismiss the existence of a national identity movement in Canada altogether. For example, in contrast to Canada, the United States' had the American Indian Movement and the Red Power Movement of the 1970s. Wilkes attributes the lack of a pan-Indigenous social movement in Canada to the multitude of "immutable identities" which already exist and prevent group cohesion, which is reflected in the lack of national social movement organizations in Canada. Wilkes (2004) accounts for the difference in pan-Indigenous social movement activity between Canada and the United States to higher levels of urbanization among Indigenous peoples in the United States and a Canadian government less willing to financially support urban Indigenous organizations. However, the Decolonize Wall Street and Idle No More movements have both taken place since Wilkes conducted her initial analysis.

On the opposite side of the discussion, Repin (2012) argues favourably for the role of identities in Indigenous social movements. Repin's use of identity theory in her comparison of Mohawk and Mi'kmaq nationalist identities is one of the most compelling analyses yet conducted. Repin (2012) explores the role of Indigenous identities in obtaining resources during conflict events. In her discussion, Repin explains how the Mohawks of Kanesatake used nationalist discourses to bolster support of neighbouring communities of Akwesasne and Kahnawake. In contrast, the Mi'kmaq Warrior Society in Burnt Church (Esgenoopetit) used a pan-Indigenous identity strategy to gain Canada-wide support.

Repin (2012) associates the different strategies with various levels of success: whereas the Mohawks' strategy of emphasizing traditional identities drew upon nationalist sympathies from Akwesasne and Kahnawake, these identities also fuelled rivalries within Kanesatake (i.e., between the Band Council and the Longhouse). In contrast, the Mi'kmaq of Burnt Church remained united, but a lack of nationalist discourses may have also contributed to a lack of solidarity among neighbouring Mi'kmaq communities.

Repin's (2012) analysis is compelling in that it overcomes racialized assumptions while simultaneously elevating nation-centric discourses. Repin achieves this by focusing her analysis on the movements' ability to recruit participants and find resources, and thus avoids having to generalize about the intrinsic nature of the movement actors. This contrasts with theories such as a calculus of rights, which suggests that the nature of Indigenous peoples is to nobly fight injustice at the expense of such things as rights and resources.

Mohawk scholar Kahente Horn-Miller (2003) also provides a compelling argument for the use of identity in her study of Indigenous movements. Horn-Miller bases her argument on the study of the role of the Mohawk Warrior/Unity Flag in Indigenous social movements. The Mohawk Warrior flag first came into existence during the 1970s, but was popularized during the 1991 Oka Crisis. As the name implies, the Mohawk Warrior Flag was originally conceived as a nationalist symbol. However, Horn-Miller (2003) draws attention to the ways in which the flag has been raised during protests beyond Kanienkehaka communities, such as those at Esgenopetitj, as a means

of expressing unification and solidarity. One conversation between Horn-Miller and a Mi'kmaq woman who was involved in the lobster disputes speaks to this international sense of solidarity:

It reflected to every nation that we have to stand up for our rights. Like the very first time I hear about the Mohawk flag, when I first seen it, was that time when they had in Kanesatake when they stood up against the army... they were not just representing their nations, they were representing all our nations (P. 128).

Both Repin (2012) and Horn-Miller draw on methods of discussing Indigenous identity without pigeonholing movements' actors. This is a critical contribution to the study of Indigenous social movements, which struggles to overcome culturalist assumptions and generalizations.

### **Chapter Five: Land**

Land. If you understand nothing else about the history of Indians in North America, you need to understand that the question that really matters is the question of land. Land contains the languages, the stories and the histories of a people. It provides water, air, shelter and food. And land is home.

- Thomas King, 2011

Land is the easiest foundation on which to bridge Indigenist and traditional social movement theories. As Thomas King's words demonstrate: conversations about land also inevitably tie in themes of language, history and story. Land is both symbolically and practically important to Indigenous efforts for economic and political legitimacy. The dual-interpretations of land as both a cultural-political and material-political symbol can be brought together to form a framework to understand contemporary Indigenous social movements.

The moral and historical claim of Indigenous peoples to land and the use of its resources sets Indigenous social movements apart from any other movement in Canada (Tennant, 1982). The longstanding historical relationship with land and resources, combined with a devastating legacy of land theft, forced relocation, and non-consensual resource development projects casts Indigenous grievances in a different light than those of environmentalists, farmers or other land based movements. This is because Indigenous claims to territories and resources are premised on historical use, treaties, confederacies and international agreements which extend farther back in history than European contact (Ladner, 2008). A relatively recent clash between Indigenous activists and the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement exemplifies this point perfectly.

Occupy Wall Street came into existence in early September 2011 in response to perceived economic injustice. The movement itself was predicated on a long-term occupation of Zucotti Park in New York City. Shortly after Occupy Wall Street issued its mission statement from its occupied camp in Zucotti Park, many Indigenous activists throughout the United States and Canada criticized OWS for ignoring Indigenous claims to the territory the movement was occupying.

Anishinabe writer John Paul Monanto (2011) released an open letter to Occupy Wall Street activists. Part of the letter reads,

On September 22nd, with great excitement, I eagerly read your “one demand” statement. Hoping and believing that you enlightened folks fighting for justice and equality and an end to imperialism, etc., etc., would make mention of the fact that the very land upon which you are protesting does not belong to you – that you are guests upon that stolen Indigenous land. I had hoped mention would be made of the Indigenous nation whose land that is. I had hoped that you would address the centuries-long history that we Indigenous peoples of this continent have endured being subject to the countless ‘-isms’ of do-gooders

claiming to be building a “more just society,” a “better world,” a “land of freedom” *on top of our Indigenous societies, on our Indigenous lands, while destroying and/or ignoring our ways of life.* I had hoped that you would acknowledge that, since you are settlers on Indigenous land, you need and want our Indigenous consent to your building *anything* on our land – never mind an entire society.

Many other Indigenous activists echoed Monanto’s concerns. Jessica Danforth (nee Yee) wrote,

The "Occupy Wall Street" slogan has gone viral and international now. From the protests on the streets of Wall Street in the name of "ending capitalism" -- organizers, protesters, and activists have been encouraged to "occupy" different places that symbolize greed and power. There's just one problem: *The United States is already being occupied. This is Indigenous land.* And it's been occupied for quite some time now (2011).

Both Danforth and Monanto speak to the moral claim of Indigenous peoples, which are rooted in historical claims to territory and experiences of oppression. Indigenous criticism (“Decolonize Wall Street”) ultimately forced the movement to include decolonization within its main priorities.

This is an important consideration for determining why movements erupt, because it provides context for the grievances of Indigenous movements. In a conceptual-cultural sense, land is a communally shared resource that is large enough to provide each person with a deeper connection to culture, history and language. However, when a political-material claim is made to land and territory, as the actors of OWS had done, issues of governance and rights to the land become divisive. Both interpretations are important to the framing and understanding of Indigenous social movements. In the ensuing pages, I will argue that resource mobilization theory is a useful and complimentary framework to studying Indigenous social movements.

## **Resource Mobilization Theory and Indigenous Movements**

Unlike storytelling and identity movements, Indigenous resistance over land and resources have received considerably more public and scholarly attention. The Oka Crisis in Kanasatake, the lobster disputes in Burnt Church, and the occupations in Ipperwash have been scrutinized by academics and the media alike. However, much of the literature on land-based movements is limited to descriptions of the actual protest event, which offers little explanation of the movement.

Morden (2014) describes the clash between descriptive and explanatory frameworks as a cleavage between models that favour different explanations for why individuals will break the law and engage in contentious politics in defense of their group (Morden, 2014). Morden describes normative theories as frameworks which assume “people will mobilize around national issues and identity without expecting direct private benefit and even anticipating private pain” (P 4). In contrast, instrumental theories are predicated on the assumption that protests have “tangible goals in mind, that they are motivated by resource logics, and that their actions are carefully calibrated against the expected response from state actors—that is, the perceived ‘feasibility’ of direct action” (P. 4). Most scholars generally include some aspects of both normative and instrumental theoretical work, but their analyses are more often than not dominated by one approach (Morden, 2014; Wilkes, 2004a; 2004b).

Unfortunately, the debate between proponents of either normative or instrumental research has fostered two widely accepted assumptions about Indigenous social movements. The first is that spiritual, cultural and traditional values of the land

are at odds with global markets, economic self-sufficiency and development. Secondly, it is often assumed that Indigenous social movements are only predicated on cultural, spiritual and traditional goals and that these factors are distinct from modern understandings of self-determination. In short, Indigenous movements will advocate simultaneously for cultural-political and material-political self-determination, because both are required for decolonization. Decolonization and ultimately self-determination and sovereignty have been taken for granted as culturally symbolic, but in fact raise interesting political-material questions that have not yet been fully explored (Fagan, 2004). Land is the ideal foundation on which to explore these questions.

### **Resource mobilization within Indigenous movements**

It is a practical reality that some Indigenous social movements require resources and opportunities to sustain themselves. Resource mobilization theory is an obvious candidate for the study of Indigenous social movements, which depend considerably on public support. Albeit limited, some research on resource mobilization within Indigenous social movements has already been done. This literature offers general support for the idea of using RMT in partnership with Indigenist frameworks in order to improve the explanatory power of normative social movement research on Indigenous political mobilization.

Ramos (2008) tested the significance of resources and political opportunities on the rate of Indigenous political mobilizations in Canada. Using regression analyses, Ramos (2008) concluded that the founding of new organizations, allocation of federal monies to Indian affairs, positive media attention, and lastly, the successful resolution of



land claims were the strongest indicators for the success and rate of Indigenous political mobilization.

Similarly, Repin (2012) used resource mobilization theory and frame analysis to compare the different recruitment strategies of the Mi'kmaq and Mohawk warriors during the Burnt Church and Oka crisis, respectively. Repin's conclusion was that the Mohawk's strategy of acquiring movement participants was more efficient, and ultimately more successful than the Mi'kmaq. However, the Mohawks of Kanasatake also fuelled internal divisions between Canadian-imposed and traditional governing bodies (i.e., the band council and the long house).

Both Ramos and Repin (2012) concluded that a mixed-methods approach to the study of Indigenous movements provided deeper understanding than one framework only. Their findings further support the argument that normative and instrumental works can and ought to work cooperatively. Wilkes (2004a; 2004b) also found support for dual-frameworks. In her analysis, Wilkes (2004a) used deprivation theory and resource mobilization theory to study the possible relationship between resources (e.g., employment) and movement participation. Wilkes (2004a) found evidence that supported a positive correlation between unemployment and social movement engagement among Indigenous peoples. Wilkes' (2004a) supports the earlier notion that, "groups must be disadvantaged enough to be dissatisfied, but also resource-rich enough to be able to challenge dominant groups" (Belanger and Pinard's as cited in Wilkes, 2004, p. 583).

However, Leanne Simpson (2011) and Kiera Ladner (2008) dismiss the theory's relevance to Indigenous movements. According to some Indigenist scholars traditional social movement theories poorly account for the socio-political context of Indigenous movements (Ladner, 2008), overemphasis formal organizations (Alfred, 2005), and depends on Western definitions of nations and resistance (Simpson, 2004; 2011; 2014). Simpson (2014) explains that this theoretical incompatibility results from Western theory originating from institutions, whereas Indigenous ways of knowing come from the land and in relation to all things:

Meaning is derived not through content or data, or even theory in a western context, which by nature is decontextualized knowledge, but through a compassionate web of interdependent relationships that are different and valuable because of that difference (P 11).

Simpson is speaking to the internal and external dynamics of Indigenous social movements, including the emotions, history, traditions, culture and spirituality within movement. The considerations Simpson describes for social movements are intrinsic to the study of movements. However, I respectfully suggest that these world-views, though different, are not necessary in conflict with practical strategies of acquiring resources.

Consider the movement led by the Unis'tot'en located in the Northwestern forests of British Columbia. The Unis'tot'en is a clan within the Wet'suwet'en nation, whose hereditary chiefs' stand in opposition to the construction of several proposed pipelines. In order to prevent the construction of the pipelines, the Unis'tot'en erected several buildings, collectively referred to as the Unist'tot'en Camp.

The construction of the Unist'ot'en Camp, including the building of the healing lodge, kitchen and bunks began in the summer of 2009. The camp's website states that the UAC was built in response to a lack of consultation with hereditary chiefs regarding the use of the land. The website reads,

No Pipelines will be constructed through unceded Wet'suwet'en Lands. The Delgamuukw Supreme Court Case of 1997, which the Wet'suwet'en had won, does not make any reference to Indian Act Tribal Council's or Bands. The plaintiffs in the case are clearly the Hereditary Chiefs and their members. 50% of your proposed pipelines are planned to be constructed through our unceded lands and you are attempting to avoid meaningful consultation with the true title owners. You will be stopped! (Unist'ot'en Camp, 2012).

The motivation(s) for the movement is/are not necessarily about the development of pipelines per se, but rather on the conflicting claims to the territory by the "true title owners" of the land. Therefore, both normative and instrumental frameworks are required to fully capture the motivation for the movement. It is also important to understand how the UAC has successfully acquired the resources, volunteer capacity and public support needed to achieve their goals. A discussion of the role of resources in social movement building may help to explain why and how movements exist. This is explored in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

### **Resources in Indigenous Social Movements**

The study of how and why movements acquire resources to sustain momentum can be both useful and complimentary to Indigenist analyses. Consider again the resources required to sustain the Unis'tot'en Action Camp. In order to sustain itself, the UAC requires a spokesperson, Indigenous and local support, skilled labour, food,

building materials, public, media support/attention, funding, etc. Moreover, the UAC has developed a rigorous process for acquiring these resources, including volunteer support.

In order to participate in the UAC, the leaders have developed a thorough application process including a written form and follow-up interview for all potential volunteers. The UAC also requires that non-Indigenous peoples pay a \$50 fee, but all visitors are encouraged to make a financial contribution. Volunteers at the camp are also asked to list their skills and explain how these skills will be used to benefit the movement. The UAC's formal processes are uncommon, but it is typical for movements to request financial support and allies. It is also normal for land-based movements, particularly occupations, to issue requests for daily living supplies such as food, clothing, blankets and toilet paper (Repin, 2012).

The Unist'ot'en movement also uses strategic alliances with neighbouring communities and local companies. A volunteer at the Action Camp and blogger for the Unist'ot'en Solidarity Brigade, wrote an entry in his entry in September 2016. Ages wrote,

This year after another quiet day doing routine chores and a little carpentry a fresh volunteer woke me up at 4 am, alarmed by the passage of a logging truck. I explained that the clan has an agreement to allow logging of a cut block on the territory – part of their strategy to maintain good relations with the forestry contractors and workers who are their neighbours and importantly to demonstrate they are not “blockading” but rather continuing to exercise their historic stewardship of the land, determining who may – and who may not – access the Yintah.

It stands to reason that ongoing Indigenous movements for self-determination and sovereignty use strategic opportunities and resources while furthering their

agendas. The systematic study of these strategies within movements would strengthen, not hinder, scholarly and popular understanding of Indigenous social movements.

In a reflection on the Oka Crisis, which was sparked by the proposal of a golf course on Mohawk land, Alfred (2010) explicitly addresses the implications of the cigarette trade across borders between the United States and Canada and Mohawk territory. Alfred writes,

Mohawks had been generating huge profits from selling tax-free cigarettes brought in from the sister community of Ahkwesáhsne to willing Québécois consumers since the mid 1980s, and much of this money has been channelled into building the capacity of the Mohawk Nation to resist Québec and Canada in physical, legal and political ways. (Alfred, 2010, p. 94).

Alfred (2010) continues by saying “This cigarette economy was a means to an end; the goal was the resurrection of our nation” (p. 94). The same logic regarding the importance of resources can be applied to the Unist’ot’en Camp’s calls for volunteers, strategic alliances and other resources.

There is evidence to support the use of RMT in combination with other frameworks to provide context for important movement factors such as histories, emotions and experiences. Resource mobilization theory is not meant to be comprehensive in the study of Indigenous social movements. On the contrary, traditional social movement theories such as RMT may ultimately help boost the explanatory power of normative models.

## **Conclusion**

*“If reconciliation is to be meaningful, we need to be willing to dismantle settler colonialism as a system.”*

- Leanne Simpson, 2017

Indigenous social movements have been conspicuously overlooked in the field of Social Movement Studies. This absence has contributed to the Canadian meta-narrative of a homogenous, peaceful history when in fact Canada has an ongoing colonial legacy that has been continuously and persistently resisted. Although recognition of this legacy and Indigenous narratives is becoming increasingly more common, political events involving Indigenous peoples are still easily dismissed as isolated and unprecedented. Moreover, few social movement scholars have attempted to describe the processes and strategies which have successfully maintained languages and nationalisms. In truth, anti-colonial resistance has existed in some form or another since contact, playing a key part in cultural continuity, language retention and nationalisms of hundreds of nations (LaRocque, 2010; Ladner, 2008).

This thesis sought to examine the usefulness of using traditional social movement theories to understand Indigenous resistance. In doing so, two assumptions about social movement that are harmful to Indigenous social movements had become clear (Ladner, 2008; Simpson, 2011; Alfred, 2005). Firstly, the invisibility of Indigenous social movements has fostered the assumption that the Canadian state is believed by everyone to be a legitimate entity. However, Frieda Huson spokesperson of the Unist'ot'en Camp, speaks to the existence of groups that contest the Canadian state as a legitimate authority: "Harper is illegal, Canada is illegal (Reclaim Turtle Island, 2014)." Therefore, social movement theories must be prepared to study movement politics that transcend typical nation-state models.

Secondly, and relatedly, there is an assumption that the colonial system has always provided the natural, accepted order and always will (Ladner, 2008; Simpson, 2014; LaRocque, 2010). This assumption is critical because it influences researchers' choice in which information to privilege and how we interpret social movement objectives. For example, a greater consideration has been paid to cultural interpretations of social movement activity instead of nationalisms. Fagan (2004) argues that the emphases on culturalist perspectives enables researchers to remain in a zone of comfort, remaining at arm's reach of the tough questions regarding the political-material implications of Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. I agree with Fagan (2004); the future of Indigenous social movement research lies squarely within the murky, difficult territory of the implications of self-determination, nationalisms and sovereignty for Indigenous peoples and Canada.

### **Final Considerations and Recommendations**

As Canada celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, on the heels of the Truth and Reconciliation's 97 recommendations (2015), now is an auspicious time to plunge forward into conversations about Indigenous social movements. The discussions of storytelling, identity and land-based Indigenous movements in this thesis problematized some of the assumptions about Indigenous social movements. Given that SMS has only very recently engaged the topic of Indigenous social movements, it is likely that the assumptions outlined above will persist for some time. Accordingly, critically engaging social movement theories will certainly need to continue. Moreover, this engagement may potentially be the most beneficial to students, scholars, Indigenous social

movements and communities if this engagement was led by Indigenous scholars, at least in partnership.

Social movement theories may be methodologically useful to the study of Indigenous social movements. Contemporary realities shaped by economic concerns oblige scholars studying these movements to consider the significance of resources as culturally and materially important for movements and communities. My interpretation of the literature is that traditional social movement theories are not at odds with Indigenous social movements, but they are destructively insufficient. Based on this interpretation, future work in the field of social movement research should consider the following:

A theoretical framework needs to be culturally and locally informed (Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, pan-Indigenous analyses may be most appropriate in contexts of inter-nation collaboration, urban Indigenous movements or pan-Indigenous movements. For example, Repin (2012) used the concept of a pan-Indigenous identity in the context of a strategy used to recruit support during the Burnt Church crisis. The same can be said about Idle No More, which was not taken up in this thesis, but also used pan-Indigenous discourses to appeal to all Indigenous peoples. Yet, generalizations can also be misplaced or worse, assumptive, in movements which employ specific nationalist discourses such as those observed by the Unist'ot'en Camp or the Mohawk Warriors during the Oka Crisis. In short, future research should continue to explore the potential of local, culturally informed frameworks. This locality necessitates Indigenist leadership or partnership.



A second consideration for movement theorists is the balance between exploratory and explanative research. A main criticism of SMS and scientific-based methodology in general, is its emphasis on empirical, observable evidence. This criticism is understandable considering how research has been used to perpetrate colonial violence (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). However, much of the existing literature on Indigenous social movements is primarily descriptive and exploratory, offering little explanation to the strategies, goals, and motivations of Indigenous movements. This conflict between exploratory and explanatory models also appears to contribute to the tension between political-conceptual (predominately culturalist) and political-material models (primarily explanatory). As the discussion of land-based movement demonstrated, Indigenous social movements can simultaneously have political-material (e.g., economic goals) and political-conceptual (e.g., self-determination) implications for a nation and/or a people. Indeed, this is the contemporary reality that all movements, particularly those which seek cultural and economic self-determination. Powerful examples in other disciplines which reflect this balance include the growing field of Canadian Indian Literary Nationalisms and Discourse Analysis.

For a theory to be adequately prepared to investigate Indigenous social movements, the perspectives ought to be decolonizing. This is a thorny topic that requires constant revisiting: there is no universal definition of what constitutes as decolonizing, or who can/should responsibly engage in decolonizing work (Ermine, 2007). Fortunately, a substantial body of Indigenous literature already exists that provides a thorough exploration of this question in more detail.

As Indigenous-led research continues to grow, so too will our collective and holistic understanding of colonialism and a new better way forward.

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