

CHAPTER 18: CANADIAN INDIGENOUS FEMALE LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL AGENCY ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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Introduction

The Canadian federal election of 2015 was a watershed moment for women's political agency, indigenous activism and climate justice in Canada. Since 1990, skyrocketing fossil fuel extraction, especially in the Alberta tar sands, had generated escalating environmental crises on First Nations territories. Extreme weather events due to climate change were impacting communities across the country, with particular implications for women's caring and other unpaid work. Ten years of attacks on women's organizations and priorities by the conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper had angered female voters. In response, indigenous and settler women's organizing on climate and environmental justice, fossil fuel extraction and voting rights was an important factor in Harper's October 2015 defeat. Justin Trudeau, elected on promises to address climate change, indigenous rights and gender equity, now faces the challenge of delivering on both distributive and procedural climate justice.

This story of extraction, climate change, weather, unequal impacts, gender and political agency in a fossil fuel-producing country in the Global North has implications for gender and climate justice globally. Canada contains within its borders many examples of environmental racism stemming from fossil fuel extraction and climate change, paralleling global injustices. The

politics of addressing these inequities is key to a successfully managed energy transition away from fossil fuels. In the Canadian case at least, women's leadership – especially *indigenous* women's leadership – is emerging as crucial.

Extraction, Environmental Justice and Indigenous Women's Leadership

Canada, the world's fifth-largest fossil fuel producing country, more than doubled its production of crude oil and equivalents between 1990 and 2014, from 264.9 to 594.7 thousand cubic metres per day (Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers 2016). As shown in Figure 1, the bulk of this increase was due to the growing extraction of bitumen from the Alberta tar sands north of Fort McMurray.

[insert Figure 18.1 about here]

Figure 18.1: Canadian Crude Oil and Tar Sands Production

The environmental impacts of tar sands extraction are massive: boreal deforestation, toxic tailings ponds covering more than 75 square km, hazardous air emissions, vast use of surface and underground water, toxic seepage into the Athabasca River upstream from First Nations settlements at Fort McKay and Fort Chipewyan and into Lake Athabasca, where fish and other wildlife are now showing abnormalities (Gillespie 2008; McDiarmid 2013). The social and human health effects are gendered, with elevated women's cancer rates downstream from the tar sands (Young 2014), indigenous people shifting to non-traditional foods over fears of

contamination (McCarthy & Cryderman 2014), and prostitution, sexual violence and harassment of women linked to industries associated with fossil fuel extraction and pipeline construction (Zuckerman 2012).

Alberta bitumen producers are pressing for pipeline construction to get their product to the coasts or Great Lakes for export, but all routes cross First Nations territories and face strong opposition from indigenous and environmentalist groups concerned about spills and impacts on forests and wildlife, watersheds and coastal ecosystems. Fracking for natural gas has also sparked strong opposition from First Nations and environmental groups, frequently led by women (Troian 2013).

[insert Fort Chipewyan high school students picture about here]

The Harper government (2006–2015) pushed fossil fuel development, increasing energy subsidies to more than \$34 billion per year by 2010. Canada was providing more subsidies to petroleum as a proportion of government revenue than any other country besides the U.S. and Luxembourg (Anderson 2014; Climate Action Network 2012). Canada repeatedly won the Climate Action Network’s ‘Fossil’ awards at Conference of the Parties (COP) climate change negotiations and the Rio+20 meeting in Rio de Janeiro, and the ‘Lifetime Unachievement’ Fossil Award at the Warsaw COP in 2013. Christian Holz, executive director of Climate Action Network Canada, stated,

Canada is in a league of its own for its total lack of credibility on climate action. The utter lack of a credible climate policy plan on the part of the

Harper government has gone a long way towards undermining Canada's standing in the world, even as a clear majority of Canadian citizens seek action and leadership on climate change (Climate Action Network 2013:1).

In opposition to the Canadian government's stance on climate and the tar sands, Canadian women have raised their voices and organized a range of responses, grounded in their own communities and experiences. Their actions address both the differential *impacts* of climate change and fossil fuel extraction – distributive justice – and the *political agency* necessary to change those impacts – procedural justice (Paavola, Adger & Huq 2006). Besides world-famous activists such as Elizabeth May, Naomi Klein and Maude Barlow, there are dozens of indigenous women activists whose organizing laid the groundwork by 2015 for a huge political shift in Canada.

In November 2012, at a Saskatoon teach-in in opposition to federal Bill C-45 (which weakened environmental laws and water protection), four young women launched a national movement, Idle No More, by calling for nationwide protests, rallies and demonstrations against resource exploitation, especially on First Nations territory, and for respectful consultation with First Nations on land claims, treaties, water protection and resource-sharing. These women were Nina Wilson (Lakota and Plains Cree from Kahkewistahaw First Nation, Treaty 4 territory), Sheelah McLean, Sylvia McAdam (Néhiyaw Cree First Nation, Treaty 6 territory) and Jessica Gordon (Pasqua First Nation, Treaty 4 territory). Idle No More included a surge of protests in the winter of 2012–2013, including round dances and flash mobs at shopping malls and plazas in Regina,

Edmonton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa; blockades of railway lines, roads and border crossings in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia; and solidarity protests in the U.S., Europe, New Zealand, Egypt and elsewhere. Idle No More was fundamentally about indigenous rights, protecting the earth and protecting women (Ross 2013). Foreign Policy magazine named Gordon, McAdam, McLean and Wilson ‘Leading Global Thinkers of 2013.’

[insert Idle No More founders photo about here]

Idle No More built on a long history of indigenous women’s advocacy on environmental justice issues in Canada. For example, Dorothy McDonald-Hyde, the first woman to be elected chief of the Fort McKay First Nation (1980–1988), campaigned for water, housing and infrastructure on the reserve, led a roadblock against a logging highway in 1981, and in 1983 brought charges against Suncor’s Fort McMurray plant for spills into the Athabasca River, setting a precedent for oil industry accountability with indigenous communities (Donnelly 2012:4).

Sheila Watt-Cloutier, former President and International Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), is a spokesperson for Arctic indigenous peoples and in 2005 launched the world’s first international legal action on climate change, a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Her book, *The Right to be Cold*, about the effects of climate change in Inuit communities, was published in 2015. She is the recipient of many honorary doctorates and global environmental awards, including the Right Livelihood Award in 2015.

The former chief of the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation, Marilyn Baptiste, led a battle against the Prosperity copper and gold mine which would have destroyed Fish Lake, the source of spiritual identity and livelihood for indigenous peoples in the south Chilcotin area of British Columbia. Both in federal environmental hearings and via a one-woman blockade in 2011 to prevent construction crews from reaching the proposed mine site, Baptiste's leadership catalyzed opposition to the mine. The Supreme Court of Canada's Tsilhqot'in decision in 2014 granted First Nations land title to more than 1,700 square kilometres in the Nemiah Valley where Baptiste lives. Baptiste was awarded the Goldman Prize for grassroots environmental activism in April 2015.

In 2009, Eriel Tchekwie Deranger (Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Dene, Treaty 8 territory), the Tar Sands Campaigner for the Rainforest Action Network, climbed to the top of a Toronto flagpole and dropped a banner saying 'Please Help Us Mrs. Nixon.com', urging Royal Bank of Canada CEO Gordon Nixon's wife Janet Nixon to help the activists pull RBC's investments in the Alberta tar sands (Hunter 2009). She later became the communications manager of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, which is suing Shell Canada regarding unmet Impact Benefits Agreements obligations, and she continues to campaign against tar sands projects and publicize their impacts. In a 2014 speech at Harvard University, she said "Our people and our Mother Earth can no longer afford to be economic hostages in the race to industrialize our homelands. It's time for our people to rise up and take back our role as caretakers and stewards of the land" (Winton 2014). Eriel's mother Susana Deranger met Eriel's father at the American Indian Movement protests at Wounded Knee, and campaigned against indigenous land takeovers by Dorado and other mining companies (Ball 2012).

Melina Laboucan-Massimo (Lubicon Cree First Nation, treaty 8 territory), an activist, documentary filmmaker, and tar sands campaigner with Greenpeace Canada and the Indigenous Environmental Network, has publicized the health and environmental impacts of tar sands exploitation in her northern Alberta homeland, including the effects of the 28,000-barrel Little Buffalo pipeline spill in April 2011 (Laboucan-Massimo 2015).

Theresa Spence, Chief of the Attawapiskat First Nation from 2010 to 2015, called attention in 2011 to appalling living conditions on the reserve, where many families were living in tents, more than 200 homes needed replacement or major repairs and spring flooding endangers both infrastructure and the drinking water supply. In the winter of 2012, she carried out a six week hunger strike during the Idle No More protests while living in a teepee on an island in the Ottawa River, asking for the Prime Minister and Governor General to meet with chiefs to discuss living conditions on reserves. A group of Manitoba women chiefs, after meeting with her, stated, “We share Chief Spence’s deep concern for the future of our nations and echo Chief Spence’s call for restoring our relationship with the Crown to reflect the original spirit and intent of the treaties” (CBC 2013).

Treaty Coordinator and Communications Manager for the Beaver Lake Cree Crystal Lameman (Beaver Lake Cree, Treaty 6 territory) is leading their legal action against the Alberta and Canada governments because of the damage tar sands mining has caused on their traditional lands, covered by an 1876 treaty. This is the first legal consideration of First Nations treaty rights in relation to the tar sands (DeSmog Canada 2013).

Along with other young indigenous women, Helen Knott (Prophet River First Nation, Treaty 8 territory), a social worker and community activist, set up the Rocky Mountain Fort protest camp on 13 December 2015 to block land clearing and construction of the ‘Site C’ dam on the Peace River in northeastern British Columbia, which was approved by a joint federal-provincial review in 2014. The dam would flood 107 kilometers of the Peace Valley, destroying farmland and sacred burial grounds. Although challenges are making their way through the courts, BC Hydro obtained an injunction to remove the protesters and plans to continue construction (Smith 2015; McSheffrey 2015).

Led by women tar sands activists, First Nations representatives met in January 2016 in Edmonton to develop an Indigenous Climate Change Action Plan based in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Perry 2016; Connors 2016; Indigenous Climate Action).

There are many additional examples from across Canada of extraction, pipeline and climate justice protests and campaigns led by women activists, fighting for both distributive and procedural justice (Gray-Donald 2015).

[insert Elsipogtog photo about here]

In Canada, the effects of climate change are gendered, as they are everywhere. Extreme weather events, warming cities, melting sea ice and permafrost, ice storms, floods, droughts and forest fires cause economic and social impacts that affect women differently from men, as a function of their gendered economic and social positions. For example, cleaning up after a flood, moving house during a fire, finding alternate sources of food and caring for depressed partners and sick or upset children are usually women's responsibilities. Women and men also have differential access to redress and to political processes shaping public responses.

A growing body of literature, documented elsewhere in this book, shows how women often bear the brunt of extreme weather events, at both the household and the community levels. Women's gendered social roles, economic positions and expertise derived from activism related to inequality are logical reasons for their climate activism. As a result, environmental and climate justice movements often employ organizing and activist techniques developed within the feminist movement, such as consciousness raising, unmasking patriarchy and contextual reasoning – the grounding of the movement's theorizing in women's lived experiences rather than abstractions (Weiss 2012). At the same time, environmental and climate justice activism changes the lives of the women involved and, by extension, other women, forcing them to confront the constraints they face – time, work and other opportunities, political agency, etc. – and thereby creating the conditions and potential for more radical change (Weiss 2012:6). This seems to describe the process which has been playing out in Canada since the late 1990s, with a huge push from indigenous women's grounded, culturally-embodied activism (Nixon 2015).

Indigenous chief and activist Arthur Manuel comments in his book *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call* that women have long held leading roles in indigenous activism on land, rights and the environment, and the majority of young indigenous activists today are women (2015, 211). Clayton Thomas-Muller, tar sands campaign organizer for the Indigenous Environment Network and Defenders of the Land, also emphasizes the importance of indigenous women's leadership (Thomas-Muller 2014).

Says thefeministwire website,

... Indigenous women activists and academics have shown how the foundation of contemporary capitalism was contingent on industrial resource extraction of Indigenous people's land, which was also simultaneously fully reliant on disempowering any positive ethic towards nature and women. This was achieved by installing European forms of gender relations and dismantling women's power, aided by the appropriation of Indigenous women's bodies. Residential schools were perhaps the strongest tools in reinscribing balanced gender relations of North American Indigenous matrilineal societies into the unequal ones of patriarchal models imposed by European colonizers and settlers. For the women's contingency (at the September 2014 Peoples' Climate March in

in New York City), the centrality of resisting the colonization of Mother Earth, Terra Madre, and Pachamama is paramount (Gorecki 2014).

Indigenous women identify very clearly the connection between environmental and gender justice. At the 2014 climate march, led by a group of indigenous people including Melina Laboucan-Massimo, she commented,

Violence against the earth begets violence against women. I think when we don't deal with both of them we're not ever really going to resolve the issue of the colonial mind and the colonial mentality and the values of patriarchy and the values of capitalism that essentially exploit the land and exploit our women (Gorecki 2014).

Kanehsatà:ke Mohawk activist Ellen Gabriel stated,

Indigenous women were targets of the Indian Act because they (European colonizers) knew that the power rested with the women. And right now it's a man's world. In fact, it's a rape culture because in Canada, rape of Indigenous women has gone on with impunity and the government of Canada refuses to ... have an inquiry because it profits them to continue to oppress Indigenous People ... and it's another form of genocide as far as I'm concerned (Gorecki 2014).

At least 1,200 indigenous women, and perhaps far more, have been murdered or reported missing since 1980 in Canada. Bella Laboucan-Massimo, Melina's sister, who died July 20, 2013, is one of them. Indigenous women are eight times more likely to be killed than non-indigenous women in Canada (Narine 2015; Kirkup 2016; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2014, 11). Calls for a federal inquiry into this problem long went unheeded by the Harper government; indigenous women started their own lists (It Starts With Us; Walk4Justice) and continue to call for official investigations.

Outcome: Canada's 2015 election

By 2015, the connections among fossil fuel extraction, climate change, extreme weather events, violence against women and women's activism were manifest. Polls prior to the 2015 Canadian federal election showed a big split between women and men on climate change and other environmental issues. A nationwide random-sample poll conducted for the Climate Action Network in April 2015 found that while a majority of all Canadians felt that protecting the climate is more important than building pipelines or developing the Alberta tar sands (61 percent), the gender breakdown was also significant: 74 percent of women agreed, compared to 52 percent of men; 68 percent of women said that building the Energy East pipeline to take tar sands oil to Atlantic ports was unethical because it is harmful to the environment, while only 43 percent of men agreed; 71 percent of women said that a federal government promise to legally limit carbon pollution was important or very important, compared to 49 percent of men; 72 percent of women wanted to see a federal commitment to phase out oil, gas and coal and replace them with renewable energy; 47 percent of men felt the same way. And according to this poll,

women constituted 67 percent of those Canadians who had not yet decided who to vote for in the federal election; they were apparently waiting to see whether any of the (male) candidates would represent their views. Louise Comeau, Executive Director of Climate Action Network, commented,

Women have the power to move Canada forward on climate protection. If Canada is going to step up to the plate, women need to be at the forefront of what is clearly an ethical issue with serious implications for our children (Climate Action Network 2015).

A pre-election poll in September 2015 showed that the environment and health were about twice as important to women as to men, while ‘the economy’ was much less important for women than for men (CBC News 2015a). Another 2015 poll found that women were more likely than men to consider climate change a serious problem (90 percent of Canadian women compared to 77 percent of Canadian men), be concerned it will harm them personally (71 percent to 51 percent) and say that major lifestyle changes are needed to solve the problem (81 percent to 66 percent) (CBC News).

During the 2015 campaign, Justin Trudeau promised to launch a national public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIW). He also said that he would include an equal number of men and women in his cabinet, ensure gender-based impact analysis in cabinet decision-making, develop a national child care framework to ensure affordable fully inclusive child care is available to all families who need it, implement a federal gender violence strategy, strengthen gun control, phase out subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, cancel the

Northern Gateway pipeline, re-do the expansion review process for the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline and provide new funding for indigenous languages and culture, education and schools, post-secondary student support, water supply, roads, Métis self-government and economic development. He promised to enact the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the legacy of residential schools; review, repeal and amend all existing laws that do not respect indigenous rights or that were passed without proper consultation; ensure every new policy and law meets with the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); and guarantee that First Nations communities have a veto over natural resource development in their territories (Trudeaumentre 2016).

While Harper made it clear that climate change was not a priority for him (Scrimshaw 2015), NDP candidate Thomas Mulcair promised affordable childcare, women's shelter enhancement programs and a strategy to end violence against women, as well as an inquiry into MMIW (Onstad 2015). A campaign debate focusing on 'women's issues' was cancelled after Harper refused to participate and then Mulcair backed out; only Trudeau and candidates of the minor parties were willing to come (Armstrong 2015; Up for Debate 2015; Hansen 2015). Although the New Democratic Party, traditionally Canada's most progressive party, fielded more women candidates in the 2015 election (40 percent of candidates, compared to 33 percent for the Liberals and below 20 percent for the Conservatives) (Murphy 2015), the NDP downplayed its gender and climate positions, in an attempt to appeal to more centrist voters, while the Liberals emphasized theirs.

Voter turnout in the 2015 Canadian federal election reversed a thirty-year trend of declining participation. There was a 7.39 percent increase in voter turnout in the 2015 election, compared to the previous federal election in 2011 when 2.736 million more Canadians showed up at the polls, “a clear indication of the degree to which the 2015 election galvanized the Canadian public”, and the vast majority of these new voters voted for Trudeau (Majka 2015).

Elections Canada does not provide an immediate breakdown of voters by gender, so the precise role of women’s votes in deciding the result is not yet known. In the 2011 election, however, two percent more women than men voted, which meant that half a million more women than men turned out to vote; this led one commentator to note that “women vote bigger than their demographic” (McInturff 2015).

Also a big factor in the 2015 election was the impressive First Nations voter turnout. In 2014, Harper’s Conservative government – perhaps threatened by the success of Idle No More and wanting to disenfranchise indigenous voters – passed Bill C-50, which he called the ‘Fair Elections Act’, making it harder to vote without approved identification. This backfired, however, when indigenous activists led by women conducted a massive voter registration and election mobilization campaign. Some reserves saw voter turnout spike by up to 270 percent in the 2015 election. In the riding of Kenora, Ontario, where forty Northern Ontario First Nations are located, some First Nations polling stations ran out of ballots and either used photocopies or voters patiently waited for more ballots to be brought in (Puxley 2015).

Tania Cameron, a band councilor for Dalles First Nation who started ‘First Nations Rock the Vote’ on Facebook as part of her organizing efforts (which also included ‘ID clinics’ where people could find out if they were registered or had the required documents to cast a ballot), commented,

It was so heartening to see....Harper’s intent was to suppress the indigenous vote and that motivated me. It just caught on. I think the excitement of getting rid of the Harper government, showing Harper that his oppression tactics weren’t going to work – I think that was a huge motivator for many people who decided to step up.... I was thinking were’re going to see a turnout that Harper never expected (Puxley).

According to Manitoba First Nations activist Leah Gazan, the indigenous voter turnout was also related to the Conservative government’s Bill C-51, passed in 2015 (which increased police powers, allowed domestic spying and could criminalize indigenous activists), and to Harper’s weakening of federal environmental protection and support for aboriginal organizations.

He was quite violent with indigenous people through aggressive cuts and aggressive legislation that aimed to silence indigenous people. (But) as much as he attempted to divide, he really brought people on Turtle Island together, she said (Puxley).

The voter-registration drives apparently brought a high percentage of indigenous voters to the polls, meaning that although they make up just 4.3 percent of the population in Canada, indigenous people voted much bigger than their demographic – and this largely benefited the Liberals (Grenier 2015).

Trudeau's Liberals won 184 of 338 seats in the election, with 39.5 percent of the vote, to 31.9 percent (99 seats) for the Conservatives, and 19.7 percent (44 seats) for the NDP. A record ten indigenous Members of Parliament were elected in October 2015, and in Kenora, Conservative Natural Resources Minister Greg Rickford went down to defeat (Puxley). Jody Wilson-Raybould, a former crown prosecutor, treaty commissioner and regional chief with the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, which represents the interests of 203 First Nations in BC, won her Vancouver riding and was then appointed Trudeau's Justice Minister (Stueck 2015).¹

Immediately following his electoral victory, Trudeau announced his half-female cabinet:

'Because it's 2015!' Besides Wilson-Raybould, the female cabinet ministers appointed included Catherine McKenna (Environment and Climate Change), Chrystia Freeland (International Trade), Carolyn Bennett (Indigenous and Northern Affairs), Jane Philpott (Health), Patricia Hajdu (Status of Women), Marie-Claude Bibeau (International Development and La Francophonie), Diane Lebouthillier (National Revenue), Kirsty Duncan (Science), MaryAnn Mihychuk (Employment, Workforce Development and Labour), Judy Foote (Public Services and Procurement), Mélanie Joly (Canadian Heritage), Diane LeBouthillier (National Revenue), Maryam Monsef (Democratic Institutions), Carla Qualtrough (Sport and Persons with Disabilities) and Bardish Chagger (Small Business and Tourism).

Trudeau and a delegation of ten federal and provincial ministers and other politicians attended the 2015 Paris climate change conference, and Trudeau supported the inclusion of indigenous

rights in the resulting agreement. First Nations leader, Grand Chief Edward John, also at the First Nations Summit there, said

Canada has taken a very supportive role in Paris which is absolutely welcome given where we have been over the last decade on this issue. The only recourse we have had is to the courts (Prystupa 2015).

Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna met with environmental activists at COP21, endorsed the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C, and advocated a national carbon tax (National Observer 2015; 2016).

Trudeau's government may not take particularly radical action on climate change, but at least the discourse has changed: politicians can no longer sweep climate justice under the rug and pretend it's not an issue for Canada. Clearly the level of policy discussion on gender and climate justice in Canada was transformed by the 2015 election outcome – driven largely by women and indigenous leaders and voters.²

Conclusion

Returning to the question of distributive and procedural climate justice for women in Canada, the story traced in this chapter about women's leadership and organizing on environment, indigenous and intersectional issues illustrates a convergence of gendered impacts, awareness and action.

As noted in climate justice theory, it is those on the front lines of climate change – both extreme weather events and extraction – who are most aware of its impacts and most knowledgeable about how they should be addressed; this puts women at the forefront of climate justice struggles. It is no surprise that indigenous women, facing health and livelihood crises due to fossil fuel extraction on their territories, are leading movements to address this issue at its source. Besides the gendered economic and social roles that all women face in a patriarchal society, cultural factors also lead indigenous women to assert their voices and leadership on matters related to water, health, education and livelihoods.

It is important to underscore that the climate justice struggle in Canada, led mainly by indigenous women, is not subject to claims or control by Western environmental and/or feminist movements (Nixon). These women's activism highlights a key distinction in how gender justice and climate justice are linked in Canada (and likely in other countries that both produce and consume fossil fuels). It is the toxic effects of fossil fuel *production* itself – water and air pollution, ecosystem impacts on fish, wildlife, soils, forests, and particularly in Alberta the huge scale of government-subsidized tar sands operations, trampling on local governance processes and indigenous land rights – that first and most clearly demonstrate the deathly problematic nature of the economic system that produces climate change. The impacts of fossil fuel *consumption* – greenhouse gas emissions leading to extreme weather events, weather variability, and their myriad health, social, and economic outcomes – while global in their implications, are longer-incubating; their gendered effects also have great political significance. Women's leadership to address all of these gendered climate-related injustices is a powerful political force in both fossil fuel producing and consuming countries.

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Endnotes

¹ Harper’s Environment Minister Leona Aglukkak, former Chair of the Arctic Council who had served in the Nunavut government as Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, was defeated in the 2015 election. She was the first Inuk to serve in the federal Cabinet (CBC News 2015b). Earlier, her statements on climate change had ignited controversy when, during a 2013 television interview, she avoided agreeing that the

climate is changing. Asked whether ice was melting in the Arctic, she sighed and said it was “debatable.” The important thing, she said is that

people that live in the Arctic become experts and are engaged in that

Because we live in that environment every day. We are seeing the changes every day or no changes – what have you – and we have valuable information to contribute to research (True North Smart and Free 2013).

She also seemed reluctant to use the term ‘climate change’ during the interview.

I was in Oslo, just recently at the climate ch-ah climate conference, ah environment ministers conference, sorry, she said (True North Smart and Free).

At the time Aglukkaq was appointed Environment Minister in 2013, the conservative National Post commented,

Insiders say Aglukkaq is hard-working, bright, looks after her constituency and is highly managed from the top. She seldom goes off script and almost never scrums with reporters (Cheadle 2013).

Just as elsewhere in Canada, there is a broad political spectrum in Nunavut with significant support for all political parties (Ducharme 2015); Aglukkaq lost her seat in the 2015 election to Hunter Tootoo, a Liberal.

² However, a 2 March 2016 meeting on climate change in Vancouver between Trudeau and provincial premiers “fell to shambles”, according to Athabasca Chipewyan Chief Allan Adam, who said,

I think Canada's in a crisis and it ain't going to get any better now. Canada failed terribly, the provinces failed terribly in regards to addressing this issue" (Moran 2016).

Trudeau's failure to include the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples or the Native Women's Association of Canada in the Vancouver meeting led to criticism and disappointment (Weber 2016).

In Ontario, indigenous leaders including Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day called for more formal recognition and engagement with government on climate change strategies (Garlow 2016).