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Politically Speaking: Participation of Indigenous Women in Canada and the Importance of Intersectionality and Indigenous Resurgence

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Politically Speaking: Participation of Indigenous Women in Canada and the Importance of Intersectionality and Indigenous Resurgence

By

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POLITICALLY SPEAKING: PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADA
AND THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY AND INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE

by
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ABSTRACT

In the current political climate, the efforts of Indigenous women in the advancement of Indigenous rights have not gone unnoticed. Particularly, in 2012 the Idle No More movement gained attention across Canada and throughout the world, with Indigenous women front and centre, leading the fight against the destruction of land and working towards advancing the rights of Indigenous peoples. Importantly, the ways in which Indigenous women engage politically has continued to evolve and there is a need to document and understand the changes that are occurring. This research seeks to examine the changes in political participation among Indigenous women by looking at the influence that identity and community connections have on political involvement. Employing the theories of both intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence, the material presented examines the personal experiences of Indigenous women to gain a better understanding of what motivates them to become involved, what barriers they face, and how they have participated.

This research uses the voices and experiences of Indigenous women to show how identity and community impact their political participation. It is shown that through everyday acts of resistance, Indigenous women contribute to wider collective goals of Indigenous resurgence. Indigenous women's motivation is rooted in their identity and based on the need to address colonialism and provide a more sustainable environment for future generations. A multi-methods approach is used, that included surveys and interviews. Indigenous women over the age of 18-years-old and residing in Canada were sought out for participation. A total of 86 surveys were collected and analyzed. Surveys were used to let those involved guide the issues that would be explored further during the interviews. By using quantitative and qualitative research methods, a decolonizing framework has been employed to properly account for the experiences of Indigenous women. Originally, interviews were to be done in-person. However, as a result of the global pandemic, participants were able to choose to be interviewed over the phone or via video call. A total of 13 interviews were conducted over the phone.

Findings show that identity is a highly contested topic among Indigenous women that plays an important role in how they participate. Identity and political participation have a mutually beneficial relationship. In other words, identity encourages participation, and participation supports identity. While identity can be a motivating factor in how one participates politically,

providing support and encouragement, it can also discourage participation through feelings of not belonging. Community connections were shown to have only a positive influence on political participation, providing individuals with a network of support and producing more opportunities for involvement. However, one does not need to have a connection to the community to participate politically, and having a connection does not guarantee participation. Overall, both community connections and identity are shown to influence the political participation of Indigenous women in different ways. It is demonstrated throughout this research that Indigenous women are continually engaging in everyday acts of resistance with a wider goal of Indigenous resurgence. It is hoped that by finding out what motivates and deters participation among Indigenous women, efforts can be directed towards reducing barriers and developing programs that increase motivation for involvement.

DEDICATION

This is for my parents. Who have always supported me. My father, who is the reason behind this research. I would also like to dedicate this research to past, present, and future generations of Indigenous women who are strong, important figures in the fight for justice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Indigenous: term used that includes all individuals who are original peoples of the land and their descendants. This includes Inuk, First Nations (status and non-status), and Métis individuals (Stevenson, 2021, p. 201).

Community Connections: Community connections are dependent on attachments to other Indigenous individuals rather than a specific location. A feeling of fellowship with others which often results from sharing common goals, attitudes, and interests (Jewkes & Murcott, 1996, p. 555).

Métis: Individuals with mixed ancestry (often associated with having Indigenous and Euro-American ancestry) (Teillet, 2013, p. 3).

First Nations: Any group of Indigenous individuals in Canada that are officially recognized as an administrative unit by the federal government or that function as such without official status (Vowel, 2016, p. 27).

Inuk: A member of the Inuit people, who are Indigenous peoples of northern Canada (Searles, 2008, p. 239).

Status: Individuals who hold status are legally defined as Indian under the *Indian Act.*

Citizenship: In this research, Citizenship is defined as being a registered member of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Canadian State: Consists of Canada's system of government that is vested power by the Crown to govern on behalf of and in the interest of the people (Government of Canada, 2022).

Colonialism: A practice of domination, involving the subjugation of one people over another (Cavanagh & Veracini, 2016, p. 153).

Colonization: Subjugation of an area or people using force, often as an extension of state power (Lloyd, Few & Allen, 2009, p. 283).

Network: A system or group of interconnected people that can work together as a system (Collins English Dictionary, 2023).

Identity: Beliefs, feelings or characteristics which make an individual or group different from others (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

Nation: A large group of people united by common language, culture, descent, or history that inhabit a distinct territory or country (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Political Participation: An action guided and initiated by the goal to have an impact on existing arrangements.

Note: While all definitions are applicable to the research, they are not exhaustive. Many of the terms are based on information provided by the participants and then supported by the literature. Where applicable, the terms used will be discussed in greater detail within the research

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, when the Idle No More movement took hold, Canadians began to notice the power of Indigenous women and their influence in the Indigenous rights movement. However, the truth is that Indigenous women have long played an essential role in advancing Indigenous rights. Unfortunately, their contributions and perspectives were often overshadowed or ignored. This situation is not limited to Canada, as Indigenous women worldwide have worked tirelessly to bring about recognition to many issues, with minimal acknowledgement of their efforts (Asante, 2005). Examples can be seen in several previous Indigenous rights protests that have occurred throughout the world, which are shown in the media and represented in public discourse as being led by Indigenous men (Barker, 2008; Conradi, 2009).

The work and contributions of Indigenous women have only more recently been the focus of attention through the assistance of outspoken Indigenous women activists and scholars (Anderson, 2000; 2016; Gehl, 2000; Simpson, 2017).[1] Despite this progress, more work still needs to be done. It is time that the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous women are adequately represented and acknowledged, both inside and outside of academic circles. Indigenous women's triumphs were often placed under the broader discourse of Indigenous rights. However, it is essential to recognize the gendered nature of their struggles. Ignoring or overlooking Indigenous women's role in advancing Indigenous rights reinforces violence and gender-based discrimination (Palmater, 2020b; Picq, 2018). Moreover, this exclusion can result in a lack of perspectives and representation of Indigenous women in decision-making processes, perpetuating an imbalance of power. This research seeks to share Indigenous women's knowledge in hopes of inspiring and bringing about change.

The chapters presented provide detailed information concerning the research conducted. Chapter One focuses on my journey of understanding and acknowledging my identity and Métis heritage. Using an autoethnographic exploration of my personal experiences, the motivations and objectives of this research will become more apparent. As an approach to writing and research, autoethnography seeks to systematically analyze and describe personal experience to gain an

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[1] See: https://www.manitoba.ca/msw/persons-day.html for information on several important Indigenous women activists and scholars.

understanding of cultural experiences (Butz & Besio, 2009). Autoethnography challenges recognized methods of conducting research, treating research as an act that is socially conscious and political (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). As such, being reflexive about my experience is another way that I seek to decolonize the research being conducted.

The goal and importance of this research are rooted in a need to expand on current literature and place the experiences and knowledge of Indigenous women at the forefront of analysis. Chapter Two presents a description of the literature, highlighting the impact of colonialism on the experiences of Indigenous women and the history of their activism in Canada. Significant differences become apparent by looking at past acts of resistance engaged in by Indigenous women. Particularly, three events (the Kanesatà:ke Siege[2], Idle No More, and the Wet'suwet'en Protests[3]) which occurred decades apart, show a shift in how Indigenous women engage politically and a change in response by the Canadian government and the general public.

To adequately address the questions guiding this research, Chapter Three presents information on the theories of intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence. Specifically, both theories provide a more holistic understanding of Indigenous identity, community connections, and Indigenous women's political participation. Indigenous women who participated in this research guided the focus of issues that were covered. By decolonizing methodology which solicited ideas from Indigenous women through surveys and interviews, their experiences and voices remained the engine driving this research. Both surveys (n=86) and interviews (n=13), which are described in Chapter Four, were conducted with Indigenous women throughout Canada. Survey results were used to guide the interview questions and the topics covered. The results of this research are presented in Chapter Five, with findings collected categorized under three themes. The themes which emerged are (1) Community Connections; (2) Identity; and (3) Motivations for Participation. Each topic is discussed and examined in connection with the information provided by the interview participants. Chapter Six presents the conclusions and limitations of this research. This research intends to use the experiences of Indigenous women as

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[2] It is important to note that while the 1990 protests are most often referred to within the media and government reports as the Oka Crisis, those involved, and community representative Ellen Gabriel refer to this event as the Kanesatà:ke Siege (see Major, 2020). Moving forward, what is commonly recognized under the colonial name "the Oka Crisis" will be referred to as the Kanesatà:ke Siege.

[3] The Wet'suwet'en Protests are also known under the colonial name as "the 2020 Pipeline and Railway Protests."

a starting point for future research and the development of programs which enhance and support Indigenous women's future goals of empowerment and change.

My Biography

Trying to figure out where to start when explaining the important moments in my life that brought me to my current research is challenging. Researchers have various motivations, some more straightforward than others. To say that I am interested in the topic of political participation and Indigenous women's rights is apparent. However, getting to personal motivation is more complex. I have always avoided talking about myself in my research, so trying to find the words to explain who I am is difficult. However, like many others before me, I believe the best place to start is the beginning. One of the main reasons I began this research was to understand my father and his heritage. My interest deepened when my father showed me a book my aunt made, which provided a family history. Although there was some critical information, huge gaps remained, and I took it upon myself to try and find out more. I spent several months searching through government and public records to provide a more detailed look into my family ancestry.

My paternal grandfather passed away when I was very young, so I never had the chance to get to know him. My father also did not know him well because my grandfather was not around much when my dad and his siblings were growing up. So, as a child, I only knew about my mom's side of the family. I grew up with stories about Newfoundland that my Nanny and Poppy would tell. Every Christmas, I would get a stocking full of candy from Newfoundland and would hear the songs my mom grew up hearing. These are the things I remember from my childhood. When I think about the time spent with my father's side of the family, there was no tradition. I was raised in a white, Catholic Christian home.

In the fifth grade, I was assigned to present the class with information about my heritage. When I asked my father about his background, he said I would not even have a minute of material with the information he had. Although the presentation was supposed to be on both parents, my entire presentation was focused on my mom's heritage. When asked in front of the class why I only focused on my mother's side of the family, I had to say that my father does not know his background. I was embarrassed, and this situation played out for most of my childhood in different ways. In each case, my identity was solely reflective of my mother because of not

knowing where my father came from or who he was. This lack of understanding led me to avoid confrontations in terms of explaining the lack of knowledge about my father's ancestry.

There were many times when my friends saw my father, I would be asked who he was. When I was younger, I did not think anything of it. Until I was in high school, I did not even really know what Indigenous was. I could not describe in detail the first time I found out that my father was Indigenous, which he affirmed when I asked him. When I was in high school, I found out that my father was ill, but nothing could be done. It was not until years later that my father was invited to take part in a new type of clinical trial for his illness. Undergoing a battery of tests needed to report results, he discovered he was 50% "Native." While my father grew up separated from his siblings and lived with different family members, he knew he and his sisters had Indigenous roots. He wants to know more about where he came from, as do I. I feel that if I can find this information for him, at least he will be able to have more answers about who he is, and in some way, he can begin to understand his past. I want nothing more than to help my father find out where he came from.

My need to understand more about my family history increased as I realized the fragility of family and heritage when a close member of the family decided to sever all ties, and with it, any relations that I could have built were gone. Some questions linger about why they chose to estrange themself from the family. While I had strong ties to my dad's side of the family, as the years passed, these ties weakened and, over time, became almost nonexistent. I remained significantly close to my mother's side of the family, who are light-skinned.

My mother was the one that always met with my teachers and participated in school and after-school events; we look very much alike, so I never needed to explain who she was like I had to do with my father. As a young child, I remember being close to my mother and not my father. One day in kindergarten, my teacher asked me what my father did, and I knew nothing about him. Embarrassed that I did not know, I looked outside and saw a man working on the school grounds and said my dad is a gardener. "That is my dad there." To my dismay, the teacher went over and introduced herself to him, only to find out that I had lied. I got in trouble for lying and was made to sit in the corner for 'time out.' I look back at that now and realize I knew nothing about my father. Furthermore, to this day, I still feel like I do not know him the way that

I should. My desire to learn more about my ancestry is rooted in my need to be closer to my father.

Presenting as white, I did not doubt my Whiteness even though I had questions about my father's ancestry. Questions about one's heritage did not seem as important when I was younger. Already dealing with discrimination around my sexuality and learning problems, which were significant when I was younger, I did not want to add more 'reasons' to be different or targeted. It was not until grade four that I began to learn how to read, and in grade nine I learned math. I struggled to keep up with other students, but no matter how hard I tried, I could never grasp the material being taught. When I got to high school, I chose to avoid learning by skipping classes and not handing in the material. I felt it was better to fail for not trying rather than admit I was 'not smart.' Hiding things about myself seemed normal for a long time.

I grew up knowing little about my Indigenous father and, thus, my Indigenous roots. However, I had some close Indigenous friends with whom I spent a lot of time; I felt accepted by them. I was comfortable with them and their families; I felt secure. Despite not identifying myself as Indigenous, there were clear connections and experiences that made me feel comfortable with them. Members of my family babysat my friends who are Indigenous when they were younger, and they knew my father well, maybe even more than I did. Their parents and extended family members knew a lot about where my fathers' ancestors came from; Penetanguishene, Ontario. I always wondered if this was what they knew first-hand or whether it was information they had heard from my father. Regardless, they always took the time to try and teach me about Indigenous culture and invite me to family and community events. Unfortunately, my friends and I, being teenagers, did not take advantage of invitations to engage in Indigenous events. Although my friends had strong connections to their Indigenous heritage and culture, as young adults, we prioritized spending as much time as possible with our friends rather than our families.

During my teenage years, I was not incentivized to build connections and learn more about my heritage. Since I had my Indigenous friends and they accepted me, I felt that I had everything I needed. When those ties were gone, I realized that my comfort was situational and at a younger age, I did not consider my Indigenous identity as important. When I was a teenager, there were so many other things I tried to focus on other than who I was…it was all about whom I

tried/wanted to be. I grew up in Scarborough, Ontario, in a neighbourhood called Guildwood. Living in a predominantly white suburb, I never had to confront my Indigeneity, as the only exposure I had to other Indigenous peoples was those who travelled from other communities to attend the local high school.

Due to the difference in appearance between my father and myself, the relationships he formed with others seemed very different from how I formed relationships. When people met my father, his skin colour was immediately brought up by others. "What is your background?" was a common question. For myself, my heritage was never in question. I looked white, so I was white. Although I had questions about my Indigeneity, I was not forced to confront my identity. Looking back, when I was younger, I never faced the constant judging and questioning of who I was like other family members did. I could not imagine the struggle they experienced at a young age of walking into a room and worrying about having to defend and constantly explain my complexion. Furthermore, since our heritage is not well known, how can I provide answers to something that I have little knowledge of?

As I became more aware of my heritage, I was hampered by the lack of access to information. The Internet and social networking were not as readily accessible as they are today. My aunts and father knew next to nothing about their family background since their father was not present in their lives. Indigenous lives and cultures were not as publicly acknowledged and discussed. My family and I did not access any Indigenous services, information, or community during my teenage years in Toronto. The word "Métis" seemed to be just a term for someone who is not Indigenous yet is not white. Furthermore, when I was younger, you were either white or not white, Indigenous, or not Indigenous. There was no in-between.

When I moved away to study at schools in Aurora and Oshawa due to my learning disability and social anxiety, I spent most of my time trying to excel in my coursework. I did not make time to build connections. I lost touch with my childhood friends and never tried to explore my Indigenous identity further. Instead, I was able to find the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, asexual, and two-spirited (LGBTQA2+) community. I threw all my efforts into establishing myself as an openly gay woman. I researched this aspect of my identity, as it was something that I knew about myself at a very young age. I conducted my master's thesis to explore my sexual identity and learn about the LGBTQA+ community.

Since my sexuality was blatantly clear, and I was forced to confront it daily, other aspects of myself took a back seat. I focused my research on my sexuality because it was essential to my life. I had many support systems, having disclosed my sexuality to friends in middle school. I had decades to build connections and would spend much time in Toronto's downtown Gay Village. I attended Pride every year, and when I was old enough, I would attend clubs and events catered to the LGBTQA+ community. I made a lot of friends and connections. By focusing my master's research on sexuality, specifically on the intersectionality of hate crimes against lesbians and violence against women, I was able to extend my understanding of discrimination that occurs beyond the individual level. This focus on sexuality also allowed me to use my academic knowledge to engage personally with the LGBTQA+ community in the Durham region by volunteering for several non-profit organizations.

Having immersed myself in the LGBTQA+ community and focusing my attention and research interests on sexuality, I became comfortable enough to start exploring other aspects of my identity that were less clear to me. My curiosity surrounding my Indigeneity was always there, and throughout my academic journey, when the opportunity presented itself, I focused on Indigenous rights issues. However, learning more became a priority when I found out that my father was sick. My need to know about my Indigenous heritage became more pronounced, and I decided to focus my Doctoral research on Indigenous women's experiences. With time and persistence, I have become more engaged with the Aboriginal Education Centre at the University of Windsor. The support and knowledge I have gained from them have been very positive in general, specifically in identity support and belonging.

Thinking through my lack of connections and histories with the Indigenous community, I wondered whether there are other women like me and how they are participating in Indigenous politics. With this, an idea to study how identity issues and experiences shape Indigenous women's political participation began to form. Not identifying myself as Indigenous, my political awakening began with embracing my sexual identity. Do other Indigenous women who know themselves to be Indigenous get involved with Indigenous social movements and how? Moreover, with Indigenous women's organizations dealing with a lack of funding and limited staff, I began to wonder how Indigenous women may participate politically outside these organizations and what form of involvement they take.

If you were to ask my father what his ethnicity is, he would identify as being half Indigenous. Me, I identify as having Indigenous ancestry. When someone asks me about my background, I say I am mixed with Newfie, French Canadian, and Indigenous ancestry. Even though I have discovered my Indigenous roots, I cannot claim to be Indigenous. I have not grown up Indigenous and cannot simply identify as Indigenous. There is no denying my affinity with my Indigenous father. However, my disconnect from my dad's side of the family may have resulted from how different I seemed from him. I am white-passing, while my father and his siblings are not. When I was younger, I would ask why I looked different. People would tease me saying, "you're the mailman's daughter." I was already alienated from my Indigeneity through the different racialization and my white appearance, distinguishing me from my father.

I remember going to work with my father, who constantly told his coworkers that I was his daughter (without provocation), with most people in shock to find out we were related. While my father has a dark complexion, brown eyes, and dark brown hair, I was born with blonde hair and blue eyes, lacking any resemblance to my father or anyone on his side of the family. When my father was in public with other family members, there was never any question about them being related. Even though I knew my father was proud of me as a daughter, we had difficulty connecting because I looked so unlike him, and we never discussed it.

The recent Indigenous resurgence has encouraged me to embrace my roots more fully. Although I never shunned my Indigeneity as a child, I never fully embraced it. My father was not forthcoming regarding his background and upbringing. Even now, when asked, he says he remembers very little. My father's hesitancy to discuss this part of himself made me feel awkward about becoming more involved with Indigenous matters. It seemed as if shame surrounded that part of who he was and what he experienced growing up. Indigenous resurgence has helped me overcome the awkwardness of my identity and has made it possible to engage with my Indigenous heritage.

I started my political journey the moment I entered University. However, my involvement was primarily directed toward student-led events. University provided me with tools to engage in various causes, offering information on events, transportation, and other individuals to connect with. Shortly after this, when I started my Master's, my interests expanded to more personal causes, particularly my sexuality. One could argue that, in some ways, I became politicized in a

very sheltered way. My political experience focused primarily on LGBTQA2+ rights in the beginning. However, my interests continued to expand beyond those presented to me. I took it upon myself to find opportunities to be involved. That decision has brought me here, to this point in my life, to this research.

Goal of Research

This research is the culmination of almost a decade of work. Various trials and tribulations have occurred since this research began. The global pandemic impacted numerous aspects of life, and the research process was significantly altered. However, the information collected from this research presents important findings that will assist in developing a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous women's political participation. By highlighting the experiences of Indigenous women, this research focuses on the personal fueling the political.

I embarked on this research intending to learn what being of Indigenous ancestry means and how it may shape political involvement and consciousness. Although I have found that it is different for everyone, learning about other people's experiences helped me find myself. Additionally, by understanding other women's experiences, I can learn about and build connections. I further deepened my ties to the LGBTQA+ community during my master's thesis. I have a similar inkling that this research process is also a way to understand the Indigenous community more wholesomely.

Identifying with the LGBTQA+ community was easier than asserting my Indigenous identity. This difficulty is partly due being divorced from my history. Without family history, this identity requires a lot more effort and confidence to acknowledge. I have always felt that I cannot fully embrace that part of myself if I do not have tangible proof of where my father came from and his ancestry. However, I needed to look at the bigger picture regardless of how I felt. My father was denied an opportunity to understand and assert his Indigeneity. It is my goal to reclaim that identity positively. By reclaiming my identity, I can embrace my own history in hopes of reconciliation.

My experience of identification is part of this process as it is the motivation behind this project. If you ask a Métis person what it means to be of Indigenous heritage and its impact on their identity, it would be very different from someone who is First Nations, just like it would be

for someone who is Inuk. Moreover, this identity is different for every Indigenous person. For example, an Indigenous woman who is Anishinaabe may view their identity differently from that of a Cree Indigenous woman. In terms of my own identity, I have many questions. Where do I belong? Furthermore, do I have the right? Will my claim be accepted? Why do I want to make this claim? What advantages can this have for me - to what end? What would I lose if I did not try to make this claim?

Because I cannot 100% confirm these answers from my ancestors, are there commonalities I can draw on with other Indigenous peoples? If I were pressed to give myself a label, I would be of Native and Newfie heritage. However, I have hesitated to define myself as Indigenous in many respects. What if what my family has told me is incorrect? Can I assert an Indigenous identity just based on ancestral linkage? Even if it is correct, is it even suitable for me to acknowledge any Indigenous ancestry? Just because my ancestors are Indigenous, does this mean I am also? Am I too white to be Indigenous? Does my Indigenous ancestry go too far back for me to acknowledge any Indigenous bloodline? How would embracing my Indigenous heritage inform my own political experience and insights? Regardless of how precariously I am rooted in Indigeneity, how can I find a respectful place for it in my life and build solidarity with Indigenous communities? These are some of the questions I ask myself often. While I cannot answer all these questions, this research has allowed me to explore such issues.

This research is generated from Indigenous women's lived experiences rather than the Western academy's traditional methodological and theoretical orientations. Moreover, it builds on the action and thinking of Indigenous women in this research and those engaged with similar thinking and ideas. This work is influenced by the insightful and inspiring book *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* by Leanne Simpson (2017). Simpson (2017) presents the Radical Resurgence Project, which uses Indigenous theory, critique, and interrogation, as well as the grounded normativity generated by these systems as an intelligence system. This system promotes resurgence and is the process from which Indigenous, real-world, grounded alternatives are realized and manifested.

Although the radical resurgence project brought essential considerations for this research, how Simpson (2017) presented her work stood out. I could feel the author's interest and conviction presented on every page, within every paragraph, and in every idea. This work aspires

to present the material gathered during the research process with the same vigour that many Indigenous scholars, academics, and activists demonstrate daily and with the passion that was present among all the Indigenous women who participated in this research.

The work of Marie Campbell (2019, originally published in 1983) and Patricia Monture-Angus (1996) offers an insightful look at Indigenous identity from Indigenous women's perspectives. In particular, the book *Half-Breed* by Campbell (2019), a memoir which details the author's journey of self-discovery, presents the experiences of a Métis woman and issues of identity and race. Campbell's (2019) work made me realize that I am not alone in terms of my feelings of not belonging to either white or Indigenous society. Furthermore, a large portion of the material presented in her work has provided a basis for understanding and formatting questions in this research concerning identity.

Another influential scholar who impacted the formation of this research is Monture-Angus (1996). Her book, *Thunder in My Soul*, discusses the complexities surrounding Indigenous identity. Her reflections point to a choice. A choice of how one defines and names themselves. For some, identity can be seen as a choice since it is a dynamic and fluid aspect of who a person is rather than a necessarily fixed, innate characteristic (Weaver, 2001). However, it is important to note that while identity may be a choice for some individuals (for example, white-presenting Indigenous peoples might choose to 'pass' as white to avoid discrimination), these choices are often constructed by broader social factors such as colonization. For instance, individuals might face cultural or societal pressures to conform to specific categories of identity, or they may be unable to access resources that can impact their identity (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005).

Importantly, when one chooses to identify in a particular way, there may be implications for their relationship with their community and cultural heritage (Asante, 2005). As such, I must be extra conscious of this dynamic by continually interrogating myself to look at the changing and situational dynamics framed by a white colonial structure. Monture-Angus' (1996) work examines the individual's place in the political and social collective. This aspect of her work directed me towards looking at the political nature of Indigenous identity and how Indigenous identity influences political participation. Each of the scholars presented above has influenced the ideas presented and examined throughout this research.

Importance of Research

Existing literature on the political participation of Indigenous peoples in Canada is significantly lacking (Alfred, Pitawanakwat & Price, 2007). The research that does exist tends to focus on specific political actions such as voting (Dabin, Daoust & Papillion, 2019; Ladner & McCrossan, 2007), involvement in demonstrations and collective action (Barker, 2015a; Barker & Ross, 2017; Ramos, 2006; Wilkes, 2004), as well as online avenues (Budd, Gabel & Goodman, 2019; Richez, Raynauld & Kartolo, 2020). Over the years, Indigenous women worldwide have had a presence within the Indigenous rights movement; however, with the gendered and racial struggles of discrimination at societal and institutional levels, their impact on policy has only more recently been evident (Buice, 2013).

Studies primarily look at Indigenous youth or Indigenous peoples as a whole (Corntassel, 2007) and Indigenous people's political involvement in environmental issues (Palmater, 2018). Specifically, research examining Indigenous women's political participation in Canada is almost nonexistent (Allsop & Richez, 2021; Green, 2001). Furthermore, although some studies focus on Indigenous women's political participation in general, the material and information fail to provide a better understanding of what influences participation among Indigenous women in various political activities (Guimond-Marceau, Roy & Salée, 2020). This research will address such inconsistencies by looking at the motivations for Indigenous women to participate.

Research Questions and Conceptual Approach

Indigenous women have contributed in various ways to the political gains that Indigenous peoples' have achieved (Mayoux, 1995). However, literature on Indigenous women's participation in the advancement of Indigenous women's rights outside of recognized organizations is lacking in identifying the importance this has to the advancement of political goals (Kuokkanen, 2012). Therefore, I am interested in understanding alternative ways Indigenous women can engage in political issues and their impact on raising awareness. Since a large majority of Canada's Indigenous population lives off reserves, I want to see if political involvement is influenced by one's connection to the Indigenous community (Milke, 2014). Moreover, with the rise of issues surrounding Indigenous identity, this research seeks to better understand the role identity can have on political participation.

This research contributes theoretically by expanding on intersectionality, using it to understand Indigenous women's identity through the inclusion of Indigenous resurgence theory. Moreover, both theories are explained using real-world experiences of Indigenous women and political participation, going beyond the theoretical towards the practical. In analyzing the political involvement of Indigenous women, I will address several main lines of inquiry: 1) their level of political involvement; 2) their ways of engaging in political issues; 3) their connection with the Indigenous community; and 4) the impact they believe their identity has on their political participation. Ultimately, this research explores what motivates and influences Indigenous women's political involvement. There are several reasons why understanding the motivations and influences of Indigenous women's involvement is important (which are outlined below). Based on the theoretical framework of intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence, accounting for these aspects in Indigenous women's lives become necessary and important as part of my larger decolonizing strategy:

Historical context: Throughout history, Indigenous women have played important roles in resistance efforts. The factors influencing Indigenous women's political involvement and resistance are rooted in a long history of oppression and colonization. Understanding such factors presents an important context for current issues and may assist in future action.

Intersectionality: Since the resistance and political involvement of Indigenous women is often impacted by a number of factors (such as race, colonialism, gender, and ethnicity), recognizing these factors and how they intersect is crucial for understanding the unique challenges that Indigenous women face.

Recognition: Looking at the factors which impact the political involvement and resistance of Indigenous women can assist in developing greater recognition of the perspectives and needs of Indigenous communities, making sure they are accurately reflected.

Building Connections: By understanding Indigenous women's motivation and role in resistance, connections can be built between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, promoting greater collaboration, respect, and understanding.

Acknowledging Agency: The marginalization of Indigenous women is widespread, and the contributions they have made to Indigenous movements is often downplayed or ignored.

Acknowledging the roles of Indigenous women provides them with recognition and agency that they have rightfully achieved. Additionally, we need to go one step further by not just acknowledging Indigenous women's agency but also understanding how they construct their agency differently. For example, many Indigenous women place emphasis on their connection to the land and see their agency as being linked to their ability to protect natural resources and the environment.

Empowerment: By understanding what influences the resistance and political involvement of Indigenous women, possibilities arise that may address and overcome the barriers which prevent them from participating. Moreover, by learning about Indigenous women's resistance, resilience, and strength, others may be empowered and inspired to become involved.

Community Building: Understanding what influences Indigenous women's political involvement and resistance can create more inclusive, stronger communities, encouraging greater collaboration and understanding.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Our presence is our weapon, and this is visible to me at every protest, every mobilization, every time a Two Spirited person gifts us with a dance at our powwows, every time we speak our truths, every time we embody Indigenous life" (Simpson, 2017, p. 6).

The quote presented above by Simpson (2017) speaks to the core of this research. Regardless of the circumstances and difficulties, Indigenous women have actively engaged in resistance for centuries. Their resistance occurs on both individual and collective levels. The fact that Indigenous peoples still exist in Canada after decades and centuries of trying to remove them, trying to make them 'white' by attempting to suppress their culture and ways of being, and trying to erase their identities; the fact that Indigenous peoples are still here is the most significant form of resistance. It is the existence of Indigenous peoples that works against the colonial goals of the Canadian government.

No analysis of Indigenous resistance in Canada can be completed without presenting a detailed description of colonialism's impact on Indigenous existence. This chapter begins by examining Canada's colonial nature and the impact colonization has had on Indigenous women. The following sections will focus on how Indigenous women's lives were dramatically changed by colonialism. Attention will be directed toward the impact that the *Indian Act* and residential schooling has had on Indigenous women's community connections and identity. Moreover, the violence and discrimination they continue to experience due to colonial practices and ideologies will be discussed.

It will be shown that colonial ideologies have permeated every level of Canadian society, and as a result, Indigenous women's lives have been significantly impacted. Next, attention will be directed toward discussing Indigenous identity and its role in participation. This chapter will then outline Indigenous organizing in general, followed by a history of Indigenous women's political involvement. Finally, three specific events will be presented (the Kanesatà:ke Siege, Idle No More, and the Wet'suwet'en Protests) to show the changing nature of Indigenous women's influence in advancing Indigenous rights. By discussing previous acts of resistance and issues which have impacted Indigenous women, one can better understand how identity impacts their political participation.

Colonialism

Colonialism has shaped Indigenous women's role and place in Canadian society; therefore, colonization will be discussed throughout this research to present a decolonizing framework. Moreover, by acknowledging the existence of colonialism as an active structure that continues to influence Indigenous peoples, cultural and social rejuvenation can occur (Elliot, 2017, p. 61; Sherwin, 2022). With this research using the theory of Indigenous resurgence, colonialism and its impact on Indigenous women needs to be explored further. Acts of Indigenous resurgence have emerged to challenge the impact of colonialism and to resist policies and practices of assimilation imposed by the Canadian government.

With colonialization, Indigenous ways of being have been dramatically altered. While all Indigenous peoples have been impacted by colonialism, Indigenous women have faced a specific assault against their identity. With the arrival of colonizers, the suppression and erasure of Indigenous practices, languages, and cultures occurred through coercion and violence, having a lasting impact on the sense of identity among Indigenous women (Royle, 2017). As a result of colonialism, Indigenous women have experienced numerous traumas, which include the loss of culture, language, tradition, and land (Ouellette, 2002). These traumas have significantly impacted the identity of Indigenous women, displacing them physically, socially, and politically (Harry, 2009, p.8).

Assumptions about gender and Indigenous women's place, as a result of colonization, dramatically changed gender relations within Indigenous societies (Anderson, Innes & Swift, 2012, p. 266; Sakamoto, 2014). As a result of the Canadian state, Indigenous women's status was further undermined by the cultural and structural breakdown of family, community, and social ties (Bell, 2016; Culhane, 2003; Royle, 2017). Colonization continues to have negative social consequences for Indigenous peoples, such as high unemployment and poverty rates, child welfare issues, overrepresentation in the corrections system, and educational inequalities (Razack, 2002, p. 127; Willow, 2016). In particular, the sexual oppression faced daily by Indigenous women cannot be separated from the legacies of racism and colonialism (McGrath & Stevenson, 1996, p. 37-38).

The legacies of colonialism and racism continue to marginalize Indigenous peoples, devaluing their traditions and cultures (Grey, 2004, p. 19; Ouellette, 2002). Communities and

families were torn apart, and women received discrimination in government services and experienced inequalities in living situations, causing some to remain in dangerous situations to survive (Amnesty International, 2014). The root causes of the high levels of violence against Indigenous women are linked to a history of discrimination which continues to impact them today, starting with colonization and proceeding through unjust and inadequate policies and laws, such as forced enrolment in residential schools and the *Indian Act* (Gilchrist, 2010; Pedersen, Malcoe, & Pulkingham, 2013). Overall, the continual experience of colonialism is demonstrated in violence and discrimination against Indigenous women, particularly racialized and sexualized violence against women symbolized by Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

The Indian Act

Colonial policies and laws that sought to remove the threat of Indigenous women's empowerment substantially impacted Indigenous women's identity (Lavell-Harvard, 2014). The *Indian Act* is one example of colonial policies that altered Indigenous women's connection and place within both Indigenous communities and society as a whole (Cornet, 2001). The policies developed to 'civilize' and assimilate Indigenous peoples were based on the European model, having devastating effects on Indigenous women (McGrath & Stevenson, 1996, p. 40). Indigenous women possessed considerable independence and personal autonomy, but they were expected to be dependent on men in the way European women did (Devens, 1992, p. 66).

The independence of Indigenous women was threatening to white men and the core 'values' they sought to maintain. White men viewed themselves as superior due to their gender and race (Harry, 2009, p. 6; Royle, 2017). European men who settled in Canada were sexually violent towards Indigenous women, leading to a shift for women from standing under egalitarian values to patriarchal ones (Rutherdale & Pickles, 2014). After Europeans took over, Indigenous women were placed in a devalued position; they were not permitted to sign land rights or treaty forms, ultimately altering the gender relations between women and men (Pedersen, Malcoe, & Pulkingham, 2013, p. 1036-1037).

The colonization of Indigenous peoples led to a cultural and social breakdown and a loss of family structure (Desjardins, 2014, p. 9). Over the years, inadequate Canadian government procedures and policies caused Indigenous women to suffer the most (Stout & Kipling, 1998).

Such policies tore apart communities and families, and Indigenous women experienced discrimination in access to government services and inequalities in living situations. These circumstances caused some Indigenous women to remain in dangerous situations to survive (Amnesty International, 2014). The Canadian government saw the existence of Indigenous peoples as a threat to the state, so to make them easier to control, officials sought to eliminate all their freedoms and rights (Sakamoto, 2014, p. 60). As a result of colonization, Indigenous women became more vulnerable in Canadian society (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Pedersen, Malcoe, & Pulkingham, 2013).

The root causes of the high levels of violence against Indigenous women are linked to a history of discrimination which continues to impact them today. Discrimination and violence started with colonization and proceeded through unjust and inadequate policies and laws, such as forced enrolment in residential schools and the *Indian Act* (Desjardins, 2014, p. 9; Gilchrist, 2010). As a result of the *Indian Act* (1876), thousands of Indigenous women in Canada were denied their rights as Indigenous persons, increasing their marginalization in society (Gehl, 2000; Harry, 2009, p. 18). For example, the *Indian Act* asserted that if a First Nation woman married a non-First Nations man, she would no longer be recognized as a member of that nation by the Canadian government (Monture-Angus, 1999, p. 28). This removal of Indigenous identity was specifically directed towards Indigenous women. With many Indigenous women losing their status and connections to their communities, the ties that were once held began to fracture.

Many Indigenous women were stripped of their identity, no longer able to pass on status to their children, and were barred from their community (Kelm & Townsend, 2006, p. 341). Between 1876 and 1985, around 25,000 Indian women had to leave their communities due to losing their status (Harry, 2009, p. 21). Indigenous women's connections to their communities were significantly impacted by colonization and the proceeding laws and policies which sought to alter Indigenous ways of life (Desjardins, 2014, p. 9; Morton, 2016). By separating Indigenous women from their communities, settlers attempted to weaken the connection to land, social ties, and customs of Indigenous peoples. As a result, the community connections of Indigenous women have yet to be fully mended. For Indigenous peoples, community provides support; it is where culture and heritage thrive and identity is formed (Maracle, 2021, p. 18). In other words, community is the basis for the survival of Indigenous knowledge and the continuation of

Indigenous existence. Through colonization, settlers sought to dismantle the livelihood of Indigenous peoples, targeting Indigenous women and children for assimilation and eradication (Palmater, 2016).

Before colonization, for Indigenous women, community membership provided a sense of belonging based on kinship, acceptance, and recognition (Baskin, 2020). However, after colonization and the introduction of the *Indian Act* (1876), numerous Indigenous women lost connections to their communities (Borrows, 2008, p. 2). The implementation of colonial policies resulted in many instances in which Indigenous women were forced to leave the reserve (Deschambault, 2020, p. 4). While some were forced to leave, others left to gain employment, access to health care, or obtain higher education (Peters & Robillard, 2009). Leaving their communities left many Indigenous women and their children with fractured connections to their families, community, and culture. The fracturing of community, isolation and separating Indigenous women from all aspects of their life has been the primary strategy of colonial forces, leading to the politics of belonging and identity, which continue to pose significant difficulties for all Indigenous communities (Yuval-Davis, 2016, p. 369). One of the key implications of fracturing Indigenous women's identity and connections is difficulties in the context of Indigenous women's activism and political work.

For Indigenous peoples, connections are essential (spiritually, mentally, and physically). It is not only about connecting to people, culture, and heritage but also to the land. Indigenous women are unified with their claim to the land through their history of colonialism and beyond. Rather than just territorial, the land is symbolic as it allows for the construction of ties and connections, and Indigenous women can use them to build a greater sense of belonging (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016, p. 89). Indigenous identity is strengthened through engagement with reserve and urban communities (Maracle, 2021, p. 18). Indigenous peoples' values, culture, and identity are often transactive within community life (Lee, 1992). Community offers Indigenous peoples a sense of self and a chance to renew their connection to lands, family, and friends (Usborne & Taylor, 2010). There is a strong link between community connection and the well-being of Indigenous peoples (Corntassel, 2003, p. 82; Taylor & de La Sablonnière, 2014). Therefore, we must recognize and enhance such connections to further Indigenous identity and advance Indigenous rights.

An additional influence and burden on Indigenous community connections was the separation of Indigenous children from their families through residential schooling and the child welfare system. As a result of residential schooling and the removal of Indigenous children from their homes, future generations of Indigenous peoples were left without an understanding and connection to their culture, families, and communities (Regan, 2010, p. 9). Community and family connections are crucial resources for Indigenous peoples. However, these connections were severely challenged through colonial practices such as residential schooling and what is known as the 'Sixties Scoop.'

The displacement of Indigenous women and the violence and discrimination they experience cannot be discussed without looking at the impact that residential schooling had and continues to have on Indigenous peoples throughout Canada. In particular, the experience of Indigenous women within these schools has left lasting adverse effects that continued throughout generations. In 1884 the *Indian Act* was amended, and attendance at residential schools became mandatory for all Indigenous children 4-16 years old (Robertson, 2018). This action by the Canadian government forcefully removed Indigenous children from the care of their parents, not being able to see or contact their families (Grant, 1996). In addition, single mothers were often targeted by Indian agents in the belief that these women were unfit to raise children alone (MacDonald, 2019). Indigenous children's forced removal from their families was just one part of the government's domination over Indigenous education and families, and the beginning of the genocide against them (Regan, 2010, p. 1).

More than 150, 000 Indigenous children attended residential schools in Canada from the mid-19th century to the end of the 20th century (Robertson, 2018). While all children in residential schools faced extreme abuse and discrimination, Indigenous females experienced heightened forms of violence (Stirbys, 2016). Females faced abuse within these schools because of their Indigenous identity (seen as against the white colonialist system) and gender (Miller, 1996). Such abuses continued long after students left these schools, as traumas had long-lasting impacts on the identities of Indigenous women (Bourgeois, 2015). Canada's residential school system significantly impacted female Indigenous students (Fournier & Crey, 1997). Young girls were made to feel worthless and inferior, which has had long-lasting impacts on Indigenous peoples (Grant, 1996).

Rather than receiving an education, female Indigenous students spent most of their time praying, cleaning, and cooking, as it was believed they would hold lower-level jobs (Robertson, 2018). The Canadian government used residential schools to enforce racial and gendered roles onto Indigenous peoples (Bourgeois, 2015). Heightened supervision of Indigenous children led to increased incidents of punishment (Dhillon, 2015). Females were punished for being Indigenous and being a woman (Bourgeois, 2009). For example, Indigenous girls were often monitored by nuns who tracked their menstrual cycles to make sure they remained "pure" (Robertson, 2018).

In many instances, Indigenous girls were subjected to sexual abuse at the hands of male authority figures as well as other students (Dhillon, 2015; Stirbys, 2016). In fear of being punished, Indigenous girls often did not report the abuse they experienced, as they would be blamed (Robertson, 2018). The lack of concern and the belief that it was Indigenous girls' fault for being sexually assaulted while male offenders are not punished still occurs throughout Canadian society (Bourgeois, 2015; Fournier & Crey, 1997). The normalization of sexual abuse towards Indigenous girls has, in numerous instances, led to a cycle of victimization with countless negative consequences (Morton, 2016; Razack, 2000).

Shockingly, residential schools continued to operate until the last one, located in Saskatchewan, Canada was closed in 1996 (Florence, 2021, p. 82). More recently, the horrors of these schools became known to the public when the media reported on the remains of children being found underneath several residential schools (Thorne & Moss, 2022). For Indigenous peoples, this discovery was heartbreaking, yet served as an important reminder to the world of the violence and discrimination that Indigenous peoples were subjected to at the hands of the Canadian state.

Similar to residential schooling, the Sixties Scoop had a significant impact on Indigenous identity, culture, and community. The "Sixties Scoop," which was supported by a series of government policies, is used to characterize the mass removal of Indigenous children from their homes, often without consent (Stevenson, 2021). This process took on many different forms and varied across Canadian provinces (Linklater, 2021). From around 1951 and 1984, over 20,000 Indigenous infants and children were removed from their families by authorities for child welfare and were placed primarily with non-Indigenous families (Stevenson, 2021, p. 45). In the end,

children were stripped of their communities, cultural teachings, and language causing historical and intergenerational trauma (Stirrett, 2015).

Violence and Discrimination

Another assault on the survival of Indigenous peoples and ways of being is the violence and discrimination perpetrated against Indigenous women. Indigenous women are sacred as the keepers of knowledge, culture, community, and family; every assault on them is an assault against Indigenous existence as a whole (Culhane, 2003). The targeting of Indigenous women results from colonialism and Eurocentric views, which cause racialization, sexualization, and victimization (Dylan, Regehr & Alaggia, 2008). As a result of the patriarchy present throughout Canadian society, Indigenous women are subjected to more inequality compared to non-Indigenous women and Indigenous men (Harper, 2006).

The violence and discrimination faced by Indigenous women and girls are embedded within Canadian society and can take on various forms (Barker, 2008; Morton, 2016). Indigenous women continue to experience racism and discrimination at both the societal and institutional levels (Dhillon, 2015). When it comes to such things as social services, child welfare, education, healthcare, and the prison system, Indigenous women experience a lack of services and face continual discrimination (Arnold, 2017; Corntassel & Gaudry, 2014, p. 107). Moreover, Indigenous women experience discriminatory gaps in support and protection, such as inadequate funding for shelters to meet their needs (Culhane, 2003).

Violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls are rooted in structural and historical inequality present throughout Canadian society (Barker, 2008). As such, Indigenous women in Canada continue to suffer from large-scale inequalities (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts & Johnson, 2006). It is important to note that violence against Indigenous women and girls has deep roots in poverty, marginalization, and racism (Amnesty International, 2014). Research has shown that compared to most other Canadians, Indigenous women in Canada face significant disparities in education attainment, the standard of living, health, life expectancy, and accumulation of wealth (Harper, 2006). Each of these increases the odds of being a victim of violent crime (Scrim, 2010).

The inequalities presented above have caused an increase in Indigenous women and girls being involved in the sex trade, which can lead to many negative consequences and heighten their risk of experiencing violence and discrimination (Dylan, Regehr & Alaggia, 2008). Indigenous women's victimization and presence in the sex trade industry have become normalized due to social and economic inequalities historically rooted in colonial discourses of gender and race. Compared to non-Indigenous women, Indigenous women are greatly over-represented as sex trade workers (Jiwani, 2008; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2005; Scrim, 2010; Sikka, 2010). Previous research has highlighted the intersection of poverty, colonization, and racism, creating conditions where Indigenous women become substantially over-represented in the sex trade (Culhane, 2003; Farley, Lynne & Cotton, 2005; Sethi, 2010).

Razack (1998; 2000) focuses on the ordering of spaces in society, asserting that spaces in which 'degenerate' activity, such as prostitution, become spaces that are defined by that activity, where coercive and violent incidents perpetrated in those spaces become normalized. This results in the existence of violence being carried out on those bodies (primarily Indigenous women) in such spaces (which are often racialized) with impunity (Razack, 1998). As such, the violence occurring to Indigenous girls and women is seen as a natural consequence for those belonging to such spaces.

There are multiple causes for the exploitation experienced by Indigenous women, one being issues concerning space. The ordering of spaces impacts Indigenous women's connection to the community and the land. Indigenous women are forced into spaces through the loss of traditional territories, environmental degradation, and forced relocation (Van Meijeren Karp, 2020). The destruction and displacement of natural resources profoundly impact Indigenous women, leading to the loss of cultural identity, economic insecurity, and heightening their vulnerability to violence (Notzke, 1994).

The historical colonial labelling of Indigenous women being prostitutes, alcoholics, and drug addicts carries substantial semiotic weight, influencing the iconic image of Indigenous women as both helpless and hopeless (Jiwani, 2009). Moreover, the colonial ideologies of Indigenous women as sexual deviants, which are still present today, were developed to emphasize their culpability to violence and discrimination (Farley, Lynne & Cotton, 2005; Razack, 2002). Racialized and sexualized violence against Indigenous women is based on racial hierarchies

within Canadian society (Razack, 2000). This hierarchy comes from settler colonialism and posits that Indigenous peoples are worthless to society (Wolfe, 2006). Structures of colonialism create the idea that the body of a racialized sex worker belongs to a space where violence is a natural aspect of daily life (Razack, 2000). As a result, Indigenous women continually face victimization based on their identity as women and as Indigenous peoples. These ideologies can not and will not change unless there is greater recognition at the societal and state level of what needs to be done and that these result in actions rather than promises.

It seems that when it comes to acknowledging Indigenous issues and rights, the government is resistant to change, and when change does occur, it can take years or decades. Additionally, even when there is a call for action, the Canadian government remains idle in implementing solutions to recognized problems (Wright, 2017). This lack of action has occurred in several instances, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Inquiry (Simpson, 2017). A prominent example of this is the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada. It took decades for the government of Canada to address this growing problem. Moreover, it took increasing pressure from outside agencies and human rights organizations for something to be done (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts & Johnson, 2006). The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry launched in 2016 and released its final report in 2019 (Pictou, 2020). The Inquiry made 231 recommendations, and to date, there has yet to be much progress made in implementing these recommendations (Wright, 2017).

As the material above demonstrates, Indigenous women have experienced a long history of violence and discrimination. These circumstances have impacted numerous aspects of their lives and have played an essential role in shaping their experiences and opportunities for political participation and organizing. This discrimination and violence can ultimately impact the ability of Indigenous women to engage in politics, their willingness to interact with political institutions, and the kinds of issues that are prioritized in their efforts to organize. Despite Indigenous women's challenges, they remain at the forefront of efforts to protect Indigenous rights, environmental justice, and Indigenous sovereignty (Simpson, 2017). How Indigenous peoples and Indigenous women specifically organize will be discussed in greater detail at the end of this

chapter. Importantly, to better understand Indigenous women's experiences, their identity as both women and Indigenous peoples must be discussed.

Beyond the Indigenous Identity Label

There is much debate on finding an all-encompassing, 'politically correct' term to describe Indigenous, Aboriginal, or First Nations peoples (Corntassel, 2010, p. 75). The term Indigenous peoples is used as a collective name for North America's original peoples and their descendants (Charron, 2019). Although the term Aboriginal is still used and accepted, Indigenous is quickly replacing this term as it is recognized internationally (Coates & Poelzer, 2010). In the 1970s, the term Indigenous was chosen by Indigenous leaders to unite and identify diverse communities and represent them globally in political arenas (University of Waterloo, 2021). As such, in this research, I have chosen terminology that has been selected by the populations themselves, rather than what has been imposed on them by colonizers.

The concept of identity is multifaceted and allows individuals in diverse societies to identify themselves in various ways (for example, based on religion, ethnicity, sex, and occupation) (Woodward, 2018). The identity of Indigenous peoples, in particular, Indigenous women, is intersectional, based on situational and varying differences within the local, national, and global context. Moreover, Indigenous identity is the basis for myriad forms of self-identification. In any group, the criteria for membership may include but is not limited to, social organization for interactions with those in the group and outside the group, specific cultural traits such as language and or custom, descent, and self-identification or categorization (Frideres, 2008). In the context of national and regional affiliations, due to the plurality of Canadian society, the fragmentation of allegiances and identities is possible (Kalin & Berry, 1995).

Identity has been traditionally understood as a category of emergent identification; however, there have been instances where groups/individuals possess border identities (Wilson & Donnan, 1998). Although identity can be a powerful tool for making political claims and asserting Indigenous rights, reducing Indigeneity solely to issues of identity is problematic. Indigenous identity cannot be simply reduced to a single category, rather it is connected to a complex set of political, cultural, and historical factors (Frideres, 2008). Reducing Indigenous political claims to issues of identity can lead to the erasure of the complexity of Indigenous histories and

experiences, reinforcing structures of colonial power which seek to erase and homogenize Indigenous cultures and peoples (Harris, Nakata & Carlson, 2013, p. 125).

In understanding the complexities surrounding Indigenous identity, the concept of border identities can be used. Acknowledging border identities is important to understand the positionality of Métis individuals. With the duality between Indigeneity and whiteness, Métis individuals have different personal, social, and political experiences (O'Sulliva, 2017). Through openness in thinking, emergent identities can take shape and are removed from binary thinking about borders (such as outsider and insider identities). However, sometimes one must be strategic about identifying oneself for political access and gains, always remaining vigilant and thoughtful about limiting identities. To access spaces that have suppressed the voices and knowledge of Indigenous peoples, Métis individuals may either present themselves as Indigenous or not.

Border identities exist somewhere between white and Indigenous, lying between predefined social categories (Frideres, 2008). As such, these individuals hold a unique status, with their identity rooted in dominant and Indigenous culture, allowing them to cross boundaries (De La Cadena & Starn, 2007). Dual identities allow individuals to fit in or not in various interactional settings, but identifying with one group and not others causes boundaries (Frideres, 2008). Although such boundaries can change over time and space, these individuals are often responded to at the outset based on their physical features, clothing and language (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012). In these instances, identity is initially subject to how others define it (Romero & Roberts, 1998).

Identity is essential to Indigeneity, whether government-obtained, community-acknowledged, or self-affirmation. Indigenous peoples and their cultures are diverse. Political claims can only be made through an identity as oppressed (deserving accommodation) or dominant (rights-bearing). An individual can hold an allegiance and identify with smaller communities (ethnic groups) while in a larger community (Frideres, 2008). Difference from other communities and individuals has been suggested as a prerequisite in identity formation, with identity being the basis for power and exclusion (Weaver, 2001). Moreover, identity is viewed by some as a combination of the perceptions of others as well as self-identification (Fiola, 2015, p.20).

Numerous individuals in Canada struggle with issues of identity and a sense of belonging (Woodward, 2018). For Indigenous women, oppression is embedded within the law as their

cultural identities are intertwined with legislation (Simpson, 2017). Laws have also constructed and restricted the rights of Indigenous women within categories of identity constructed by the state. For example, Gehl (2000) discusses her legal and personal struggles in trying to obtain Indian Status as outlined within the revised *Indian Act* (Bill C-34).[4] Using her own experiences, she highlights the various issues surrounding verifying her Indigenous identity (Gehl, 2000).

The meaning of Indigeneity is complex, and in theory, defining who is Indigenous can be problematic when looking at legal definitions (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012). Therefore, there is a need for an account of identity which considers issues of stories, interconnectedness, ancestry, place, and the medicine wheel's aspects of colonization, self, and resistance which speaks to the experiences of Indigenous peoples (Turner, 2010). Instead of attempting to fit Indigenous identity into the existing theories primarily from a Western worldview, Indigenous identity must be examined for its complexities and nuances (Harris, Nakata & Carlson, 2013, p. 263). With identities being defined, realized, and implemented through Western laws and policies, the representations and worldviews of Indigeneity and Indigenous peoples become highly alienating (Palmater, 2011). As such, the practices of identification would benefit from the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous women to assist in undermining the alienation and abstraction that is developed from a colonial framework.

It has been argued that identity is a social construct that is always in transition, fluid and continual, with no single Indigenous identity (Fiola, 2015). There is a need for a basic understanding of Indigenous identity, the development of a new emergent identity exhibited by Indigenous peoples and a contextual basis for contemporary Indigenous identity (Cherubini, 2008). Indigenous identity can include a significant diversity among people, interests, and groups in various demographic, socio-political, and economic situations (Berry, 1994). Indigenous peoples do not comprise a single-minded monolithic entity with one voice (Frideres, 2008). Therefore, no single definition of identity can be applied equally to all Indigenous peoples. With that, there is a need to include differences among generations, Indigenous identity of people who

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[4] In response to the decision in Descheneaux, the Government of Canada introduced Bill S-3, created to amend status provisions of the *Indian Act*. See: Gehl v Canada (2017) for the specific challenges made to sex discrimination in *Indian Act* provisions.

live in rural and urban settings, among various sub-groups (Inuit, First Nations, Métis), and differences in the identity of females and males (Corntassel, 2003, p. 85).

Although there are variations present among Indigenous peoples, there are some common strategies that Indigenous peoples use for addressing systemic oppression and asserting their identities. Such efforts include cultural revitalization, education and awareness, community building, and activism. Cultural revitalization is engaged in by many Indigenous peoples to celebrate and reclaim their cultural heritage (Simpson, 2017). Acts of cultural revitalization can occur through storytelling, revitalization of language, and traditional arts and crafts. By promoting and preserving cultural traditions, Indigenous peoples can resist efforts to attack their identities.

Engaging in education and raising awareness can be done to promote cultural appreciation and respect and combat and challenge negative stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. Community building has also been used to promote cultural identity and resist oppression. Through the creation of strong communities, Indigenous peoples can form networks of support, develop community-led initiatives, and build connections with other Indigenous peoples. Another critical effort that Indigenous peoples engage in for identity support is activism and advocacy. Indigenous peoples advocate for inclusion and change by asserting their rights and addressing injustices. These actions and others serve as a form of resistance against erasure and assimilation, helping promote and preserve Indigenous self-determination, communities, and cultures (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005).

Since Indigenous peoples strategically identify themselves based on their heritage and experiences, Indigenous identification can be seen as continuous acts of resistance, yet this identity cannot be taken for granted as real given the way it has been socially constructed and limiting a full account of people's experiences. The question of authenticity is a part of the contestation resulting from identity being the basis of political engagement. This idea is expanded on further by participants during the interviews and is discussed in greater detail in the findings section. Identity is not something that is given, rather it is constantly in flux. Moreover, we are constantly negotiating and recreating identity through experiences, strategies, and political engagement.

Indigenous peoples have faced challenges asserting their political identities, which colonial forces have misrepresented and historically constructed (Cherubini, 2008). As a result, Indigenous people have been actively asserting and reconstructing their political subjecthood in new ways. They have countered misconceptions and stereotypes disseminated through institutional and cultural processes (Moeke-Pickering, Cote-Meek & Pegoraro, 2018). In an effort to address this, Indigenous peoples reconstruct a political identity which reflects Indigenous experiences and cultural traditions. This primarily involves the acknowledgement of intersections of their identities, such as class, sexuality, gender, and ongoing struggles for sovereignty and self-determination (Wright, 2017). Importantly, Indigenous women in Canada challenge dominant narratives by asserting an intersectional and more complex political identity, reclaiming their agency.

Political Participation, Consciousness, Activism, and Agency

Literature concerning political participation varies significantly across disciplines. Participation refers to activities that seek to influence society (Conge, 1988, p. 241). What is labelled as activism and what is labeled as participation is fluid (Neumayer & Svensson, 2016). Participation is involvement which occurs in a given arena, in accordance with a given agenda and mode of activity (Peet & Reed, 2002). The main idea of participation is the exercise of citizens' rights (Micheletti, 2002). When it comes to political participation, there is no universally accepted definition (Nagengast & Kearney, 1990). Almost every activity carried out by individuals can be understood as a form of political participation (Mayer, 2011).

Research by Van Deth (2014) suggests that the core features of political participation are: (1) it is understood as an action or activity; (2) it is not obliged under law/not ordered by a ruling class (voluntary); (3) it refers to the activities of individuals in their role as amateurs/non-professionals (i.e. not as lobbyists, civil servants, or politicians); (4) in a broad sense of these words it concerns the state, politics, or government; (5) it is not restricted to specific areas/levels (contracts with party officials or national elections), nor specific phases (executing laws or parliamentary decision-making processes)(p. 351-352). As can be seen, political participation has been defined in both restrictive and broad ways (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991). For the purpose of this research, political participation will be defined broadly as an action guided and initiated by the goal to have an impact on existing arrangements.

When it comes to involvement in social movements, the development and or emergence of a political consciousness is important. Numerous scholars have looked at political consciousness in relation to various social movements (Sandoval, 1991). However, throughout the literature, political awareness or consciousness is presented as a broad term (McCaughey & Ayers, 2013). Political consciousness has been defined as containing ideological expressions and cultural beliefs which are employed for the maintenance and realization of group interests (Hunt, 2017). Moreover, it is guided by a commitment to justice and human rights as well as an understanding of inequity and power in economic, political, and social systems, values and relations (Miller, 2002).

Becoming politically conscious is associated with an individual coming to understand their political role and their identity (Seider, et al., 2018). Moreover, it is a result of group struggle and social inequality, stemming from systems of domination (Zugman, 2003). It can take many forms, such as working-class consciousness, racial consciousness, and gender consciousness, all in response to such things as male domination, racial domination, class domination, etc. (Morris, 1992). As such, it is important to consider the various forms of oppression to understand the ways these systems of oppression interconnect (Greenwood, 2013). There are two important interlocking systems, that are significant to this research, which include gender and racial domination. Examining how multiple streams of political consciousness interact allows one to understand how they impact political options and collective actions (Green, 2007).

Political consciousness is continually shaped and impacted by concrete political and social struggles engaged by individuals and groups (Morris, 1992). There are both subordinate and dominant groups which develop political consciousness to achieve their respective social and political ends (Sandoval, 1991). For the purpose of this research, focus will be directed towards examining the political consciousness of subordinate groups (in this case, Indigenous women), incorporating the impact of settler colonialism. A significant aspect of political consciousness, especially in terms of marginalized groups, includes helping individuals develop a sense of their rights (Miller, 2002). Additionally, individuals can seek out and construct their consciousness within the context of what is available.

For Indigenous women's political consciousness, a historical understanding of colonialization is important. Overall, political consciousness has been asserted as increasing

one's chances of becoming active in social movement causes and issues (Zugman, 2003). A politically conscious individual is more likely to get involved and actively participate in issues that concern them (Greenwood, 2013). This can be done in various ways such as voting, engaging in community development projects, getting involved in decision-making, protesting, expressing one's opinion, taking part in rallies, and the like (Sabucedo & Arce, 1991). However, political consciousness does not guarantee that individuals will become active in social movement organizations (Spannring, 2012). Political consciousness is not fixed; rather, over time it can change and evolve due to shifts in political and societal contexts, exposure to new information, and personal experiences (Morris, 1992). Individuals can simultaneously demonstrate elements of multiple types of political consciousness, resulting in diverse forms of political engagement.

It is important to look at what attitudes or actions Indigenous women engage in as part of their resistance (Iseke-Barnes, 2003). By examining how Indigenous women have resisted, one can build on the traditions of resistance (Anderson, 2016). Resistance has been based on examples of preceding generations of Indigenous women who throughout history have resisted colonial processes (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib & Rupert, 2007). Indigenous women have been viewed as primary community motivators (Lawrence, 2003). As such, they are often called on to take up responsibility for their communities by engaging in community politics to ensure the empowerment of their people (Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault & Barman, 2010). Even though the political involvement of Indigenous women is prominent, it usually occurs through unrecognized or unofficial channels (Anderson, 2016, p. 103). In some cases, when Indigenous women's voices are excluded by the community and government officials, they may take more radical routes such as the Tobique women who fought for justice by occupying their band office (Lawrence & Anderson, 2005).

Throughout the literature, the concept of political resistance has gained traction as a way to critically examine subaltern practices in relation to power (Lee & Logan, 2019). There are two 'ideal types' of resistance identified by Lilja, Baaz, Schulz and Vinthagen (2017), organized resistance and everyday resistance. Everyday resistance covers how subalterns act in people's everyday lives in ways which can undermine power (resistance that is not organized formally) (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). This kind of resistance is not easily recognized like organized

resistance, such as demonstrations or rebellions (Sivaramakrishnan, 2005). However, everyday resistance is not necessarily disguised, dispersed or quiet (Corntassel & Scow, 2017). Resistance may be composed of subtle practices, but they may not be hidden, as resistance generates, provokes, inspires, encourages, or discourages resistance based on circumstances and contextual factors (Lilja, Baaz, Schulz & Vinthagen, 2017).

Activism and agency are often examined in relation to an individual's appropriation and negotiation of institutions and social structures where power is invested (Lee & Logan, 2019). Agency has been shown to be a matter of subversion of and negotiation with the constraints of gender, class, and various other social constructs which mediate access to power and authority (Greenwood, 2013). Agency highlights the explanatory dichotomy of social structure or individual action (Peet & Reed, 2002). The concept of agency offers a valuable approach to theorizing Indigenous women's history as it highlights social structure and individual action (Lee & Logan, 2019). Activism of Indigenous women can include a wide range of approaches, such as efforts to intervene, promote, direct, or imped economic, political, environmental, or social reform seeking to make social changes (Moreton-Robinson, 2021). There are various types of activism which can be collective or individual, such as participation in protests, demonstrations, rallies, marches, etc. (Norris, 2011).

Collective action refers to actions that a group of people take based on collective decisions and can be defined as action by numerous individuals which is organized and purposeful (Hardin, 2015). Since more people are likely to be involved, collective action primarily deals with issues on a larger scale. However, a person can take individual actions concerning large-scale issues. Collective action can be equated with participation as long as the individual costs of such participation are greater than the individual benefits (Blanton & Fargher, 2007). In other words, there must be a number of voluntary efforts and involvement for the achievement of a common good.

Recent research has demonstrated that individuals tend to seek sites for politics that are more applied, network-oriented, and flexible (Micheletti, 2002). From this, one can conclude that compared to the past, citizens tend to view political participation differently (Norris, 2011). A collective action would be if you are part of a group or organization which petitions the government for changes. Individual action refers to actions that a single person takes based on

their personal decisions (Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). An individual can have an impact on what collective actions are made (Hardin, 2015, p. 68). For instance, if you become involved in an organization or group, you can impact the actions of others and similarly, others influence the actions you may take (Peet & Reed, 2002). An individual action could be a person choosing to post their views online.

An overwhelming amount of literature exists which focuses on the initiatives and advancements made by Indigenous women's organizations and individuals who are involved in such groups (Culhane, 2003; Harper, 2006; 2009; Suzack, et al., 2010). Importantly, there is currently a need for more comprehensive research concerning Indigenous women's efforts on an individual level to combat and bring awareness to issues of gendered violence and discrimination that they experience (Bourgeois, 2015). While previous studies have looked at the political participation of Indigenous women in Canadian rights groups (Lawrence & Anderson, 2005), discussion of alternative venues of involvement by individuals is significantly lacking. Since a majority of studies tend to focus attention more on examining the efforts put forth by individuals involved in recognized Indigenous women's rights groups, this dissertation seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of Indigenous women's political participation that has often gone unnoticed.

Although there is research concerning the impact that Indigenous women's rights organizations have throughout Canada (Barker, 2006; Green, 2007), and the efforts of these groups in addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls (Eberts, McIvor & Nahanee, 2006), there is a noticeable lack of attention given to understanding the views of Indigenous women who do not identify as being involved in these organizations. Rather, numerous studies examine the perceptions of those intimately involved in Indigenous women's organizations (Knight & Rodgers, 2012).

Previous research has focused on gaining the perspectives of those involved in the struggle (Bell, 2015; Cornet, 2001, p. 117), which is important, what about those not specifically affiliated with Indigenous women's rights organizations? Research concerning their views, understandings, and the ways in which they come to participate, the evolution and reconstruction of identity is needed to provide a more holistic interpretation of Indigenous women's influence in political matters. Research would benefit from placing greater emphasis on gaining the perspectives of Indigenous women who use alternative avenues of political participation. This

research will assist in understanding the obstacles and motivations for Indigenous women to participate politically.

Tracing Indigenous Political Organizing

To better understand political participation among Indigenous women, this section of the research presents a brief historical account of Indigenous political movements and organizing in Canada. Following this, a detailed description of Indigenous women's political participation and their roles in advancing Indigenous rights will be discussed. Although Indigenous activism has occurred since the arrival of settlers, it has not been adequately acknowledged by the public until more recently (Nickel, 2019; Wilkes, 2004). Furthermore, such acts as protests, sit-ins and marches often bring recognition to issues that Indigenous peoples have been dealing with and resisting for centuries (Ramos, 2006). In other words, acts of resurgence had taken place long before they were characterized or documented.

The rise of activism in the early 20th century was in response to the assimilative pressure that the Canadian government developed and projected under the guise of the Indian Act (Dorries, Henry, Hugill, McCreary & Tomiak, 2019; Dyck, 1991). The Indian Act created a situation in which Indigenous peoples were encouraged to become individuals who were "worthwhile" by altering their manner in a way that was promoted by instructing agents[5] (Bell, 2015). Becoming "worthwhile" individuals was rooted in the goal of erasing Indigenous identity and culture, stigmatizing those who did not conform. At this time, assimilation gave rise to a greater political consciousness around identity and culture. The refusal to follow the manner of living outlined by the government was a sign that Indigenous peoples resisted government policies regardless of societal marginalization, poverty, and force (Barker, 2015a). Notably, the fact that Indigenous peoples as a group existed into the 20th century is resistance in its first form (Cairns, 1990).

Survival after centuries of assimilationist policies and maintaining an Indigenous presence is an act of resistance which fights against the colonial administration. There was also Indigenous activism related to the experiences of 'Indian' veterans (Wineguard, 2012). In the military, at the beginning of World War One, Indigenous peoples, as a result of their deprivation from the

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[5] Instructing agents, also known as Indian Agents, existed in Canada from the 1870s to the 1960s. They were employed by the Department of Indian Affairs and were mandated by the *Indian Act* to 'manage' Indigenous peoples (see Bell, 2015).

franchise, were not actively recruited (Bell, 2015). It was not until late 1915 that the recruitment of 'Indians' occurred, with white volunteers becoming increasingly harder to find, members from various Indigenous backgrounds signed on, with Canadians applauding these individuals (Titley, 1984). Following the war, Indian veterans discovered they were not eligible for the same programs as whites until they permanently left their reserves (Wineguard, 2012). The lack of consideration to onlookers was viewed as unfair, with Canadians showing solidarity behind veterans and for the first time, behind Indigenous peoples (Bell, 2015).

There was a continuation of passive resistance, with Indian veterans being instrumental in the development of the first nationwide Indian political organization, known as the League of Indians in Canada (Kulchyski, 1988). For the first time, Indigenous across Canada were uniting based on principles of self-determination (Dyck, 1991). The League of Indians Canada was developed in Ontario in 1918 by F.O Loft, a member of the Six Nations of Grand River, who was a returning First World War veteran (Titley, 1984). The founder advocated for the resolution to such concerns as restrictions of trapping and hunting rights, poor health and economic conditions on reserves, loss of reserve lands, recognition of Indigenous rights to land, culturally destructive administrative practices, and educational policies (Bell, 2015). The League eventually failed due to difficulties in uniting religiously, ethnically, linguistically and geographically divided bands into a national Indigenous organization (Kulchyski, 1988).

In subsequent years, other Indigenous groups were created; the Union of Saskatchewan Indians and the Indian Association of Alberta (Nickel, 2019). However, there were still significant regional differences between groups and at this time, a national organization would be too large to accommodate all interests (Bell, 2015). Even though initially, there were few benefits, precedents were set during this period for Indian assemblies, and it showed Indian Affairs that Indigenous peoples had the aptitude, education, and motivation to challenge government policies (Nickel, 2019). It was during the 1930s and 1940s that an increase in Indigenous political organizing occurred, in particular, at the provincial and regional levels (Borrows, 2008). Indigenous in Canada, after the stagnate 1950s, began to view their struggles against colonialism which connected them to the upheavals of individuals of colour across the globe (Palmer, 2009).

A well-studied period of Indigenous activism is the 1960s, known as the Red Power movement (Palmer, 2009). The Red Power movement, rooted in an era of rebellion, is essential to Indigenous activism and political organization (Davidovic, 2016, p. 2). The relationship between Indigenous peoples and white Canadians was dramatically altered during this time (Borrows, 2008, p. 1). The change occurred due to the conception accepted by legal experts and academics that colonization was not a solid place to rest the foundations of laws in Canada (Bell, 2015). Some have seen the 1960s as an era of youthful assertion of Indigenous rights which mimicked the United States civil rights movement (Palmer, 2009).

With the growing civil rights movement in the United States and Indigenous soldiers' impact in both wars, Canadian society started questioning Indigenous peoples' institutional and long-standing discrimination and mistreatment (Gemmell, 2021, p. 61). In 1967, the emergence of the National Indian Brotherhood marked the organization's growth that would significantly define the national political landscape for Indigenous peoples (Whiteside, 1973). Due to the legacy of the 1960s, underlying tensions started to gain public attention (Nickel, 2019).

Several Indigenous organizations gained political recognition following criticisms of the government's White Paper in 1969 (Whiteside, 1973). The emerging political crisis that the White Paper created strengthened many Indigenous organizations that were already in existence and led to the creation of other organizations (Belshaw, Nickel & Horton, 2016). The federal government introduced the White Paper (1969) sought to abolish the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Indian Act, attempting to transfer administrative responsibility to provincial governments over Indigenous peoples (Bell, 2015). However, this policy has a fundamental flaw: the ignorance rooted in over a century of discrimination imposed by the state against Indigenous peoples (Warren, 2020).

Many Indigenous peoples viewed the new White Paper as the culmination of the long-standing goal of Canada to assimilate Indigenous peoples into mainstream society (Nickel, 2019). As a result of the White Paper (1969), Indigenous peoples were brought together, and a dramatic increase in the intensity and scope of political activism and organizing occurred (Manuel & Derrickson, 2021; Stevenson, 2019). In other words, a collective identification of Indigenous roots occurred in response to the hostility surrounding the White Paper. A political response was needed, and Indigenous leaders and communities throughout Canada took to the

courts, the streets, the British Commonwealth, Parliament, legislatures and international forums (Belshaw, Nickel & Horton, 2016). Indigenous identity became more pronounced through a collective struggle against the state during this time.

Since the 1969 White Paper, the advocacy for Indigenous peoples has continued to shape the landscape of national politics (Nickel, 2019). Numerous people claim that the intent and spirit of the White Paper and handing over responsibilities to Indigenous peoples is a long-term objective of successive federal governments to take over Indigenous sovereignty (Stevenson, 2019). In response to the failed attempts of the federal government to solve the 'Indian problem' arose a radical youth movement (Palmer, 2009). The 1969 White Paper led to the Red Power movement; a new rise of Indigenous resistance was marked by the emergence of numerous Indigenous organizations (Manuel & Derrickson, 2021).

In response to the White Paper, the Red Paper (1970), prepared by the Indian Association of Alberta and Harold Cardinal was presented to the federal government (Gibson, 2009, p. 47). The authors of the Red Paper saw the White Paper as an assault on the future of Indigenous peoples (Devy & Davis 2020, p. 34). Overall, the White Paper demonstrated that the federal government did not understand the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and sought to continue assimilative policies without the consent or consultation of Indigenous peoples (Imai, 2002, p. 540).

Derived from the Hawthorn Report, Citizen Plus argued that to preserve Indigenous cultures, it is critical to preserve Indigenous rights to traditions, status, rights, and lands (Murphy, 2000). Coined in the Hawthorn Report (1966), the phrase "citizens plus" defines Indigenous people as citizens who hold the same responsibilities and rights as other Canadians, and to the treaties and rights guaranteed during the occupation of North America (Burnett, 2002). According to Cairns (2011), the "citizen plus" status is the best method that Indigenous peoples can improve the conditions they have dealt with under colonialism without giving up the modern state benefits of citizenship (p. 34).

Support of the "citizens plus" approach by Cairns has been met with some criticisms, particularly concerning his interest in promoting the findings of the Hawthorn Report that he helped produce (Imai, 2002, p. 541). Particularly important for this research is the lack of consideration given by Cairns about the effect that Indian policy has had on gender relations. While he briefly acknowledges women's issues, he overlooks the changing patterns of

participation by Indigenous women in political leadership that have occurred as a result of colonialism (Burnett, 2002, p. 231).

In response to the White Paper, a counterargument was made by various Indigenous leaders and groups, and a rise of more collective legal and political activism of Indigenous peoples occurred throughout Canada (Crane Bear, 2015). Self-determination amplified during this time, making it possible for Indigenous peoples to organize against the Canadian state to assert their sovereign Indigenous rights (Warren, 2020). As a result, Indigenous peoples took their rightful place in political, social, and legal discussions, such as the Charlottetown and Meech Lake Accords (Gemmell, 2021, p. 61).

Another critical moment in the history of laying out the groundwork for Indigenous activism is the establishment of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in the wake of the Kanesatà:ke Siege (Metallic, 2017). Although the report made many recommendations that were not fully implemented, it provided a nation-to-nation framework for the relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canadians. The RCAP, along with the emergence of various instances surrounding the recognition of Indigenous rights, the solidification of Indigenous sovereignty and the importance of treating Indigenous peoples as a distinct 'nation' began.

While before the 1960s, Indigenous activism was engaged in a fight to gain equal footing with white Canadians, more recently, the language of nationalism is more widespread (Cairns, 1990, p. 99). The language of nationalism in Canada has been intricately tied to the concept of identity, with the development of Canadian national identity being influenced by political, linguistic, historical, and cultural factors. More recently, there has been an emphasis placed on promoting policies which preserve and celebrate cultural diversity (Berry, 1994). Previous periods of Indigenous activism paved the way for more confident advocacy by youth, making the presence of Indigenous peoples impossible to ignore.

Identity came to the forefront of political organizing during the Red Power Movement. The movement sought to challenge discriminatory policies and assert Indigenous rights and identity. Following this, the patriation of the Canadian Constitution and Section 35 marked the constitutional recognition of Indigenous rights. This constitutional change offered a legal basis for claims made by Indigenous peoples and assisted in the assertion of Indigenous identity within Canada's political framework. In the 1990s, the final period of 20th-century Indigenous activism

occurred due to an increased presence within post-secondary institutions by Indigenous youth throughout Canada and participation in new political organizations (Bell, 2015). Importantly, it was in the 1990s that the stage was set for current activism in both language and tone, leading to the creation of Indigenous activism in the 21st century (Willow, 2016).

Although information has been presented on the history of Indigenous activism and political participation, there is a noticeable lack of attention given to the perspectives of Indigenous peoples in general, and Indigenous women in particular. Oftentimes, research is presented by the winners of history (Smith, 2013). For example, some scholars who write about the influence of government policies on Indigenous peoples and the progression of inclusion, overlook the experiences of Indigenous peoples.[6] As suggested by Major (2020), previous research has failed to consider the role of identity in the actions of Indigenous peoples engaged in policy change and the motivations they have for engagement (p. 1). This research seeks to address gaps in the literature by presenting the perspectives of Indigenous women.

This section has presented a brief description of the emergence of Indigenous rights and the changing political context that has occurred in the past, paving the way for future acts of resistance and resurgence. Although only some events, actions, and changes have been identified, the material presented outlines how Indigenous peoples have asserted their rights and the progression of their achievements. Since the late 19th century, Indigenous activism in Canada has focused on organizing political associations past the band level to take up common interests (Warren, 2020).

Indigenous activism established a political, legal, and social presence across Canada (Bell, 2015). Notably, government recognition was sought, and political activism during this time resulted in greater access to political processes (Cairns, 1990, p. 76). While Indigenous peoples sought to advance their rights and gain recognition, Indigenous women faced issues that could not be fully addressed within the broader goal of advancing Indigenous rights (Gottardi, 2020). Failing to address the specific needs of Indigenous women within both the Indigenous rights and

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[6] Dr. Rebecca Major (2020) discusses this issue in detail in her doctoral dissertation, *Shifting Institution Control: Changing Indigenous Policy Goals Through Métis and First Nations Identity Assertions.*

feminist movements led Indigenous women to form groups that assist in addressing their identities' intersectional needs.

Social and Justice Movements

Justice movements and social movements are two forms of collective action which advocate for change and seek to address societal issues (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). Although some similarities exist between social movements and justice movements, they are distinct. Social movements are collective, organized efforts by groups of people coming together to resist or promote cultural, economic, social, or political change (Diani & McAdam, 2003, p. 173). These movements can take the form of formal organizations or grassroots efforts (Hamel, 2000). The goals of social movements are far-reaching and use a variety of tactics to achieve their objectives (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004; Yates, 2015). Tactics include such things as online activism, educational campaigns, protests, lobbying, and demonstrations (Diani & McAdam, 2003).

Justice movements are a subset of social movements which focus specifically on issues connected to fairness, equity, and justice (Hamel, 2000). These movements often seek to address disparities and systemic injustices (Langman, 2005). Justice movements seek to create a more fair and equitable society (Porta, 2005). Justice movements, similar to social movements use several tactics to achieve their goals, but their strategies primarily revolve around dismantling and challenging systems of discrimination and oppression (Flesher Fominaya, 2010; Langman, 2005).

A fundamental principle for social and justice movements is collective action (Diani & McAdam, 2003). The amplification of efforts and voices is greater when individuals join together, making it harder to ignore their demands (Porta, 2005). In social movements and justice movements, membership is typically seen as non-negotiable for several reasons. These movements depend on individuals who share a common passion and purpose for their cause and membership ensures that everyone is committed to the values and goals of the movements (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Membership creates a feeling of unity and solidarity among participants, fostering a sense of shared identity and belonging which can strengthen the resilience and cohesion of a movement (Flesher Fominaya, 2010).

Membership also assists in mobilizing resources such as organizational support, volunteers, and funding, enabling the movement to sustain activities (Porta, 2005). Individuals, by being members of a movement, are more likely to be accountable and maintain the integrity of the movement (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). The idea of membership being non-negotiable underscores the significance of active and dedicated participation in advancing objectives of the movement (Cook-Huffman, 2008). Membership is an important aspect of participation in Indigenous rights movements. The identity of Indigenous women places them in a position that influences their political involvement and the causes they pursue (Barker, 2006). This identity is not just based on gender, but also their heritage, which is why the feminist movement or even the Indigenous rights movement alone cannot properly address Indigenous women's causes and concerns. The experiences of Indigenous women cannot be captured by movements which attend to only one aspect of their identity; their lives exceed the identities they are assigned. As a result, Indigenous women attend to these complexities through various kinds of involvement.

The History of Indigenous Women's Activism in Canada

When looking at Indigenous women's political participation, the analysis must go beyond formal politics, as Indigenous women's activism occurs in many non-formal spaces, such as the community. Indigenous women's activism often occurs outside formal political institutions and structures (Ouellette, 2002, p. 88; Simpson, 2017). This type of participation can include but is not limited to, community building, direct action, cultural revitalization and preservation, grassroots organizing, and other forms of resistance (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Fiske, 1996). Indigenous women's activism often tries to address the unique injustices and challenges they face, asserting their sovereignty and rights in ways that formal political channels may not recognize (Barker, 2015a).

Despite facing many obstacles and challenges (such as marginalization and systemic oppression), substantial contributions have been made by Indigenous women to Indigenous society, culture, and organizing (Barker, 2008). Indigenous women's achievements have significantly impacted Indigenous organizing and have assisted in increasing the recognition of self-determination, sovereignty, and rights of Indigenous peoples (Gottardi, 2020; Mayoux, 1995). In addition, indigenous women have taken on prominent leadership roles in their

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communities, becoming influential speakers for preserving culture, self-determination, and Indigenous rights (Simpson, 2017).

A second area where Indigenous women have made significant strides is the sharing of knowledge and education. Indigenous women are instrumental in preserving and passing down cultural practices, traditional language, and knowledge to future generations (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016, p. 93). While there are various events and programs held through the Native Women's Association of Canada that focus on education, smaller-scale actions within communities also occur (Lavell-Harvard, 2014). For example, projects include cultural centers, long houses, powwow grounds, and women's lodges.

Other significant contributions of Indigenous women are in the area of activism and advocacy. Indigenous women have been crucial in raising awareness about the injustices that Indigenous women face. Numerous initiatives have been developed and carried out by Indigenous women seeking to address violence and discrimination (Palmater, 2020a). In particular, calls to action for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls led to the MMIWG Inquiry, with annual events, marches, and protests continuing throughout Canada (García-Del Moral, 2018; Pictou, 2020). One of the most well-known and reported is the Sisters in Spirit Vigils, drawing attention to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (Harper, 2009, p. 189).

Throughout Canada, Indigenous women have been instrumental in grassroots movements and a driving force in advancing Indigenous rights. Initially, Indigenous men seemed to be at the front of protests. However, it was Indigenous women who were often the driving unseen force. In more recent times, they have now become more visible. Indigenous women are positioned in a unique intersectional space which challenges conventional thinking concerning politics, activism, and gender (Fiske, 1996; Labrecque, 2011). The experiences of Indigenous women are shaped by intersecting and multiple factors such as socioeconomic issues, Indigenous identity, history, gender, and culture (Kuokkanen, 2012).

Indigenous women's intersectional positionality defies conventional thinking about politics and gendered activism, continually prioritizing the views and experiences of middle-class, white, cisgender women (Simpson, 2017). The experiences of Indigenous women emphasize the significance of recognizing the intersecting and complex factors which shape experiences and the

importance of having approaches to politics and activism that are more intersectional and inclusive (Horowitz, 2017). It is important to note that while in the past, attention was directed towards the efforts of Indigenous men, in more recent times, Indigenous women have been represented at the forefront in the effort to address Indigenous rights. Recently, Indigenous women have started to make their voices heard and re-appropriated spaces that were 'traditionally' male (under colonialism), such as politics (Labrecque, 2011). Indigenous women's activism on both the national and international front has led to the signing of several agreements, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Aboriginal Peoples (Basile, 2012; Wiessner, 2009).

Although continual victimization of Indigenous women is demonstrated throughout the literature, Indigenous women's activism has highlighted their resilience and the importance of the political actions taken. To understand the social impact that Indigenous women's organizations in Canada have had throughout the years, it is essential to look at the history of Indigenous women's activism and the formation of groups representing their interests. This section examines the formation of various Indigenous women's groups in Canada along with their goals, mission, and overall organization. Indigenous women have actively resisted colonial-gendered violence since first contact (Barker, 2006; Ouellette, 2002). However, during the late 1960s, an increase in activism among Indigenous peoples started taking place to protect their culture against government policies of assimilation (such as the White Paper 1969) (Bell, 2016).

The formation of political organizations helped make the demands of Indigenous women more visible, articulating an alternative voice for Indigenous rights since the late 1960s (Warren, 2020). Numerous national Indigenous political organizations began to form during this time, such as the Native Council of Canada (1971), now known as the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and the National Indian Brotherhood (1982), now known as the Assembly of First Nations (Macklem & Morgan, 2000). Additionally, Indigenous women started organizing nationally to address the aspects of Canadian law they found to be imperialistic, racist, and sexist, such as the Indian Act (Krosenbrink-Gelissen, 1991). However, it was not until the 1970s that Indigenous women's organizing began to gain significant momentum, with women coming together to resist the enshrined sexism and racism embedded within Indian Affairs legislation and policy (Maracle, 2003). Early organizing of Indigenous women ultimately resulted in the development

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of organizations which sought to support Indigenous women and the issues they face (Iseke & Desmoulins, 2011).

A critical and well-recognized act of Indigenous women's political resistance was against the Indian Act (Jamieson, 1986). There are three cases, Mary Two-Axe (1967), Jeannette Corbiere Lavell (1973), and Irene Bedard (1973), in which Indigenous women sought to challenge the gender discrimination within the Indian Act (Harry, 2009, p. 22-23; Lawrence, 2003). These cases brought increased support for Indigenous women across Canada, and issues of gender discrimination faced by Indigenous women came into focus through legal challenges. Moreover, challenges against the Indian Act led to the development of various Indigenous women's organizations and activism (Holmes, 1987).

In recent times, Indigenous women's organizing has continued to expand rapidly, demonstrating their significant roles in promoting community well-being and advancing Indigenous women's rights (Kuokkanen, 2012). Various groups have emerged, such as the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), and the most well-known group, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) (Eberts, McIvor & Nahanee, 2006). However, although Indigenous women carry out a significant amount of work, they continue to experience many challenges when it comes to organizing due to the settler colonial state in which they operate (Lawrence, 2003). In response to male domination in band governments, organizations, and national debates about Indian rights to self-govern, Indian women's groups began to mobilize to assert Indian women's rights (Krosenbrink-Gelissen, 1991). The two main groups which emerged were the NWAC and Indian Rights for Indian Women (IRIW), focusing nationally on the repeal of status provisions in the Indian Act (Barker, 2006).

Resistance has been based on examples of preceding generations of Indigenous women who, throughout history, have resisted colonial processes (Cook-Lynn, 1996). However, Indigenous women have also acted in everyday capacities, mobilizing their cultural resources in individual acts of resistance. Regardless of the issues being addressed, Indigenous women's activism has been about struggling against the conditions and oppressions occurring in their everyday lives. As such, they draw on their knowledge, ways of being, and cultural resources to challenge how Canadian laws and systems negatively impact them.

Research has suggested that young Native women have grounded themselves in Native culture to fight against outside pressures (Driscoll, et al., 2007). As a result, they may learn alternatives to negative behaviours promoted by mainstream policies (Anderson, 2016). In addition, they were often called on to take responsibility for their communities by engaging in community politics to ensure the empowerment of their people (Suzack, et al., 2010). Indigenous women's activism has often been rooted in their connection to the community, which motivates them to become involved politically. Indigenous peoples across generations reaffirm and assert their rights to their cultures and the land (Cook-Lynn, 1996). Grassroots Indigenous movements reflect Indigenous ties to the land and each other (Horn-Miller, 2012, p. 62). By looking at previous events, particularly the Kanesatà:ke Siege, Idle No More, and the Wet'suwet'en Protests, it will be shown that Indigenous resurgence is nothing new. However, how Indigenous peoples engage in such resistance has changed.

The Kanesatà:ke Siege

A majority of scholars agree that the events around the Kanesatà:ke Siege (also known as the Mohawk Resistance) are considered significant moments in Canada's history regarding Indigenous rights (Conradi, 2009; Grenier, 1994; Trudel, 1995; Valaskakis, 1994). In particular, the events that occurred are important landmarks in the history of Indigenous resistance and resurgence against colonialism (Ahooja, Burrill & Higgens, 2010). The Kanesatà:ke Siege has been described as one of the first highly publicized conflicts between the government of Canada and First Nations peoples, which helped shape Canadian understandings of political issues (Marshall, 2013).

There has been a long dispute between the Canadian government and the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples (Mohawks) over land (McWhinney, 2017; Winegard, 2009). The land granted by the French Crown in 1717 to the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples had been reduced from 33,000 acres to just 11,000 in 1945 after it was transferred to the federal Department of Indian Affairs, despite claims by the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples to the entire tract (Brock, 2010). Many years later, in March of 1989, the municipality of Oka sought to expand a golf course and start development on the part of alienated lands which sheltered sacred resting grounds (Marshall, 2013). Following the court decision in favour of expanding the golf course, a protest by some members of the Kanien'kehá:ka community began with a barricade to block access to the area (Hedican, 2015).

To prevent the violation and destruction of the grounds, Kanien'kehá:ka community members erected a barrier at Kanehsatà:ke on the road leading to the Pines (Conradi, 2009). As a result, the people of Kahnawá:ke and Kanehsatà:ke faced off against the Canadian Army, government officials, and the police in defence of their ancestral lands (Ahooja, Burrill & Higgens, 2010; Lackenbauer, 2008).

On July 11th, 1990, what is known as the Kanesatà:ke Siege began in a small town approximately 50 kilometres northwest of Montreal (Winegard, 2009). The dispute between the Canadian town of Oka, Quebec and a group of Kanien'kehá:ka peoples lasted 78 days (Marshall, 2013). The provincial police (Sûreté du Québec) were called to intervene in the protest (Trudel, 1995; Valaskakis, 1994). Sam Elkas, the Quebec Minister of Public Security, and the town of Oka warned the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples to remove the barriers (Ciaccia, 2000). On July 11th, approximately 100 officers of Sureté de Quebec approached the barricade asking to speak with a 'leader' (Brock, 2010). When no one came forward, the SQ fired flash-bang grenades and tear gas at the crowd, which included women and children (Sharma, 2016). These actions resulted in gunfire (MacLaine & Baxendale, 1990; Tugwell & Thompson, 1991). After Corporal Lemay was shot fatally, the SQ retreated, escalating the situation (McWhinney, 2017).

On August 14th, the SQ was replaced by armed forces at the barricades, which used psychological tactics against the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples (Brock, 2010). The RCMP Emergency Response Team was sent in and resorted to acts of violence against the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples (Valaskakis, 1994). Tear gas was deployed against protestors, and acts of aggression toward unarmed women and children occurred (Marshall, 2013). In addition, they ensured a significantly large show of force to intimidate the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples (Hedican, 2015). When the municipality obtained an injunction from the Quebec Supreme Court, which barred the Kanien'kehá:ka people's from continuing their protests in Oka, the raid carried out by the Sureté de Québec (SQ) was devastating (Allen, 2014; Brock, 2010). The Kanien'kehá:ka peoples and others who sought to defend the land of Oka tried to end the standoff peacefully by discarding their weapons and walking out unarmed (Bourgeois, 2009; Ciaccia, 2000). However, the Canadian military arrested and forcefully apprehended everyone leaving the camp (Sharma, 2016).

The initial confrontation occurred in "the Pines" when a group of Indigenous women were approached by the Tactile Intervention Squad of the Sureté du Québéc, followed by police in full tactical gear (Hedican, 2015). When trying to end the confrontation and begin negotiations, the police approached the women (who are known as the caretakers of the land), asking for 'their leader' (Riley, 1990). However, the roles of Haudenosaunee women are significantly different from women in settler society, with women playing an integral part in societal and political aspects of Haudenosaunee institutions (Horn-Miller, 2012, p. 35). While men and women have balanced roles, women hold power over land use, warfare and other public concerns (York & Pindera, 1991). As such, there is a need to recognize the power of Indigenous women.

The participation of Indigenous women in the Kanesatà:ke Siege is just one example of the work Indigenous women are doing to fight against colonialism, creating new ways to strengthen their communities (Greer, 1994). Moreover, it highlights a lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous women's roles and the failure of wider society to recognize their actions as a gendered form of organizing. Indigenous women's gendered forms of organizing are rooted in unique historical and cultural contexts and experiences of intersectional oppression. These efforts reflect their commitment to community-building, social justice, and decision-making (Iseke & Desmoulins, 2011). Rather than being focused only on individual rights, the organizing of Indigenous women is committed to collective community advancement.

The Kanien'kehá:ka people's success was primarily a result of women's historical role, working side by side with their men to defend their rights to the land (Horn-Miller, 2012, p. 34). The success of this protest reaffirms the empowerment of Indigenous peoples with the inclusion of their women (Riley, 1990). The Kanesatà:ke Siege demonstrates Indigenous women's importance in defending territory (Simpson, 2014). However, the public view of the Kanesatà:ke Siege is based on masculine images rooted in colonialism (Blundell, 1993). For example, an iconic image of the protest was the photograph of a Mohawk man staring face-to-face with a Canadian soldier (Allen, 2014).

Although women were the primary negotiators during the Kanesatà:ke Siege, the media's focus on the Mohawk men obscured the central role of Indigenous women's resistance (Riley, 1990; Simpson, 2014). Indigenous women have long been essential figures in their communities. In pre-colonial times, Indigenous women were respected as leaders and honoured for their role in

developing a thriving culture (CRIAW, 2016). Operating within gendered spaces, the roles of Indigenous women were significantly underestimated by colonial observers (Horn-Miller, 2020, p. 88). During the Kanesatà:ke Siege, officials sought out the men for negotiations based on the patriarchal frame of reference of men being in power.

The Kanesatà:ke Siege was a turning point, bringing to light Indigenous grievances that previously failed to gain the public's attention (Conradi, 2009; Lackenbauer, 2008). Research has suggested that since this event, provincial and federal governments have created a heightened awareness of Indigenous people's rights (Marshall, 2013). The Kanesatà:ke Siege helped increase Canadians' awareness of Indigenous rights and land claims (Sharma, 2016). In addition, the events during and after this event motivated Indigenous peoples to renew their pride in their traditions and identities (Grenier, 1994). This event has been suggested as the main contributor to the growth of visibility for Indigenous issues and connected to the Idle No More movement (Marshall, 2013).

Idle No More

Indigenous peoples throughout Canada have resisted colonization for centuries. The Idle No More (INM) movement began in 2012 and became a new way to describe Indigenous resistance (De Cicco, 2015; Dobson, 2020; Graveline, 2012). Like other Indigenous movements in Canada throughout the years, Idle No More sought to challenge the Canadian government's treatment of Indigenous peoples and the destruction of their land (Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013). What makes this movement so important is that it was not only created by Indigenous women but was also promoted and primarily sustained by the efforts of Indigenous women across Canada. Although Indigenous women have always been instrumental in the Indigenous rights movement, the Canadian public began to see their determination and impact during Idle No More.

While several commonalities exist between Idle No More and other Indigenous movements, substantial differences exist. Idle No More is recognized as being organized by Indigenous women, taking a more intersectional approach to address issues. Indigenous women's significant presence and recognition make Idle No More different from previous Indigenous movements. The Idle No More movement demonstrates a shift in recognition of Indigenous women as critical political actors in advancing Indigenous rights (Peacock, 2022).

Idle No More, which occurred in late 2012, was founded by women, developed, and sustained through social media, capturing the attention of a younger generation of activists (Tupper, 2014). The creation of the Idle No More movement began in the fall of 2012 with four women in Saskatchewan (Nina Wilson, Sheelah McLean, Jessica Gordon, and Sylvia McAdam) exchanging e-mails concerning the introduction of Bill C-45 (Starblanket, 2022). These four women started the Idle No More movement when they began to discuss the negative impact of State policies on Indigenous peoples and communities (Coulthard, 2014; Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013).

The Idle No More Movement is an important example of feminist anti-colonial state organizing due to it being led by women as well as the achievements and goals they sought. It is this example of Indigenous feminist organizing that helps define Indigenous feminism (Green, 2007; Peacock, 2022). Idle No More called on everyone to participate in a peaceful revolution that sought to protect the land and water to honour Indigenous sovereignty (Dobson, 2020; Tupper, 2014). Idle No More's vision was to continue to assist in building a resurgence of nationhood and sovereignty, to increase pressure on the government to protect the environment and build alliances (Graveline, 2012).

Bill C-45 was introduced by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper on October 18th, which contained information about the implementation of specific provisions and changes in legislation within 64 regulations/acts (Dobson, 2020, p. 186). The Canadian Senate passed the Conservative government's controversial Bill on December 14th, 2012 (Coulthard, 2014). Bill C-45 (also known as the Jobs and Growth Act) was the Canadian government's omnibus budget implementation bill that weakened environmental laws and removed the protection of numerous waterways (John, 2015, p. 41). The Bill is a budget implementation of over 400 pages which contains significant changes to several federal legislations (Blevins, 2012; Tupper, 2014). In particular, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the Navigable Water Act, the Fisheries Act and the Indian Act directly impacted the rights of Indigenous peoples and the rights of all Canadians (Raynauld, Richez & Boudreau Morris, 2018; Tupper, 2014).

The amendments of these Acts allowed the government to gain more effortless opening of treaty territories and lands, easier destruction of waterways and lands, and the removal of important protection of rivers and lakes in Canada (Graveline, 2012). For example, the changes

within Bill C-45 would alter regulations which govern on-reserve leasing, making it easier to access the land of First Nations reserves, significantly limiting environmental protections of rivers and lakes, threatening to demolish Indigenous treaty rights and land, minimizing the quantity of resource development projects that need environmental assessment (Cameron, Graben & Napoleon, 2020, p. 223). The changes in Acts mentioned above, as well as the lack of consultation with Indigenous peoples, was what those involved with the Idle No More movement were angered about (Dobson, 2020).

It is important to note that while Indigenous women have been involved in many high-profile Indigenous movements, it was only in the Idle No More movement that their representation within the media began to change (De Cicco, 2015; Graveline, 2012). Although the media failed to properly direct attention towards all the underlying issues of the movement, such as sovereignty and land rights, Indigenous women were given more representation and acknowledgment than in the past (Gottardi, 2020). Indigenous women also became acknowledged as political actors with political agency and were recognized as having an important role in the Indigenous community. Rather than being seen as victims, sexualized, or voiceless objects, Indigenous women were shown as powerful and influential actors, expanding their sphere of influence on political issues (Tupper, 2014).

A critical element of the Idle No More movement, which assisted in amplifying media attention towards Indigenous issues, was the hunger strike of Chief Theresa Spence (McMillan, Young, & Peters, 2013). Chief Spence (of the Attawapiskat Cree Nation), located in northern Ontario, announced on December 4th, 2012, that she would begin a hunger strike to bring attention to and raise awareness around the negative impacts of Bill C-45, the substandard housing conditions on her reserve and her support for the Idle No More movement (Blevins, 2012; Dobson, 2020).

At the beginning of the movement, information sessions, teach-ins, and rallies increased throughout Canada (Palmater, 2013). Compared to previous Indigenous movements, Idle No More engaged with communities differently, mainly speaking and educating others. A sense of urgency fueled the significant growth of the Idle No More movement among Indigenous peoples and the general public concerning the negative impacts of the Harper government's disregard for the environment and human rights (De Cicco, 2015; John, 2015). Within weeks, hundreds of

people organized themselves as part of the Idle No More movement (Caven, 2013; Graveline, 2012). Although some people focused on round dances and teach-ins to garner attention, others became involved in blockades and protests (Chen, 2019; Gottardi, 2020).

Numerous protests by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in solidarity with the Idle No More Movement occurred across Canada and beyond (Robertson, 2023; Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013). What began online quickly became one of Canada's most significant protest movements in recent years (Callison & Hermida, 2015; Dobson, 2020). By the end of May 2013, six months after it began, Idle No More had approximately 1,215,569 mentions on Twitter (Blevins, 2012; De Cicco, 2015). Through the use of new platforms of communication, the exchange of collective knowledge occurred (Raynauld, Richez & Boudreau Morris, 2018; Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013). The movement grew significantly in a short period due to social networks and other media platforms (Coulthard, 2014; Graveline, 2012).

The movement's leaders spoke of disenfranchised communities, the violation of treaty rights and the extended history of colonialism; the focus always remained on creating a dialogue for solutions (Gottardi, 2020; Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013). Indigenous women and their allies across Canada began to gather to discuss what was happening in Indigenous communities, with issues varying between regions, from funding cuts to First Nations advocacy groups, the socio-economic crisis on reserves, to the weakening of environmental laws (Palmater, 2013). Although hundreds of men supported the Idle No More movement, a large majority of the organizers and participants were women (Graveline, 2012; John, 2015).

The nature of the Idle No More movement has been described as unifying, non-violent and fluid which engages and reflects women's agency (Caven, 2013). Unlike previous Indigenous movements, Idle No More had greater acknowledgment of the significance of women in Indigenous communities, as the movement rallied behind Chief Spence during her hunger strike (Gottardi, 2020; McMillan, Young, & Peters, 2013; Starblanket, 2022). According to research, what sets the Idle No More movement apart from other movements is that leaders have spoken openly concerning previous pain experienced (John, 2015; Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013). In addition, the leaders spoke personally, reaching out to people to join the movement (Caven, 2013).

As with the Kanesatà:ke Siege, Idle No More and the actions surrounding it faced both negative and positive media coverage (Chen, 2019; Fernihough, 2013). For example, the peaceful hunger strike of Chief Spence was criticized by right-wing Christie Blatchford as an act of intimidation resembling terrorism towards the state (Medina, 2018). Moreover, an article written in the National Post by Kelly McParland asserted that the Idle No More movement's lack of clarity and focus was disparate and leaderless (Coulthard, 2014). However, some have suggested that the bottom-up and diverse character of the Idle No More movement made it potentially transformative as a movement of decolonization (Peacock, 2022).

An essential aspect of the Idle No More movement is that it was initially led by Indigenous women, and then grassroots First Nations leaders and other Canadians joined (Gottardi, 2020). The strength of this movement was rooted in the fact that it was not led by those in positions of power. Instead, hundreds of organizers, artists, and spokespeople contributed to the cause (Sherwin, 2021; Simpson, 2023). The diversity at the center of the Idle No More movement also led to debates on the tactics and strategies to be used to start meaningful change (Medina, 2018).

Idle No More is a prime example of how Indigenous resistance has changed throughout the years, from how it is carried out to involvement and acknowledgement. Support for Indigenous rights rose to a new level, crossing racial and geographical boundaries. Social media played a crucial role in the growth of this movement and increased public attention towards Indigenous issues. What makes Idle No More different from previous Indigenous rights movements is the importance of Indigenous women's involvement (Robertson, 2023).

Indigenous women were prominent organizers and leaders in the Idle No More movement, bringing a unique perspective to the fight for equality and justice, mobilizing support and advocating for Indigenous people's rights (Starblanket, 2022). In addition, indigenous women were central in raising awareness and educating the public concerning issues that fueled the movement. From beginning to end, Indigenous women's power in advancing Indigenous rights was made evident. However, Indigenous women's involvement and political style have altered over the years due to the avenues in which Indigenous women can participate, particularly the dissemination of information online. Additionally, the visibility and prominence of Indigenous women's engagement have increased, creating a different way of thinking about organizing.

The Wet'suwet'en Protests

Like the Idle No More movement, the Wet'suwet'en Protests represent a shift in public consciousness toward recognizing Indigenous people's rights to land and the Canadian government's continual encroachment of these rights. Since Idle No More, there has been increased attention given to environmental issues and the protection of land. The Wet'suwet'en Protests occurred in response to the construction of the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline in British Columbia, which encroached through the Wet'suwet'en First Nation territory (Neuman, 2020). Although the protests involved mainly Indigenous groups in the beginning, they quickly expanded to include many non-Indigenous individuals described as acting more in opposition to the construction of pipelines than to the land claims of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs (Lindeman, 2020).

What began as a protest in solidarity by a small number of Mohawk people grew into a series of railway disruptions throughout the nation of various duration and sizes (Austen, 2020). As the dispute over constructing a $6.6 billion-dollar Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline showed no signs of ending, individuals continued to block Go Train and CN freight train traffic (D'Amore, 2020). Three separate Go rail lines in Toronto were disrupted during rush hour (Stueck, Atkins & Hayes, 2020). In February 2020, a new wave of protests occurred in support of those in opposition to the B.C. pipeline project (Ceric, 2020). Numerous injunctions were obtained by Canadian National Railway Co. and the Canadian Pacific Railway Ltd. to cease protests which blocked traffic (The Canadian Press, 2020). After police arrested protesters and cleared rail blockades in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, new blockades emerged (Stueck, Atkins & Hayes, 2020). Police arrested fourteen people after blocking the railway tracks near New Hazelton, British Columbia (Van Meijeren Karp, 2020; Wallace, 2020).

Following two weeks of political protests that disrupted several rail services throughout eastern Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called for an end to the blockades that supported the hereditary chiefs of Wet'suwet'en (Neuman, 2020). However, it is believed that due to the outcome of the Kanesatà:ke Siege and the memories of what occurred in Ipperwash, Ontario, in the 1990s, Trudeau did not call an end to the barricades in the beginning (Lindeman, 2020). In both cases (the Kanesatà:ke Siege and Ipperwash), early police intervention led to an escalation of tensions and the death of an individual, with numerous others being injured (Austen, 2020).

While blockades were removed, meetings began in late February 2020 between the Canadian and B.C. governments and hereditary chiefs (Government of Canada, 2020). Following numerous days of meetings, a proposed agreement, known as a memorandum of understanding (MOU), was made between the representatives of the Wet'suwet'en, BC Indigenous Relations Minister and the Canadian Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister (Van Meijeren Karp, 2020). The memorandum of understanding was signed by the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en Nation and the Canadian Government. The memorandum outlines negotiations concerning legal recognition of their title to 22,000 kilometres of territory (Dyok, 2020). The MOU was done at a videoconference signing event, in which Canada and B.C. committed to recognizing the title and rights held by groups in the Wet'suwet'en Nation under their system of governance (Bellrichard, 2020). On May 7th, a draft agreement was distributed to elected band councils and was published on May 12th on the website for the Office of the Wet'suwet'en (Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, May 11th, 2020).

Although the news media covered the protests, details focused on their impact on the Canadian economy and the inconvenience experienced by those needing to travel rather than the reasoning behind the blockades (Neuman, 2020). Moreover, the actions were described as Indigenous-led anti-pipeline protests, which caused some frustrated outsiders to condemn the actions negatively (Bellrichard, 2020; Ceric, 2020). The media had some negative ways of describing the protests, with one reporter from Global News referring to these actions as a "debacle" (D'Amore, Global News, February 12th, 2020).

Indigenous women played a critical role in the Wet'suwet'en Protests. They were instrumental in organizing and leading protests, showing their determination with both online campaigns and in-person action (Wallace, 2020). Working to support Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty and seeking to protect the Wet'suwet'en territory, many Indigenous women took part in blockades across Canada (Dyok, 2020). In addition, the detainment of two well-respected members within the Wet'suwet'en culture, Freda Huson (Chief Howilhkat of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation) and her niece Karla Tait, triggered solidarity throughout Canada (McCreary & Turner, 2021). *Solidarity* is an important theme that assists in advancing Indigenous rights and is present in numerous acts of resistance. The power of creating solidarity and the impact of Indigenous women working in solidarity with others has been critical

in recent events. Each of the movements presented above are rooted in the need for advancing Indigenous rights through the recognition of heritage and culture and the protection of land and resources.

Lessons That Can Be Drawn

By presenting three separate events (the Kanesatà:ke Siege, Idle No More, and the Wet'suwet'en Protests), which occurred decades apart, this section seeks to demonstrate the progression of Indigenous resistance and the role of Indigenous women. While all three of the protests discussed concerned the encroachment of Indigenous land and discriminatory actions taken by the Canadian state towards Indigenous peoples and their rights, there are differences between them; these differences include duration, number of people involved, reactions and conclusions. Nevertheless, these protests demonstrate a significant change in the atmosphere of support and recognition of Indigenous resistance.

Numerous lessons can be drawn from the differences between the events discussed above and the political context of Indigenous women's organizing. First, particularly important for this research is that Indigenous women had an essential role in demonstrating the significance of intersectionality in social justice movements. For example, in the Kanesatà:ke Siege, Indigenous women were central in organizing and leading the resistance. While in the Idle No More and the Wet'suwet'en Protests, Indigenous women were at the forefront, bringing attention to the intersectional issues of gender-based violence, environmental protection, and Indigenous sovereignty. Another important lesson that can be learned is that the political context is crucial as it shapes how these events are perceived and the responses they generate. For example, during the Kanesatà:ke Siege, tensions existed between the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples. However, the Idle No More movement and the Wet'suwet'en Protests took place during a time when increased awareness of Indigenous rights existed, and there was a greater willingness to engage in dialogue.

Additionally, representation within the media is important. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public views of social justice movements (De Cicco, 2015). The Kanesatà:ke Siege (1990) was and continues to be, clouded with ambiguity due in part to distorted media coverage. Hundreds of Indigenous activists occupied disputed territory which resulted in a lengthy confrontation ending in violence and the arrest of protestors (Graveline, 2012). The Kanesatà:ke

Siege has been represented in the media as a violent conflict between the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples (Riley, 1990; Simpson, 2014). What is not properly represented within the media is the role Indigenous women played and the true nature of the violence perpetrated against the Indigenous peoples involved.

Unlike the Kanesatà:ke Siege, during both the Wet'suwet'en Protests and Idle No More, Indigenous women used social media and various other media channels to tell their stories, creating a space for dominant narratives to be challenged (Gottardi, 2020). A third important lesson that can be learned from these events is the effectiveness of non-violent resistance. While more recent movements were primarily non-violent and peaceful, the Kanesatà:ke Siege was marked by armed conflict. The differences between these events highlight that violence is not necessary to bring attention to issues and that non-violent resistance can effectively accomplish social change.

Finally, collaboration is critical for change. For example, the Kanesatà:ke Siege, Idle No More, and the Wet'suwet'en Protests all included the collaboration between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous allies. In addition, Indigenous women were instrumental in their role as solidarity brokers. This collaboration demonstrates the significance of coalitions and relationship-building throughout communities in the search for social justice. Specifically, the more recent Wet'suwet'en Protests and the involvement of non-Indigenous allies assisted in directing attention toward environmental issues and Indigenous sovereignty.

It is important to note that Indigenous communities throughout Canada are diverse, representing a wide range of experiences, languages, and cultures (Asante, 2005). As a result, the political participation of Indigenous women can vary significantly across different communities and generations. Intergenerational differences between the movements described above are clear when looking at the experiences of Indigenous women. There are a variety of factors to consider in connection with Indigenous women's political participation which include, historical context, changes in policy, social dynamics, and cultural traditions. Government policies and historical events have had a significant impact on the political participation of Indigenous women (Deschambault, 2020). For instance, historical injustices such as residential schools and the Indian Act had detrimental effects and have contributed to intergenerational trauma which can impact political engagement among different generations (Borrows, 2008; Florence, 2021).

Throughout the years, there have been numerous changes in Canadian policies which seek to promote Indigenous political representation and self-determination (Barker, 2006; 2008; Brock, 2010; Coates & Poelzer, 2010). The establishment of Indigenous political organizations and the recognition (or even lack of recognition in some cases) of Indigenous rights through court decisions and land claim agreements have created opportunities and motivation for Indigenous women to engage in political issues (Bell, 2015; Cornet, 2001; Eberts, McIvor & Nahanee, 2006). Access to education can also have an impact on political participation and can contribute to intergenerational differences in political participation (Peters & Robillard, 2009). For the participants involved in this research, obtaining an education was instrumental in their political involvement, providing them with opportunities to advance Indigenous rights. The number of Indigenous women who are obtaining a higher education has increased over the years, as more Indigenous peoples are moving to urban locations (Dorries, et al., 2019). Overall, the goals and political priorities of Indigenous communities shift over generations, with greater environmental destruction and globalization changing the ways in which Indigenous women become involved in the advancement of Indigenous rights.

The ways in which Indigenous women participate politically and their involvement in resistance have evolved over the years. Past social movements look very different from those that have occurred more recently. Contemporary social activism has been attributed to the multiplicity and fluidity of identities (Melucci, 1996). Unlike before, new social movements are organized around such things as human rights, environmentalism, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and gender (Martin, 2015; Vilkė, 2021). Everyday life has become politicized as the connection between the collective and the individual becomes blurred (Johnston, et al., 1994, p. 7). The personal and political equation fosters a lifestyle where everyday life becomes a key area for political action to occur and where identity politics is promoted (Buechler, 2013). New social movement theory, however, does not properly account for Indigenous people's experiences and only offers a minimal explanation of differences that have emerged more recently.

The literature presented above assists in gaining a better understanding of the history of Indigenous women's involvement in political issues and the impact colonialism has had on their identity and community connections. While research focuses on a wide range of issues in connection to the lives of Indigenous women, there is a lack of material which presents the

perspectives of Indigenous women in their political journey. This research seeks to address the gaps in the literature, presenting a more holistic understanding of why and how Indigenous women become involved and what impacts their involvement.

CHAPTER 3

THEORY

When conducting research with Indigenous peoples, it is necessary to employ Indigenous methodologies and theories that provide a more accurate understanding of Indigenous perspectives (Coleman, 2016). While outside (Western) theories present some critical contributions, trying to fit data collected on Indigenous peoples into mainstream theories can negatively impact the understanding of Indigenous peoples. Moreover, these theories can lead to a continuation of misrepresentation (Morgensen, 2016). However, it is important to note that Indigenous methodologies and theories still face criticism. In particular, previous research has suggested that Indigenous methodologies tend to downplay issues of gender (Olsen, 2018). For example, Green (2007) argues that Indigenous leaders often refuse to tackle issues of gender, while Moreton-Robinson (2021) asserts that white feminist women have been unwilling and unable to understand Indigenous women's issues.

The assertions about Indigenous and feminist theories cause confusion and debate among scholars, further complicating research that seeks to understand Indigenous women and their experiences. Therefore, while this research cannot encompass all the issues and factors that impact Indigenous women, I believe that using a feminist theory and an Indigenous theory together provides a solid basis for data analysis. Intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence are essential theories that can stand alone; however, using them to complement each other offers a new way of thinking through political participation among Indigenous women. Both theories prioritize identity and community and can be explained in greater detail. Using theories from feminism and Indigenous communities speaks to recognizing various lived experiences and attending to the multiplicity of our lives. Moreover, using both theories, this research can centre participants' lives as Indigenous and as gendered, assisting in decolonizing how we have researched Indigenous women and Indigenous communities in general.

Employing a resurgence framework and incorporating intersectionality allows one to move beyond intersectionality, focusing primarily on such essentialisms as gender, sexuality, class, race, and other facets of identity. It provides a way of engaging with Indigenous communities and individuals beyond their parts, which can become incorrectly confined in aspects such as gender, class, sexuality, and race (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). Intersectionality, for this research,

has provided a framework for examining and understanding the multiple and intersecting identities held by Indigenous women and the influence it has on their participation.

This research will employ the theory of intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence toward the decolonization of my theoretical framework. While the feminist theory of intersectionality assists in providing a more holistic examination of how Indigenous women experience multiple forms of discrimination, there is also a need to incorporate an Indigenous theory which accounts for political participation. As such, Indigenous resurgence, as a form of resistance to colonial impositions, will be used to analyze past and present forms of resistance, particularly among Indigenous women. By employing theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2017) and Indigenous resurgence (Simpson, 2017), I will be able to address the existing gap in understanding Indigenous women's political participation within the field of social science. Overall, when looking at political participation among Indigenous women, intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence can provide a more holistic understanding of the political participation of Indigenous women in Canada.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a critical feminist theory that can be used in understanding social change and identity (Collins, 2017). It is a valuable concept for this research as it will be used to expose relations of domination and evaluate social relations which contribute to or supress the political participation of Indigenous women. Since Indigenous women experience multiple levels of subordination based on their gender, race, and other contributing factors (such as class, age, and sexuality), these intersecting identities must be addressed (Olsen, 2018). Ignoring the intersectional nature of these systems would lead to a systematic overlooking of different marginalized groups and their experiences (Weldon, 2008).

Issues related to Indigenous communities and peoples are complex and broad (Horowitz, 2017). That said, doing research with Indigenous peoples should go beyond simply discussing Indigenous identity (Booysen, Bendl & Pringle, 2018, p. 110). Since an essential aspect of this research is to look at the impact that identity has on Indigenous women's political participation, intersectionality is needed to consider variations that exist. Different Indigenous identities are decided by age, class, gender, and other dimensions (May, 2015). These dimensions impact the lived experiences of Indigenous women.

There are three basic assumptions of most definitions of intersectionality (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). First is a recognition that individuals are simultaneously characterized by their membership in more than one social category (sexual orientation, gender, religion, ethnicity), which means the experience of one social category is intertwined with membership in other categories (Booysen, Bendl & Pringle, 2018, p. 251). The second assumption is that power dynamics and interrelations are embedded in each socially constructed category (Duran & Jones, 2020). As such, attention to power is needed for intersectional analysis. The final assumption is that all social categories have contextual and individual facets (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). In other words, social categories are intrinsically connected to structural systems, institutional practices/processes, and personal identity (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). For example, Indigenous women are characterized by their gender and race and often hold membership in other categories. This characterization increases their marginalization and limits their access to resources, which impacts how they participate socially and politically.

Through intersectionality, power relations are acknowledged as essential in creating knowledge, thought, and experience (Booysen, Bendl & Pringle, 2018, p. 155). Moreover, it can assist in revealing how power works in differentiated ways by developing and deploying overlapping categories of identity (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Using the feminist theory of intersectionality, this research will address how such things as race, age, gender, and sexuality have intersected to not only historically impact Indigenous women, but it has also played a role in the formation of Indigenous women's identity today.

Intersectional approaches and Indigenous studies start at the margins rather than the centre (Collins, 2017; May, 2015). The examination of intersections should theorize around clusters of privilege and power (Booysen, Bendl & Pringle, 2018. P. 153). Intersectionality as a feminist theory has been mainly focused on the implications of overlapping identities from an analysis concerned with structures of exclusion and power (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Although there is an emphasis on identity, it is important to look at structural and political inequality (Yuval-Davis, 2016). One could argue that intersectionality is more about positionality than identity, forcing us to look at connections, accountability, privileges, and penalties beyond recognizing identity labels.

By using intersectionality, insights into inequality and social justice are enhanced, increasing the possible impact of social change (Atewologun, 2018). Recognizing differences is particularly important for Indigenous women (Olsen, 2018). Bringing attention to the intersection of differences and the complexity of female experiences, one can avoid generalizing the experiences of these diverse women (Nash, 2016). Indigenous women's gender and racial identity intersect, resulting in multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. Gender carries a different logic than categories such as 'class' and 'ethnicity' (Weldon, 2008). For example, the recognition of Indigenous rights/identity does not necessarily result in the recognition of gender equality (Olsen, 2018). This dilemma is essential for intersectional research.

The theoretical framework of intersectionality recognizes the interconnected nature of various social categories (for example, gender, sexuality, class, and race) and how they intersect to produce unique experiences of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 2017; Duran & Jones, 2020, p. 310). Intersectionality highlights the overlapping and multiple forms of marginalization and oppression that Indigenous women experience (Olsen, 2018). Being both women and Indigenous peoples, Indigenous women experience discrimination and marginalization intensified by the intersection of their identities (Horowitz, 2017). Indigenous women are faced with a lack of access to opportunities and resources and higher levels of violence and poverty compared to non-Indigenous women and Indigenous men (García-Del Moral, 2018).

Exclusion from economic and political structures results in the perspectives and voices of Indigenous women being improperly represented within the political sphere (Weldon, 2008). Although Indigenous women face these barriers, they have a long history of leadership and political activism which dates back to colonization (Baskin, 2020). Indigenous women have and continue to play an important role within their communities, which includes conflict resolution, decision-making, and the transmission of traditional knowledge (Rutherdale & Pickles, 2014). Moreover, they have been at the forefront of movements to preserve culture, land, and self-determination (Suzack, et al., 2010).

More recently, there has been increased recognition of the significance of political participation and leadership of Indigenous women and efforts to increase their participation and representation in political processes and institutions (Kuokkanen, 2012). Efforts include but are not limited to ensuring Indigenous women's perspectives are incorporated into decision-making,

policy-making processes, and initiatives to increase the number of Indigenous women in positions of power (Stout & Kipling, 1998, p. 31). As such, intersectionality is helpful in understanding Indigenous women's unique experiences in the political realm, including the intersecting and multiple forms of marginalization and oppression they are subjected to and their long history of leadership and political activism (Simpson, 2017).

In the beginning, intersectional analysis was focused on the inequalities of gender and race. Throughout the years, it incorporated such aspects as hierarchies of sexuality, religion, class, age, ability, nation, and ethnicity (Duran & Jones, 2020, p. 313). More recently, intersectionality has become a form of critical praxis and inquiry, going beyond identity, with literature suggesting the salient nature of the connections between political resistance and the intersection of power relations and violence (Nash, 2016). Intersectionality, rather than focusing primarily on identity, has expanded to highlight experiences that emerge from the intersection of various identities of individuals and groups. There is a danger present when focusing on identity without attending to the colonial system and situation; this is where the theory of Indigenous resurgence offers assistance.

Since the possibility for protest and resistance occur within political domination, it is vital that one looks at the sites of intersecting relations of power and how political resistance and resurgence take place (Collins, 2017). Intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence are critical lenses that can be used to examine and understand Indigenous women's political participation and resistance. While intersectionality can be used to examine and understand the impact that multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression have on the lives of Indigenous women and how they participate politically, Indigenous resurgence theorizes the goal of their participation.

Indigenous Resurgence

Indigenous resurgence has been described as constituting a theoretical framework and sociocultural movement focusing on regeneration within Indigenous communities (Hanson & Hampton, 2009). Moreover, it supports Indigenous histories, continuity, cultures, knowledge, and ingenuity (Simpson, 2017). While colonialism is acknowledged within resurgence, the relationships between settler-colonizers and Indigenous peoples are not central (Lutz, Strzelczyk & Watchman, 2020). Instead, importance is placed on Indigenous communities being sites of

regeneration and power (Coulthard, 2014). Focus is directed toward people within their communities, cultivating their own stories, knowledge, worldviews, ways of being, languages, and traditions (Simpson, 2011).

Within Indigenous practices of resurgence and national liberation, there is a need to apply a gendered analysis to examine the subtle permeation of hetero-patriarchal norms (Corntassel, 2018; Simpson, 2017). As such, it is important to examine Indigenous women's attitudes or actions as part of their resistance (Iseke-Barnes, 2003). By examining how Indigenous women have resisted, one can build on the traditions of resistance and further inspire future acts (Anderson, 2016, p. 115). Among Indigenous peoples, revitalization, resurgence, and resistance are not new phenomena, as throughout colonization and across the globe, Indigenous people resisted domination by colonizing forces (Coleman, 2016).

When looking at what has been written about Indigenous resurgence, some significant aspects assist in this research. Particularly, Indigenous resurgence strongly emphasizes Indigenous communities as they are seen as sites of power and regeneration (Lutz, Strzelczyk & Watchman, 2020). As will be demonstrated throughout this research, community plays an essential role in Indigenous women's sense of self and their need to be involved politically. Community allows Indigenous women to see themselves as part of a wider group working towards recognizing and advancing Indigenous rights. Indigenous resurgence provides a basis for analyzing community connections and the goals that inspire Indigenous women to engage in acts of resistance.

Another aspect that is central to Indigenous resurgence is grounded normativity. Grounded normativity can be used to transform understandings of relationships through shared knowledge and the development of ethical relationships with others (Simpson, 2017). Moreover, it emphasizes the support of the environment and sustaining Indigenous lifestyle (Coulthard, 2014). This is a critical aspect that was highlighted by Indigenous women when discussing community connections. Additionally, environmental protection and the sustainment of Indigenous life was a motivating factor in acts of resistance and political participation by Indigenous women.

According to Corntassel (2018), one can better understand and identify ways Indigenous peoples regenerate and renew our relationships with communities, waters, lands, and cultures by

examining everyday resurgence. It is within such daily convergences of practices, places and people which assists in honouring relationships that promote well-being and health and visualize life beyond the state (Corntassel, 2018). It is the everyday acts that Indigenous women engage in that have been instrumental in how they participate politically. Indigenous resurgence assists in helping one think about the everyday acts that Indigenous women engage in as part of a broader social goal. Indigenous resurgence also includes thinking about Indigenous identity and what it means. The meaning of Indigeneity and all connections to the land, community, and Indigenous ways of knowing become integral to thinking about Indigenous politics.

Looking at how Indigenous peoples have participated in political issues and activism, a dramatic change has occurred over the years (Deschambault, 2020, p. 32). Indigenous resurgence movements continue to expand throughout the world and occur everywhere, from international networks to local community initiatives (Corntassel, 2018; Dorries et al., 2019). With the advancement of such movements, one must reflect on how Indigenous peoples and communities are being characterized and conceptualized, to remain adaptable to emerging challenges and contexts while also concentrating on the needs of all members of the community (Starblanket, 2018).

When it comes to understanding Indigenous resurgence and the importance it has in challenging settler colonialism, the work of Simpson (2011; 2017) is central. Critical for resurgence, as suggested by Simpson (2011), is Indigenous knowledge. Simpson (2011) provides a strategy created to maintain focus on community revitalization by Indigenous and to surpass the politics of distraction (Corntassel, 2012). Revitalization of community, language, and culture is an essential aspect of Indigenous resurgence. It is through the incorporation of revitalization practices that Indigenous ways of knowing and being assist in the process of decolonization.

The four points outlined by Simpson (2011) are: (1) Visioning resurgence – it should not be underestimated in terms of the significance of dreaming and thinking of a better future that is rooted in Indigenous traditions; (2) Confront the mentality of 'funding' – it is time to acknowledge that private corporations and colonizing governments will not fund Indigenous decolonization; (3) Diplomatic mechanisms and ancient treaties need to be brought forth – the precolonial treaty relationships need to be renewed with contemporary neighbouring Indigenous Nations, which encourages decolonization and peaceful co-existence, as it shapes solidarity; and

(4) confronting linguistic genocide – without this, Indigenous may lose themselves (Corntassel, 2012). These four points offer a way for individuals to move past current methods of Indigenous rights discourses toward practices of resistance and resurgence. Unfortunately, due to the lack of commitment by the Canadian government to address colonialism and the impact it has on both the individual and collective levels, it is up to Indigenous communities and individuals to work together to bring about change.

For Simpson (2017), the Radical Resurgence Project uses the Nishnaabeg story as coded processes that create solutions to issues of erasure and occupation and life on earth. It starts from a place of refusing colonialism and the current structural settler colonial manifestation (Ayoub, 2022). Moreover, it refuses the dispossession of Indigenous land and bodies as the central point of resurgent action and thinking, continuing to work towards dismantling heteropatriarchy as a force of dispossession (Simpson, 2017). Finally, it requests the creation of networks of constellations of a radical resurgent organization as direct action against the dispossessive forces of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism (Byrd, 2020; Simpson, 2022).

The politics of refusal as a framework highlights how Indigenous women, as part of a marginalized community, challenge oppression and colonization through active non-participation in political systems and structures (Robathan, 2018). By not participating in the colonial state, Indigenous women can assert their own self-determination and sovereignty (Mitchell-Eaton & Coddington, 2022). Recognizing and appreciating the ways in which Indigenous women engage outside of dominant political structures can lead to more equitable and effective forms of political engagement. The idea of recognizing the importance of how Indigenous women engage politically outside of traditional channels has guided this research.

A central project of radical resurgence is the eradication of gendered violence, and the spine of Indigenous resistance has always been the intense love of nations, family and the land (Byrd, 2020). Resistance shifts the concept of intersectionality from a focus on identity toward place-based experiences and factors. It has been asserted by Simpson (2014) that contemporary democratic practices of recognition alter Indigenous peoples that are of sovereign nations into citizens of an ethnic minority. The politics of refusal is needed regarding the struggle for self-government (Corntassel, 2018). Resurgence is about recreating past political and cultural flourishment to support contemporary citizens and their well-being (Simpson, 2017). Under

settler colonialism, dispossession is gendered, and nation-building and radical resurgence need to be considered critically (Simpson, 2022).

There is often a pattern within Indigenous politics based on issues placed hierarchically, with issues of land claiming urgency (Simpson, 2017). While righteous work is seen as the violation of treaties, political negotiations, blockades, and land claims, issues concerning gender and sexual violence, families, bodies, and children are viewed as less important (Simpson, 2017). Men involved in political and land issues are situated as leaders and theorists. In contrast, women involved in gendered violence or child welfare issues are ignored and dismissed as community organizers or Indigenous feminists (Simpson, 2017). Moreover, individuals who are gender-non-conforming and transgender are altogether erased (Byrd, 2020). Such divisions further separate Indigenous peoples by viewing gender and sexual violence as less significant than issues of physical dispossession (Razack, 2000; 2002). These divisions, go back to the issues presented at the beginning of this research, which is the failure to adequately recognize the efforts of Indigenous women and their political participation. These issues must and can be righted through resurgence (Palmater, 2018). Particularly, resurgence centres the voices and experiences of Indigenous women and acknowledges their importance in the dissemination of knowledge and the support of Indigenous culture and heritage.

The theory of Indigenous resurgence is a framework which centers on the restoration and revival of Indigenous knowledge, systems of governance, and culture (Coulthard, 2014). Indigenous resurgence provides a lens through which to examine Indigenous women's political participation, which is vital in understanding the complex political, social, and historical factors that have influenced their participation (Simpson, 2017). Throughout history, Indigenous women have been excluded from political participation due to systemic discrimination, patriarchy, and colonialism (Picq, 2018; Suzack et al., 2010). However, through Indigenous resurgence, Indigenous women can alter their communities and reclaim their political agency by employing their cultural practices and traditional knowledge (Palmater, 2020b). Additionally, it is not just about reclaiming political agency; it is about carrying out a different kind of politics of recognition. There are several ways in which the theory of Indigenous resurgence can be applied to the political participation of Indigenous women:

1. **Building on intergenerational knowledge:** The theory of Indigenous resurgence acknowledges the significance of transferring intergeneration knowledge in developing resilient and strong communities (Starblanket, 2018). Indigenous women are critical in transmitting and preserving traditional knowledge to future generations, which can influence future political activism and participation.

2. **Reclaiming cultural practices and language**: Indigenous women can reclaim their cultural practices and language as an element of their political participation (Lutz, Strzelczyk & Watchman, 2020). This includes recognizing how crucial language is to transmitting culture and knowledge and the role that cultural practices play in maintaining a strong sense of identity and community (Simpson, 2017).

3. **Centring community healing:** Indigenous women can incorporate traditional practices to center community healing as an aspect of their activism (Maracle, 2003). This includes addressing current issues of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and healing from historical trauma (such as land dispossession, forced relocation, and residential schools) (Robertson, 2018).

4. **Reclaiming traditional systems of governance:** By advocating for the revitalization of traditional systems of governance, Indigenous women can challenge dominant political structures that historically have excluded them (Picq, 2018). This includes recognizing the significance of collective decision-making and acknowledging the role of women in decision-making processes (Palmater, 2020a).

Indigenous resurgence theory provides a way to reframe Indigenous women's political participation to challenge dominant power structures and reclaim cultural practices. Indigenous women can transform their communities by reclaiming cultural practices, centring community healing, and building on intergenerational knowledge. While intersectionality influences the ways in which Indigenous women participate politically, resurgence is the goal of their participation. Both theories are important, and together they provide a road map of the obstacles that Indigenous women face, how these obstacles are addressed in their resistance and their overall goal of Indigenous resurgence.

Research that seeks to examine and understand Indigenous women's political participation needs to incorporate the appropriate theories that account for the influence of identity and

community connections. There are various pitfalls and ambiguities which surround ideas of what a 'community' is and who holds memberships within certain communities. Political issues arise particularly around individuals who falsely identify as Indigenous and those who may not be embraced as part of the community. Issues concerning community and the connections that one may hold will be discussed in greater detail in the findings section.

Highlighting the importance of intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence, this research provides a more holistic examination of Indigenous women's motivation to become politically involved. An understanding of the impact that identity and community connections have on political participation among Indigenous women can provide a theoretical contribution when applying theories of intersectionality and Indigenous resurgence. These contributions highlight the unique experiences and challenges faced by Indigenous women and the importance of recognizing their intersecting identities and community ties. Both theories assist in addressing my initial research question, how does identity and community connections influence Indigenous women's political participation and resistance?

By combining Indigenous resurgence and intersectionality, this research presents a comprehensive understanding of how the political participation of Indigenous women is shaped by their intersecting identities and connections to community and culture. This understanding assists in disrupting and challenging dominant narratives that marginalize or overlook the contributions and experiences of Indigenous women. Moreover, it provides a basis for advocating for practices and policies that promote self-determination, inclusivity, and equity for Indigenous women within society and political systems (See Corntassel, 2012; Crenshaw, 2017; Simpson, 2011; 2017).

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This section will first describe the methodologies employed, particularly decolonizing methods, followed by a description of the research and conceptual approach. Attention will then be directed toward presenting information concerning the surveys and interviews conducted and the participants involved in the research. Finally, the codes used in this research and the coding process will be explained, followed by information gathered from the surveys.

To conduct research that challenges colonial practices, this research explores decolonizing methods, which rely on Indigenous women's experiences and voices to guide the research. A decolonizing methodology provides research practices which emancipate and liberate Indigenous voices, recognizing Indigenous knowledge and worldviews and emphasizing the historical, political, and social contexts which shape Indigenous women's experiences (Martin, Booran Mirraboopa, 2001). Decolonizing research methodologies help Indigenous peoples tell their perspectives, empowering individuals (Simonds & Christopher, 2013; Steinhauer, 2002).

When conducting research with Indigenous peoples, one must consider the knowledge and other important terms underpinning the styles and practices carried out (Smith, 2013). Decolonization will be discussed in reference to gaining a deeper understanding of the underlying values, motivations, and assumptions which inform research practices. In addition, revisiting history is integral to decolonization, as coming to know the past is part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization and resistance (Wilson, 2001).

Western knowledge and research have historically been advanced into Indigenous communities, with little consideration for self-determination in human development and notions of Indigenous worldviews (Smith, 2002). This lack of appropriate inclusion and representation resulted in the dispossession and disruption of Indigenous people's lives, undermining self-dependence and empowerment (Peacock, 1996). It has been proven historically that the collective voice of Indigenous resistance must be placed at the forefront to redress grievances and work toward implementing effective change (Sium & Ritskes, 2013). Therefore, this research will place Indigenous women's voices and stories at the centre of analysis, as there is a need to shift towards new research paradigms which serve a decolonizing agenda, with the goal of strengthening the health and wellness and serving the interests of Indigenous peoples (Ermine,

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Sinclair & Jeffery, 2004, p. 7; Martin, Booran Mirraboopa, 2001). Work must utilize Indigenous worldviews and knowledge in the development of an ethical foundation for research (Basile, 2012; Wilson, 2001). Indigenous women have unique perspectives and experiences, which will be important to this research.

Indigenous perspectives are crucial for research, and in a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is one element of a broader intent (Smith, 2013). It is one element of a broader intent because it critically challenges and examines dominant ways of knowing, power structures and narratives imposed through colonization. As such, challenging the hegemony of research consists of understanding colonial history and ensuring research has practical applications that will liberate and empower individuals through ameliorative and practical results, which means applying a decolonizing agenda (Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffery, 2004, p. 14). When it comes to research involving Indigenous populations, one must ensure participants are given control over and access to any information they provide (Anderson, 2000). Additionally, the research should be culturally relevant, valuable and beneficial to the Indigenous community (Peacock, 1996).

Research involving Indigenous peoples must be conducted in a way that values their views and experiences, as they are an integral part of the methodology (Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffery, 2004, p. 10). Therefore, this research will strongly emphasize Indigenous women's views, placing their experiences at the centre. In addition, this research will report back to those involved in the study, knowledge will be continually shared, and any concerns will be discussed (Steinhauer, 2002). Finally, as a researcher, it is important that I continually critique my own 'gaze' and remain aware of colonial and imperial discourses which can impact my research. This is also known as reflexivity and has been a critical aspect of this research.

In terms of ethical considerations, importance will be placed on the production of knowledge and granting access to information at all stages in the research process to participants. Steps were taken to ensure the interviewing process was conducted with maximum sensitivity and minimum discomfort to participants. Consent and the right to remove themselves from the research were granted to the participants during all phases of the research. Storytelling and personal narratives were used since when a person is relating a personal narrative, you are entering into a relationship with that person; you are telling your side of the story (and theirs) and analyzing it (Wilson, 2001). As a research methodology (and of particular importance to research ethics),

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relationship building reflects traditional Indigenous ways of being (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). Consent was voluntary and informed, and participants were given sufficient time for consultation and consideration (Ward, 2011). Participants were informed of the benefits of this research and were given the right to decline consent or withdraw at any time (Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffery, 2004, p. 30).

Survey Details

When decolonizing research, one must be vigilant in ensuring that the research process gives respect and priority to the concerns of Indigenous participants (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). Therefore, this research first used a survey to gain Indigenous women's perspectives concerning their political participation. The information obtained from the survey was then used to guide the formation of the interview questions. In multi-methods studies, interviews and questionnaires are often used together (McKim, 2017). These methods complement each other and assist in developing a more robust understanding of the experiences of Indigenous women. While there are methodological differences, conducting both surveys and interviews will strengthen the overall goal of this research.

Questionnaires can offer evidence of patterns, and interviews can be used to gather more in-depth insights concerning participant actions, thoughts, and attitudes (Driscoll, et al., 2007, p. 25). Although both methods (surveys and interviews) have weaknesses, when used together, one can obtain responses from participants about their attitudes, beliefs, conceptions, and understandings (Harris & Brown, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, the results of both methods (qualitative interviews and survey questionnaires) will be considered distinct but complementary (Smith, 2002). In other words, although both the questionnaire and interview data will be analyzed separately using methods suitable for each, the results of the survey will be used to strengthen the focus of the interviews conducted (Harris & Brown, 2010, p. 2).

The reason for conducting a survey prior to interviews is that the information provided was used to gain the input of Indigenous women in the research process. Using a survey allowed the topic of the political involvement of Indigenous women to guide the formation of interview questions and themes (see Appendix D). Additionally, participants were asked at the beginning of the survey if they would like to participate further in an interview. The format of questions included closed-ended, open-ended, multiple choice, and Likert scales. The use of various types

of questions was done to gain as much information as possible, while still focusing on the general goal of the research. The survey comprised 30 questions concerning Indigenous women's political involvement. The survey for this research was done using Qualtrics Survey through the University of Windsor and took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Prior to distributing the survey, consultation about the questions was done with an Indigenous faculty member at the University of Windsor. Survey participants were recruited using various methods, which included: information posted online (RiseUp newsletter), recruitment through e-mail (students at the University of Windsor), and via social media. All students at the University of Windsor were sent an e-mail asking for Indigenous women to participate or to forward the e-mail to any Indigenous women they knew would be interested in participating. Interview participants were recruited through the survey and information was passed on by participants.

The survey was available for one month. It was posted online on February 17th, 2020, and was closed on March 17th, 2020. A link to the online survey was sent to students at the University of Windsor via e-mail and distributed by the IT department. Additionally, information about the survey was included in the RiseUp monthly newsletter. As expected, a large majority of respondents were University of Windsor students. This is due to the fact that information about the survey was distributed first to students at the University through the school's IT department.

Although information was also included in the RiseUp monthly newsletter, the survey was only available for three days to individuals who subscribed to the newsletter before it was closed. The reason for gathering information from students at the University is due to an overwhelming amount of research that has shown education is strongly linked to political engagement (Seider et al., 2018). While this casual relationship is unclear, and education is suggested to be a proxy in relation to other factors, such as parental influence and individual characteristics, education is still believed to be an important element concerning political participation (Mayer, 2011). In addition, age has also been suggested to be a significant factor in political participation (outside of voting), with younger generations being more involved in attending a protest or campaign and posting comments online concerning social or political issues (Turcotte, 2015).

To increase the response rate of the surveys, those who participated were given a chance to win a $50 Amazon gift card. Additionally, my connections to other graduate students were used, as well as contacting members of the RiseUp Feminist Archive (in which I volunteered) to gain further assistance in gaining survey responses. In terms of the number of responses, because Indigenous women represent a small portion of the population, the number of individuals who would participate in the study was expected to be limited. The aim was to get at least 50 individuals to respond to the survey. Although only having Indigenous women in the study may bias the results since this research aims to understand Indigenous women's political participation, there is no reason to include non-Indigenous women.

A total of 381 responses were initially indicated as collected for the survey in Qualtrics. However, the actual number of individuals who filled out the survey was approximately 170. This discrepancy is due to the fact that Qualtrics recorded everyone who clicked on the link supplied, regardless of whether or not they answered any questions. After removing responses from individuals who did not meet the criteria for the research (i.e. those who completed the survey but did not identify as an Indigenous female over the age of 18), there was a total of 86 responses. The questions for the survey were developed while considering the intersectionality of Indigenous women's lives and how this may influence their views and experiences. Data was input into SPSS to analyze results and possible correlations. Cross-tabulations were conducted on various topics to see any patterns that emerged in connection with political participation. The questions concerning identity and community connections were suggested as being an influencing factor in political participation.

Survey Results

First, frequencies were conducted on all questions asked in the survey. Many participants (n=68, 79.1%) identified as being in the 18-25 age group. Six (7%) identified as being between 26-30, eight (9.3%) identified as between 31-40, and three (3.5%) as 41+.

Table 1: Age of Participants

Age	Frequency
18-25	68 (79.1%)
26-30	6 (7%)
31-40	8 (9.3%)
41+	3 (3.5%)
Other/Prefer not to say	1 (1.1%)

For the highest level of education, 57 (66.3%) respondents selected University, 19 (22.1%) post-Graduate, 6 (7%) Foundation Program or High School Diploma, and 3 (3.5%) Secondary. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections, the sample group comprises well-educated individuals. Education has been shown throughout the literature to be a predictor of political participation (Peters & Robillard, 2009; Seider et al., 2018). Due to education being a positive influence on political participation, it not surprising that more than half of the participants were either obtaining a degree or had graduating from university.

Table 2: Education Level

Education Level	Frequency
University	57 (66.3%)
Post-Graduate	19 (22.1%)
Foundation Program or High School	6 (7%)
Secondary	3 (3.5%)
Other/Prefer not to say	1 (1.16%)

For Indigenous identity, 30 (34.8%) selected Unsure/Don't Know/Prefer Not to Say, 18 (20.9%) chose First Nations status, 11 (12.8%) chose First Nations (North American Indian) non-status, 8 (9.3%) chose Métis (registered nationally or with an organization) and 8 (9.3%)

chose Métis (non-registered), 10 (11.6%) chose Other, and only 1 (1.2%) chose Inuk (Inuit). This aspect is significant, as the survey results seem to closely mirror the numbers presented in government statistics, with a majority of respondents being First Nations followed by Métis. However, this does not mean that results can be used to generalize Indigenous peoples.

Table 3: Identity

Identity	Frequency
First Nations (with Status)	18 (20.9%)
First Nations (non-Status)	11 (12.8%)
Métis (registered nationally or with an organization)	8 (9.3%)
Métis (non-registered)	8 (9.3%)
Inuk (Inuit)	1 (1.2%)
Other	10 (11.6%)
Unsure/Don't Know/Prefer not to say	30 (34.8%)

Only 8 (9.3%) participants have ever lived in an Indigenous community or reserve. Moreover, 24 (27.9%) of participants have lived close to a reserve, and more than half, 48 participants (55.8%), have not lived on or near a reserve. The survey presented mixed results regarding the types of political participation engaged in by Indigenous women. Approximately 45% of participants were politically involved in the last year. Surprisingly, this number is lower than the yearly participation rate among the general Canadian population, which was over 55% in 2020 (Arriagada, Khanam & Sano, 2022).

Table 4: Location

Location	Frequency
Lived in an Indigenous community or reserve	8 (9.3%)
Lived close to a reserve	24 (27.9%)
Have not lived on or near a reserve	48 (55.8%)

There are several reasons for the differences between the rate of participation among those involved in this research and the statistics gathered by the government of Canada. In particular, the specific statistics presented above do not take into account differences based on gender,

which highlights the disempowering of women. Additionally, Indigenous women are less likely to vote, which is a primary source of political participation among the general public (Narine, 2021). It is reasonable to assume that survey respondents involved in this research only considered traditional forms of political participation, which, as research suggests, Indigenous women are less likely to engage. Finally, the survey did not provide a proper definition of political participation as including acts of resistance, which was discovered as important during the interview process.

Individuals indicated the reasons why they do not participate more in political activities: Deficient knowledge of the political situation and ways to join in was number one (n=40, 46.5%), lack of confidence to change society and the government was number two (n=27, 31.4%), and lack of interest was number three (n=22, 25.6%). These numbers are significant and speak to the challenges and context that Indigenous women face in becoming politically involved. Additionally, the lack of interest could be attributed to the types of politics that participants were thinking of when they answered. Oftentimes, government or mainstream politics do not properly reflect Indigenous women's issues, which can impact interest and involvement (Theocharis & de Moor, 2021).

Table 5: Reasons for not participating.

Reason for not participating	Frequency
Deficient knowledge of the political situation and ways to join	40 (46.5%)
Lack of confidence to change society and the government	27 (31.4%)
Lack of interest	22 (25.6%)

Note: Participants were allowed to choose more than one category

While there were other reasons for not participating, participants selected these three choices most often. With such a high number of individuals stating the reasons for not participating more as being insufficient knowledge of the political situation and ways to join in, this issue needed to be explored more in-depth with interview participants. This was done by focusing on the barriers that individuals face in terms of their political participation as well as their motivation for participating.

Additionally, the factors influencing participation and the topics participants found important were alluded to in the survey. The final research question asked participants to present any topic

not covered in the survey that they found important. These issues were explored further during the interview process. Questions concerning the impact of relationships with other Indigenous people on identity were explored in the interviews based on the connection presented in the survey responses. It was suggested from the survey that relationships with other Indigenous peoples were essential to one's own Indigenous identity. This is why I explored this factor more in-depth by looking at the importance of community connections. Overall, the survey raised several issues and factors that needed further exploration in the interviews. Notably, the interview questions built on some of the reasons indicated why Indigenous women did not participate, such as lack of time, financial means, interest, or support. The results of the interviews expanded on the barriers to participation and went on to look at motivating factors.

Following the analysis of the survey responses, an interview guide was developed to explore issues which were shown to be of significance to participants in the survey. This was done to allow participants to guide the research moving forward and follow a decolonizing methodology. The main issues under consideration for this research are the types of political participation Indigenous women engage in, the role that identity plays in taking up issues of importance, the way community connections can foster political participation and identity, and barriers and motivations which can impact Indigenous women's participation.

Interview Details

A final question asked in the survey was if they wished to be contacted in the future to be involved in an interview about political participation. Interview participants were recruited from the survey and through my social networks. Those who expressed interest in being interviewed were contacted directly by e-mail. In addition, each participant was sent a $25 Amazon gift card as a thank-you for their time. The interviews conducted were casual and conversational in tone (Anderson, 2016). The research topic was described to each participant prior to the interviews, and permission to record the interview was asked before the tape recorder was turned on and after. Interviews were recorded on an old-fashioned dictation machine. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews could not be done in person. Instead, participants were asked if they would like to be interviewed by phone or video platform. All participants selected telephone interviews. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes to an hour.

Each interview tape had the interview date written on it along with the interview number. This was done to protect the identity of each participant. Only the primary researcher (myself) has access to the tapes. However, access could be granted to Dr. Jane Ku, the research supervisor and any committee members upon request. However, no identifying information is included on the tapes. Instead, each tape is numbered and dated only, and participants were asked not to use their real names. Following the interviews, information was transcribed and returned to the participants through e-mail for editing. Each interview was numbered, and aliases were given to participants.

All participants were given two weeks to confirm their interview information and withdraw consent. However, two participants withdrew consent months after their interviews were sent to them. Although the time frame had exceeded for consent to be withdrawn, I chose not to include their interviews. Their interviews were removed from the research. This removal of information was done out of respect for the individuals and the need to ensure that participant information is accurately presented, and their rights are protected. Due to the fact that historically, research involving Indigenous peoples, in some cases, was done without consent, and there was little consideration of the needs of those involved, I feel that it is important that participants remain in control of the information they provide and how it is used.

The first individual who withdrew consent did so approximately a month after receiving a copy of her transcript via e-mail. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties with the recorder, it was reported back by the participant that the information contained in the transcript was incorrect and did not correctly reflect her views. As a result, she withdrew her consent to be included in the research. Therefore, I respectfully informed her that I would not include her interview in the study and deleted her recording and all related material. An adverse event form was then filed with the Research Ethics Board for the University of Windsor describing the incident. The second individual withdrew consent approximately three months after receiving a copy of her transcript via e-mail.

Following this, it was expressed by the individual that she needed more time to edit and verify the information within the interview. It was discussed and decided that her interview would not be included. However, I let her know that in the future if she finds the time to go over the transcript and would still like to be included, she can contact me directly. Moreover, we both

agreed that she would receive a copy of the research once it was published. An adverse event form was filed with the Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor describing the incident.

Fifteen interviews were conducted, and two were removed. A total of thirteen interviews were obtained for this research. Previous research has shown that quality is more important than quantity when it comes to qualitative research, specifically interviews (Weller et al., 2018). A significant amount of literature suggests that the adequate number of participants for a qualitative study can range anywhere from 5-50 (Baker, Edwards & Doidge, 2012; Charmaz, 2006, p. 41; Morse, 2000). Since qualitative research methods are often focused on developing an in-depth understanding of an issue, compared to qualitative studies, the sample size for qualitative research is often smaller (Mason, 2010; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003).

In-depth interviews are not concerned with making generalizations about a larger population of interest (Dworkin, 2012). This research and the interviews conducted followed this line of thinking. While the interviews were used to verify and expand on the information collected in the surveys, the information gathered during the interview process is unique to those involved. Therefore, it cannot be seen as reflective of all Indigenous women's views. The goal of in-depth interviews is to develop categories from data and examine any relationships present between categories through the experiences of participants (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29). Therefore, fewer participants are needed in studies that employ more than one research method (Lee, 1992). As this research employed two different methods of research, quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (in-depth interviews), thirteen interviews are believed to be sufficient to gain important insights into the topic being studied.

Participants

Based on the inconsistencies in who is defined as Indigenous (Wiessner, 2009), this research will refer to those who consider themselves descendants of the original inhabitants of North America as Indigenous. Regardless of status, Indigenous women who agreed to participate were included in the research. This research sought to recruit Indigenous women (both status and non-status) over 18 years old residing in Canada.

No specific criteria were present regarding the level of political participation one engages. The reasoning behind this was that all information is important, those who do not participate politically still have insights into barriers or reasons for not participating, and those who do participate provide information as to why they chose to do so. The inclusion of all Indigenous women was done to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind any and all choices made. Additionally, since individuals perceive 'being political' in various ways, individuals who do not identify as being politically active must not be excluded. While interview participants varied in age and location, a majority of the survey participants were from the Windsor, Ontario, area. Most survey participants were University of Windsor students at one point in time; however, there were only two interview participants who were current students at the University.

Interview Participant Bios

Below is a short biography of the woman who participated in the interview process. The real names of the individuals were not included, and instead, aliases were given. Each participant was given access to their interview transcript for editing before the formation of their biography. Importantly, several participants expressed their indifference to the inclusion of identifiable information being presented. Effort was still made to reduce the specifics of the participants, while still providing information of who they are as individuals. All of them have different backgrounds and experiences. However, every one of them are truly inspiring women who have been active in the advancement of Indigenous rights in one way or another. Although their experiences are unique, they all share one thing in common, their strength and determination to share their stories with others to advance Indigenous knowledge. Therefore, I would be remiss not to include information on everyone involved in the interview process. Although I am using aliases, and have changed some identifying characteristics of the participants, their experiences are real and powerful.

Andrea: Born in Moosonee, Ontario and lived there until she was 14. She had to leave the area due to a lack of educational programs. She currently lives in Windsor, Ontario and attends University. Andrea has numerous friends and family members who live on the reserve in her hometown. She is of mixed heritage. Her father is white, and her mother is Indigenous. She and her mother have been trying to regain their status, which was lost when her grandfather enfranchised the family. She has experienced indirect racism. She follows Indigenous issues in

the news and has participated in numerous protests. A lot of her political participation is done through her coursework and the University.

Brittany: Is a 40-year-old single mother who was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario. Brittany is an active Band member, with status, who has lived on and off the reserve. She currently works for a non-profit organization in Toronto, specifically in the area of Indigenous collaboration. She actively volunteers and has been on several boards. Brittany has a lot of experience working with Indigenous-focused groups and also working with political members/parties. She has used her education to advance and support her community. She has taken on a lot of responsibility and is an active participant in various projects which support Indigenous peoples and communities. Her great-grandmother was a residential school survivor and her grandmother was a victim of murder.

Carly: Under the age of 20, Carly was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She currently lives in Montreal, Quebec where she attends university. She started reconnecting with her Indigenous roots at age 15 or 16, where she learned things from her Kokum. Carly is part Manitoba Métis on her father's side. She has been involved with Indigenous groups in high school and now at university. Her connections to other Indigenous peoples have more recently been made online and through school.

Darlene: Went back to school as a mature student when she was 50 years old. Born in Toronto and raised in Windsor, Ontario, Darlene's father is a residential school survivor. Although her father did not raise her, they reunited when she was around 28-29. Following this, she was reunited with her Indigenous culture. At the age of 30, she obtained her status. Darlene comes from a large family of five siblings and has been married to her wife for 20 years. She works part-time, and her goal has been to work with and for her Indigenous community. Each year she spends time with her family on a reserve in Sault Ste Marie. Darlene has participated in various Indigenous events and has sat on Indigenous Council and Committees. She recognizes the white privilege that she had 'growing-up' Caucasian, and while she does not necessarily look Indigenous, it is an important part of who she is.

Erin: is an 18-year-old Métis woman who lives in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario. She is a first-year University student in the Indigenous Work Program. Although she participates in school groups and events, she has found it difficult to participate as much as she would like due to her location.

Erin has spent a lot of time on reserves and was raised knowing about her Indigenous culture from a young age. She has her citizenship card and uses social media to spread awareness about Indigenous issues.

Florence: Born and raised in Blind River, she has children and Grandchildren as well as many sisters and brothers. When she was over 50 years old, she went to college to work in the area of drugs and alcohol. As a child, she did not know she was Métis (on her father's side) as it was something that her mother did not want people to know. Florence went to a French Catholic school as a child. She has her citizenship card and has worked with and advocated for other Métis peoples for around ten years. She has experienced discrimination from others about her Métis identity, both as a child and as an adult.

Gina: Living in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Gina graduated from University in Environmental and Health Studies. She is Mi'kmaw and Acadian and works in the area of Indigenous engagement. She grew up in Cape Brenton and lived in Toronto, Ontario, for a couple of years. Her grandmother's status was taken during enfranchisement. She has Band Membership and connections to the family reserve. Gina was raised without her Indigenous culture, and it was not until she was 18 years old while living in Toronto that she began to learn more about herself and her Indigenous ancestry. She has been very involved in the promotion of Indigenous languages. A member of her family was involved in politics, and at a young age, Gina campaigned with him. She has experience volunteering with an Indigenous organization where she visited different Indigenous communities.

Hailey: Born in Penetanguishene, Ontario, she is a member of the Métis Nation of Ontario. Hailey has lived in Toronto, Ontario, for most of her life and did her undergraduate studies in Criminology. She works full-time and is currently doing her Master's in Indigenous Education. It was not until the last five years or so that she fully immersed herself in her Indigenous ancestry. Hailey works in the film industry, leading an Indigenous initiative. She takes up issues primarily through her work, as her activism right now is very much focused on unravelling, exhibiting, and educating people about colonialism and its very purposeful process of extinction and assimilation.

Irene: A 21-year-old Métis woman in her last year of school, earning a degree in Political Science. She was born and currently lives in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Irene does a lot of

volunteering with Indigenous issues and has recently taken on a more administrative role. She has been a member of the Métis Nation of Ontario for a long time and has learned a lot about her ancestry and giving back to her community from her father. Her family started looking into their history when she was around six years old.

Jackie: Born and raised in Penetang, Ontario, she currently lives in Barrie, Ontario. Jackie is a 33-year-old stay-at-home mom involved with the Métis Nation of Ontario since 2010. She has obtained diplomas in several areas. From a young age, she knew that she was Indigenous but did not know very much about her culture until she was 19 years old. This was when she began learning about her culture and heritage. She has participated in various workshops and events.

Katlyn: A 30-year-old Métis woman, born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, in her final year of university, studying Criminology. Katlyn works part-time and has minimal connections to the Indigenous community. Her father is Indigenous, and they do not have status. She has only recently begun to learn more about her heritage. She volunteered and participated politically a lot when she was younger. More recently, her participation has been limited to online engagement.

Nicole: In her mid-20s, Nicole identifies as Inuk. She was born and raised in the Northwest Territories right outside of Iqaluit. She currently lives and works in Quebec. Nicole was very involved in Indigenous programs and organizations. She grew up with an in-depth understanding of her Indigenous heritage and culture and has very strong ties to her family and friends where she was raised. She has volunteered and has been involved in Indigenous (both national and international) matters since she was younger. Nicole contributes her love of activism to her mother, who raised her to be involved as much as possible.

Lisa: is a Métis woman, with citizenship, in her early 30s who is currently living in Windsor, Ontario, where she works part-time. She previously attended university, studying Women's Studies and Social Science. Lisa learned about her heritage from her grandparents and has been active within the broader Indigenous community for several years. She has participated in demonstrations and student groups, and when she was younger was an active volunteer. Her activism has been primarily focused on areas concerning the environment. Lisa spends a lot of time online, sharing information about Indigenous issues on social media.

Participant Summary

As demonstrated above, there are many differences between the participants. However, some similarities can be noted in terms of methods of political participation, with most individuals having engaged in some form of volunteering. All interview participants live in Canada, with a majority residing in Ontario. Three participants identified as First Nations, One Inuit, and Nine Métis. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 65 years old, and all had either obtained a degree or were in the process of obtaining a degree.

As shown throughout the literature, educational attainment is a significant predictor of political participation (Branton 2007; Campbell, 2013; Leighley 1990). As such, it is important to note that since all of the participants of this research are well-educated, their political participation is assumed to be greater than those who are less educated. Each of the interview participants represents (in various degrees) those who are categorized as being 'politically active'. Therefore, the information that they provide is more likely to explain/relate to politically active Indigenous women. Overall, each participant brings their own experiences and knowledge, which provides a unique and powerful contribution to the advancement of Indigenous women's rights.

Interview Codes

Of particular significance for this research is the information presented on connection to the community, identity, motivation and barriers for participation, types of political participation, issues of importance and the impact of COVID-19. Since this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ways in which Indigenous women participate politically has altered dramatically. I believe this is a significant element of this research. By looking at how Indigenous women become involved in issues they find important during such unstable times, this research breaks new ground by focusing on how Indigenous women are asserting themselves during a global crisis. Importantly, the Covid pandemic can be seen as an intervening variable and will be discussed further in the findings section.

Each interview was transcribed and coded using the cross-platform application Dedoose. It took approximately 6 months to analyze all interview information. In terms of coding, themes were grouped into general categories and then explored further and broken down into more

specific themes. There were over 20 codes used, which was later reduced to 10 codes and included subcodes (see Appendix F). Below is a list of several topics that were most often used when coding the interviews. A full list of codes is included in Appendix F.

Connection to the Community: Discussion around one's connection or lack of connection to the Indigenous community and the impact that it has on their own sense of self and their participation.

Political Participation: participants discussion of activities they are engaged in or have been engaged in that is political in nature.

Sub Code 1 Types of Political Involvement: the types of political involvement that an individual engages in, such as; Online, Protests, Joining Indigenous government/groups/committees, Campus Groups, Sharing Information, and Other.

Sub Code 2 Motivation for Political Involvement: reasons given for participating in political issues.

Issues of Importance: Issues that the participant feels are important in terms of Indigenous women and or Indigenous peoples in general. A particular issue that emerged in almost all interviews was MMIWG and violence against Indigenous women.

Impact of COVID-19: The various ways that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted participation among individuals.

Identity: personality, qualities, beliefs, physical appearance that makes a person or group (Waterman, 1999). There were a number of subcodes used in relation to identity including physical appearance and feelings of belonging, promoting identity, and hiding identity.

Support Systems: Various systems of support which assist in an individual's participation, feelings of belonging and help support their identity. For example, friends, family, community, school, work, etc.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The findings of this research are divided into three separate themes: (1) Community; (2) Identity; and (3) Motivation for Political Participation. Each topic offers significant findings and is guided by the information provided by the Indigenous women involved in this research. The voices and experiences of Indigenous women show how connections to the Indigenous community and identity influence the motivation for political participation. It is demonstrated that through everyday acts of resistance, Indigenous women contribute to broader collective goals of Indigenous resurgence. Moreover, it is shown that identifying with Indigenous collectivity and other Indigenous women motivates them to participate politically to dismantle colonialism and bring about change for future generations.

Interview Themes

When reading over the transcripts from interview participants various topics were covered in connection with what influences political participation. Many of the topics could be grouped into three common themes which included community connections, identity, and political participation. These themes were not only established based on the information provided by participants but also rooted in the literature which focused on the experiences of Indigenous women (Applebaum, 2016; Kermoal & Altamirano-Jimenez, 2016; Maracle, 2021; Richardson, 2006; Simpson, 2017).

Theme One: Community Connections discusses the importance of Indigenous women's connections to the Indigenous community and their influence on their identity and political participation. Indigenous women highlight the circumstantial nature of community, which is based on connections to individuals rather than specific locations. However, this does not mean that ties to the land are not important. Material is presented on the impact of environmental harms and the significance of the land, demonstrating the need for more land-based resources and protection of Indigenous land-based communities.

Theme Two: Identity presents information suggesting Indigenous identification is an important factor influencing how Indigenous women participate politically. While identification can promote participation among Indigenous women, it can also cause barriers. Overall, it was

shown that while Indigenous women experience discrimination and racism, they continue to be significant figures in fighting for social change. Their political consciousness and experiences motivate them to participate politically.

Theme Three: Motivation for Political Participation discusses the types of participation Indigenous women engage in, issues they find important, barriers they face and their motivations for involvement. While political participation was initially examined, through conversation and analysis, it was discovered that resistance is the best term to describe Indigenous women's political participation. It was indicated that Indigenous women's political participation is often carried out through everyday acts of resistance. These acts, in turn, are often reflective and in consideration of a broader goal of advancing rights and Indigenous resurgence. What is resistance for an Indigenous woman differs from other groups of women. As such, some acts go undetected by wider society due to a lack of understanding of the differences in social, political, and economic circumstances of Indigenous women.

THEME 1: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Similar to identity, community connection is not easy to define. While some standard definitions exist, the meaning of community varies between individuals and groups. For this research, community connections are defined by the participants. This section presents information suggesting that Indigenous women see community connections as dependent on attachments to other Indigenous individuals rather than a specific location. This view of community is different from what is understood as a community by other groups of individuals. When discussing community, Indigenous women often bring forth the importance of the environment. This is not surprising as Indigenous women have strong connections to the land. Community connections support Indigenous women's identity and provide opportunities for political engagement. However, those who lack such connections emphasize the importance of identity in their political participation.

Connections to one's community are intrinsically linked to a sense of belonging and, in turn, how they identify. Moreover, community connections and identity relate to how an individual participates politically. This assertion is proven within the literature and based on my own experience (Maracle, 2021; Peters, 1998; Taylor & de La Sablonnière, 2014). As such, this section looks at the importance of community connections among Indigenous women, the differences between those living in rural and urban locations, the role a connection to the land plays, the environment, and how Indigenous women define connections to the community. These topics will be explored and discussed in connection with Indigenous resurgence.

As Maracle (2021) and other scholars suggest, an integral aspect of being Indigenous is one's connection to the community. While I cannot speak for others who lack a connection to the Indigenous community, however for myself, this absence has led to instances of self-doubt and confusion. The topic of community connections is something which I have little experience with. Furthermore, there is a lack of material in the literature that substantially contributes to understanding Indigenous women's participation. This has made the topic of community connections something challenging to analyze. However, community is an integral part of Indigenous resurgence, as it provides a starting point for understanding how community helps form and sustain a positive identity and in advancing Indigenous rights.

It is important to note that only two participants indicated that they lived on a reserve at one time or another, and three had connections to others who lived on reserves. This is significant, as how participants discuss a connection to the community may vary based on whether or not they lived on a reserve. As such, I cannot make assertions about the differences between those who live(d) on a reserve and those who do not. There are several other factors influence one's connection to the community among the participants: of particular importance is the geographical location (urban or rural) and their Indigenous identity (Métis, Inuk, First Nations). These differences will be discussed and examined in terms of their importance on community connections and other variations.

Community connection and its importance are not limited to reserves (Gabrielli, Roviš & Cefai, 2022). Individuals lacking ties to a specific community can build connections outside reserves. Research has shown a misconception about urban Indigenous communities throughout Canada (Maracle, 2021, p. 20). Compared to reserve communities, people often see urban communities as lacking authenticity (Peters, 1998). However, across Canada, Indigenous peoples are becoming increasingly more urban (Barsh, 1994; Norris, Clatworthy & Peters, 2013). The increasing level of Indigenous peoples living in urban locations is documented as taking place throughout Canada, and Indigenous women involved in this research are no exception. Over 60% of survey participants indicated that they live in what they describe as an urban location, and more than half of interview participants indicated the same.

There is a common need to associate Indigenous communities with reserves and a belief that reserve communities are the only appropriate kind of Indigenous community (Maracle, 2021, p. 20). However, since the early 1950s, throughout Canada, the Indigenous population has become increasingly urban-based (Senese & Wilson, 2013). There is often a view that urban Indigenous peoples have abandoned their communities (Barsh, 1994). However, regardless of whether they are reserve or urban, communities provide a basis of support for Indigenous peoples (Norris, Clatworthy & Peters, 2013). While there are fundamental differences between them, urban communities are still Indigenous communities (Maracle, 2021, p. 21). In Canada, all land is Indigenous land, as all major cities are developed on traditional Indigenous territories (Senese & Wilson, 2013).

One cannot discuss Indigenous women's connection to the community without looking at the importance of land. The land has been shown to be inseparable from community and is inherently tied to Indigenous knowledge (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jimenez, 2016, p. 109). Therefore, when environmental harms occur, they significantly impact the land and negatively impact Indigenous women's connections to their community, ancestors, and sense of self. Connecting Indigenous politics to the land is important as the relationship with the land is central to Indigenous peoples' spirituality, cultural identity, and way of being. The land is not only a physical space, but it is also social, historical, and cultural. For many Indigenous peoples, the connection to land is rooted in a deep sense of reciprocity and responsibility. Tying Indigenous politics to the land means that the rights and struggles of Indigenous peoples are often connected to their sovereignty and resources over such lands (Norris, Clatworthy & Peters, 2013). Through colonization, Indigenous peoples have been dispossessed of their lands, and as a result, their fight for justice and self-determination includes protecting and reclaiming their territories (Simpson, 2017).

Recognition of Indigenous sovereignty over resources and land is essential to their cultural and economic well-being (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016, p. 131). However, for urban Indigenous people who lack direct connections to traditional lands or reserves, recognition of land is difficult. Urban Indigenous people may not have the same opportunities or access to resources to engage politically as those have living in rural areas or reserves. Barriers are also present in reconnecting with traditions and cultures, as they are often connected to the land. As such, Indigenous people living in urban locations can face unique challenges in advocating for their rights and engaging in Indigenous politics. While rural Indigenous women have greater and easier access to nature, urban Indigenous women took the time to seek out and participate in activities that made them feel closer to nature, such as hiking, canoeing, and other outdoor activities.

The Land and Environmental Harms

A significant amount of Indigenous women's activism and political work is rooted in caring for the environment. It is through connections with the land that Indigenous identity emerges and connections to the community are strengthened. Indigenous peoples have a fundamental connection to land, which is both profound and spiritual, a connection that is not appreciated in

the same way by white Westerners (Wallace, 2020). Connections to the community for Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women, have a strong link to the land and the environment (Kenny, McGrath & Phillips, 2017). Many Indigenous women are on the front lines defending Indigenous territories and lands, advocating for the rights of Indigenous peoples (Stout & Kipling, 1998, p. 19). A deep-rooted connection to the land and water is globally shared by Indigenous women and is held by inter-generational knowledge and wisdom (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016, p. 40).

Approximately five participants involved in this research at one point in time lived in rural locations. These individuals and their connections to the community were discussed differently than those in urban locations. Particularly, those in urban locations expressed ties to Indigenous individuals as being tantamount to community connections. Indigenous women in urban locations, despite being alienated from the land, continue to place significance in protecting the environment. This connection to the land was expressed both in the interviews and the surveys conducted. Many Indigenous women involved in this research did not have specific ties to any Indigenous reserves yet concern for the environment and the land was expressed.

It is not about one's place but the company they keep. The differences based on location also speak to one's sense of belonging, authenticity, and confidence, which will be explored further below. Notably, variations were present in describing their connection to the land. Those who lived in rural locations or had connections to a reserve discussed the importance of being one with the land and its impact on their own mental health and well-being. For example, Darlene described the trips she took with her wife and kids to visit family members every year on the reserve: *"I have participated in ceremonies and many, many sweat lodges, and kept that connection alive…I feel very tied to the land…so I travel up there just to be there. It is so beautiful."* Darlene, like many other Indigenous women, discussed her relationship with her community and, in turn, her connection to the land.

Since most of those involved in the research lived in urban locations rather than rural ones, they are more likely to have less environmental exposure unless they specifically seek it out. However, those who have connections to reserves but live in urban locations can connect with the land and their culture by engaging in activities and events held by Indigenous communities. In Darlene's case, her connection to the reserve and spending time with her family allows her to

be closer to nature. As such, she discussed at length her personal connection to the land and the time she spent engaging in activities that allowed her to enjoy the environment.

While those living in urban settings did not specifically mention personal connections to the land, several interview participants mentioned environmental issues. This is significant since urban Indigenous people find land-based connections difficult to obtain. As such, urban Indigenous women have different ways of constructing their connections to the land. In particular, although they have more limited access to nature, they continue to hold onto the importance of the environment and land to their Indigenous identity through their placement within an urban colonized space. For urban Indigenous women involved in this research, a primary way that they connect with the land is through activism and advocacy. A sense of belonging, of being, and recognizing oneself as Indigenous is rooted in a connection to place/land. Respondents indicated the feeling of being close to their Indigeneity when they are engaging in land-based activities.

Many participants discussed their active role in social justice and environmental movements, advocating for the protection of water, land, and other natural resources. For some of the Indigenous women involved in this research, a sense of Indigeneity is constructed through environmental activism. Through their involvement, Indigenous women can express their connection to the land and the need to preserve the environment for future generations. Nicole discussed how she involves herself in important issues: *"There are so many things that impact Indigenous people. I have rallied for and involved myself in environmental problems that have been occurring and continue to occur at the hands of the government…I feel that so many people ignore what is happening, or just don't fully understand what is happening. It worries me to tell you the truth."*

The fact that people ignore environmental harm and the impact it has on Indigenous peoples is something which needs to be addressed. Nicole's concern is echoed by other participants involved in this research. Everyone wants their children to live in a world free from environmental harm. However, it is Indigenous peoples who experience first-hand the impact of environmental destruction. Primarily, it is those impacted by such issues that are fighting to protect the environment. Indigenous communities often experience the most harm from the lack of access to clean air and water.

Participants discussed issues concerning access to clean water. For Erin, the following issues concerning the environment are important: *"there are a lot of people going to walk the water and they are women going to walk the water…so, I find that really important… that not many people are seeing, people taking time out of their day to step out and walk for the water."* Erin noted the participation of Indigenous women in trying to bring attention to water-related issues. Indigenous women, being natural protectors and life carriers, have a strong spiritual and physical connection to water (Cave & McKay, 2016).

The sacred connection Indigenous women hold presents them with the responsibility to nurture and protect water (McGregor, 2015). Unfortunately, it is women and children who often experience a lack of clean water. Water and access to it have impacted Indigenous communities throughout Canada for centuries (Notzke, 1994). The water crisis resonates with the water emergency in Attawapiskat, Neskantaga First Nation, and other Indigenous communities that have been dealing with contaminated water for years. This collective narrative allows Indigenous women to see themselves in a larger cultural narrative. More progress must be made in addressing the water crisis among Indigenous communities. The actual rate of access to clean water in Indigenous communities throughout Canada is not well-known among the general public.

When asked about issues that concern her, like other participants, Irene brought up the importance of the environment and the destruction occurring throughout Indigenous communities. Elaborating on this, Irene was asked about how she feels environmental issues are being addressed: *"when you see, with water for example, the accessibility of water…there is a reserve with me, and [they] have been literally poisoned by companies…and the government knows about this…mercury poisoning, and it is…why aren't these people moving off the reserves if their getting poisoned? Why aren't these people getting a water treatment centre? Why aren't they using their money to do that and to get educated? And it's like…well you know, this isn't really their issue. This isn't their fault."* The fact that responsibility is placed on individuals to 'learn' how to access clean water and not place themselves in positions of vulnerability is a common response to Indigenous rights violations. The water crisis also highlights the extreme neglect and marginalization experienced by Indigenous communities.

Indigenous women are constructing Indigeneity and finding significance in issues of land dispossession and destruction of resources such as water. The statement made by Irene demonstrates her commitment and emotional disdain for how Indigenous communities become subjected to environmental destruction. If it impacts one community, it impacts all Indigenous communities; what is to stop these abuses from occurring in other locations? While it is not her community specifically that is being targeted, she still views this as a direct attack on who she is as an Indigenous woman. Her connection to the land extends beyond her community connection; it is an assault on all Indigenous communities. While one needs to be immersed in a community to address the specific afflictions that are taking place, land issues and environmental harms transcend these views.

Indigenous communities are often denied the same rights as other communities, including proper health care, education, proper living conditions, and access to clean water. Even communities that are miles apart have vast differences. As noted by Gina: *"Water has always been one that sticks out for me. There is a town near an Indigenous community in Cape Breton, called Potlotek and the town is St Peter's. And they are seven minutes apart and Potlotek does not have clean water, whereas St. Peter's has the cleanest water in Nova Scotia. So, thinking about the polarity and human rights has always been something that has struck me. I think water is a big one…"* This statement made by Gina relates back to what was being alluded to by Irene. Just because access to clean water is not directly impacting her or her community, it poses a threat to Indigenous peoples. It shows the line drawn by the government between Indigenous peoples/communities and the rest of Canadians. Since the Canadian government and settlers have done little to protect Indigenous rights and resources, the need to protect all Indigenous peoples, cultures, and communities is instilled within Indigenous women.

For Gina, access to clean water is crucial. However, her comment also demonstrates an understanding of community and the allocation of resources. Water becomes an issue of resource allocation and colonial administration. Indigenous people's ways of life are under continual assault, living in a colonial system lacking proper infrastructure. As a result, some are denied their right to live off the land due to depleting resources. The lack of access results from social polarization, significantly impacting Indigenous communities. However, current literature focuses on this term in reference to Indigenous communities outside of Canada (Quijano, 2005).

The polarization of Indigenous communities is commonplace in Canada and impacts access to resources and has become a significant source of conflict (Stewart, McCarty & Bryson, 2020). *Social polarization* is a term which describes the increasing gap present between subgroups in connection with their social opportunities and circumstances (Chakravarty & Chakravarty, 2015). This polarization is correlated with social segregation resulting in economic displacement, income inequality, and other negative issues (Koch et al., 2020).

Many of the women involved in this research find meaning in their politics through environmental activism. This activism provides a basis for further connections with the land and other Indigenous peoples. By involving themselves with land rights, which disproportionately impact Indigenous peoples, participants can strengthen connections with their heritage, further supporting their culture. These connections to the land also extend beyond the individual, to include support of other Indigenous peoples and communities. For example, after discussing her activism, one participant presented the importance of her position as a role model in her community. Brittany: *"I have a lot of caregiving and community responsibilities. And I also take my role as Auntie very serious, not only to my biological niece, but also to my community nieces and nephews. I volunteer for Indigenous youth efforts…I champion their work…"* Community responsibilities can take on many forms. The idea of being a role model for her community extends beyond the self. For Brittany, her community responsibilities are an extension of her environment which includes support and education and is an important aspect of what motivates her to participate politically.

Discussing the land and environmental harms is an important part of decolonizing methodologies by understanding the experiences of Indigenous women. Moreover, it shapes our comprehension of the political subject, community, and politics in various ways. Indigenous peoples and communities have a deep connection to the land, and by discussing environmental harms, we acknowledge the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples and lands. Recognizing how land dispossession, resource extraction, and environmental exploitation are part of colonial strategies highlights power dynamics. By decolonizing methodologies, these power imbalances are brought forward, which assists in shifting the narrative toward equity and justice. Identifying the connection between the environment, land, and politics demonstrates the significance of Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty.

Indigenous women are often at increased risk of being subjected to the negative impacts of displacement and environmental degradation caused by colonization. Discussing environmental harms assists in recognizing and conceptualizing the intersectional experiences of Indigenous women, who face gender-based discrimination and violence as well as environmental injustices. Acknowledging environmental harms and the specific impacts it has on Indigenous women, their roles, agency, and resistance in preserving their culture, land and communities are highlighted.

Meaning of Community, Connections and Participation

All participants were asked about their connections to the Indigenous community in terms of their current and previous locations of residence. This was done to get them thinking about past and current experiences of their surrounding communities. Another element of community connections is one's residence, where they live, and how proximate they are to reservations and other Indigenous peoples. Community is something that cannot be defined or generalized; rather, it can only be described and experienced (Bruhn, 2011, p. 18). Community has been described as an affective experience, a sense of belonging and a feeling of being part of a larger group. Even though participants did not define what they believe community connections are, numerous individuals suggested that knowing and being around other Indigenous peoples is a significant aspect of community connections. Community connections are strikingly similar to the idea of a network, however, there are slight differences between them. Particularly, while a network is seen as a connection to others, for Indigenous women in this research, community connections are described as a connection to other individuals who share a similar cultural, historical, or ancestral link.

Those with no specific connections to a reserve and who lived in urban locations described community connections in a way that emphasized ties they had to other Indigenous peoples rather than a specific location. Maggie: *"I believe that a connection to the Indigenous community assists and drives people to become more involved…. you build a network of people, you are introduced and invited to events…there are people who become involved without being connected to the Indigenous community and who are not Indigenous, to show their support and they are also important and provide allyship. But in the end, if I did not have that connection… I feel that I would not know where to start…."* Being invited and participating in Indigenous community events is a sign of how one is embedded in the community, the degree and type of

connection. For Maggie, her connection to other Indigenous peoples gives her a sense of community that allows her to become involved. Maggie went on to state: *"Having other Indigenous people around me provided me with encouragement. I also learned about events and was invited to join causes I would have never known about."*

Participants were also specifically asked about the impact that a connection to the Indigenous community has on their sense of identity. While a connection to the Indigenous community was considered essential to being involved politically, surprisingly, it was not expressed as vital to one's identity. Connection to the community is not important for identity, but identity is essential for building connections. Irene noted: *"I don't know, I think it's kind of important…I feel like as a person identifying as an Indigenous person…you know that you are Indigenous and I feel like after residential schools, 60s Scoop and all of that, it's hard for a lot of people to have ties to a specific area or specific community…they don't know what their history is, they just know they are Indigenous. I mean, I think that being Indigenous is just one giant community that no matter where you are from, or you could be Australian Indigenous … you are still an Indigenous person."*

This comment by Irene is about the loss of community and community connections. A sense of Indigeneity is adrift without an anchor, a sense of history, social networks, or ties. Resilience comes from holding onto a sense that one is Indigenous so one can rebuild connections. Therefore, this continuity with the larger Indigenous community allows different degrees of attachment. This attachment, in turn, can foster a sense of thinking that is larger than oneself, which is integral to political organizing.

With Indigenous communities being so diverse and individuals living in various locations throughout Canada, Indigenous peoples may not have specific ties to communities like in the past. Rather, one could argue that as long as an individual identifies themselves as Indigenous, a connection to the Indigenous community is not as important. The awareness and knowledge of a larger Indigenous community, or even a cursory knowledge of history and identity, attaches the individual to Indigeneity and community. Moreover, it is the path that brings these women into embracing Indigenous identity and activism. Regardless of location, all participants believe that connections to the Indigenous community are an important aspect of their identity and are

instrumental in providing support and avenues for political participation. Whether reserve or urban, Indigenous identity is strengthened through community engagement (Maracle, 2021).

Community connections do not have to be in-person to impact an individual. Meaning that a community can be one in an imagined broader concept like the nation-state, where it is shaped by experiences of colonialism. Irene shows colonialism's impact on Indigenous people's community connections, specifically Indigenous women and their separation from culture, family, and community. However, even though Indigenous peoples were targeted for assimilation and eradication at the hands of European settlers, Indigenous identity has remained embedded in the minds and hearts of Indigenous peoples and their ancestors. There needs to be narratives of the Indigenous community that circulate and allow detached Indigenous actors to find a way to embrace an Indigenous identity and community political engagement, which will help advance their own and collective status.

Research suggests that the social and institutional characteristics of one's community affect how one behaves politically (Bruhn, 2011, p. 151; Rubenson, 2006). As will be demonstrated in Theme Three: Motivation for Political Participation, a connection to the Indigenous community drives political participation among Indigenous women. Community connections provide individuals with the knowledge and support needed to engage politically. A sense of community is the best way to define how Indigenous women involved in this research see and describe community connections. A sense of community has been described as a feeling of belonging that members have, that they matter to each other and to the group, and a shared view that the needs of members will be met (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Support is an important aspect of a community.

As highlighted by Brittany, support for the community is political: *"by Indigenous, for Indigenous…supporting Indigenous business that was really about my own political belief to put community first, to keep the economy strong and the community and to support our teachers and our learners."* Brittany speaks to the importance of supporting the Indigenous community. It is also about centring the focus on Indigeneity as a way of being, which includes supporting Indigenous enterprises to support Indigenous peoples and communities. Moreover, it presents validation for the ideas of Indigenous resurgence. Brittany continued, stating, *"I think your community connections definitely and community politics, definitely instill politics in you."* The

comment made by Brittany is reiterated by Nicole: *"I believe that even just participating in your culture, being active in your community…it is political."*

Community connections allow individuals to build relationships with other Indigenous peoples who may share similar interests. These connections, in turn, provide more opportunities for political involvement. Moreover, it provides individuals with the motivation to become involved. Andrea: *"I feel that without that Indigenous connection that I grew up with that I could honestly say that I would be a lot less involved maybe not even at all."* Importantly, Andrea went on to discuss her appreciation for the community connections she has, and the opportunities made available through such connections. Andrea discussed using her community connections as motivation for involvement in Indigenous issues.

Other individuals who had connections to the Indigenous community discussed how this connection is something that has been a positive influence on their participation. These connections extend beyond the individual to include having Indigenous friends, being aware of one's Indigenous roots and heritage, an appreciation for and identifying oneself assertively as Indigenous, and having family tied to the Indigenous community. It is these connections that are important to Indigenous women and their involvement. Lisa: *"I feel that it is vital…it would be hard to be involved in Indigenous issues if you have a lack of involvement within the community…."* For Lisa, her activism suggests her awareness of the larger Indigenous community. This consciousness and awareness demonstrate a broader conceptualization of politics that goes beyond individualistic notions. Several individuals found a connection to the Indigenous community to be an essential motivating factor in their political participation. This is not to say that Indigenous women who do not have a connection to the community are not involved politically; rather, they often find alternative avenues for participation.

Participants who did not have a strong connection expressed the desire to have one and viewed the lack of connection as a barrier to their political participation and their sense of belonging. A lack of connection was discussed by participants as an inability to trace one's history, a lack of knowledge or awareness of Indigenous histories, and a lack of Indigenous friends and understanding of how to become involved. For example, as stated by Carly: *"I think that because I never knew a lot about my Indigenous background…I still don't even that much…and that definitely impacted my political participation…I am shy…because I don't really*

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know a lot. And…I feel removed." As highlighted by Carly, her lack of knowledge about her heritage has been a barrier physically and emotionally.

Like Carly, looking back on things that impacted her participation, Katlyn stated: *"I think I would have taken the time to build the connections to my heritage and others in the Indigenous community. Today…that is what I am missing. That connection to others. If I had more information and had those connections to others…it would offer me a network of people who are like me. I would be more confident to participate."* The political work of Carly and Katlyn entails a desire and an attempt to build the community connection that was broken, to bring themselves closer to the Indigenous community and their Indigeneity. Katlyn's comment demonstrates consciousness beyond the self, particularly towards the community and the need to be part of an Indigenous community. Without a connection to the Indigenous community, there is a significant barrier regarding access to resources and opportunities for political involvement. For myself, not having that connection limited my understanding and appreciation for Indigenous culture and without any support, I was reluctant to be involved. However, motivation comes from the missing ties and the need to build those networks.

As shown in the discussions above, community connection is important; however, a lack of such connection does not necessarily mean that an individual will not participate; instead, it can limit the frequency of participation. Yet for some, a lack of connection also seems to be a reason as to why they wish to develop more ties to the community. This stage occurs after the initial movement into acknowledging an Indigenous sense of self. Although previous research discusses individual-level characteristics that influence political participation, these characteristics do not explain the variations that exist across communities (Rubenson, 2006; Taylor & de La Sablonnière, 2014). While connections to the community are essential in Indigenous women's lives, the meaning of community and the connections possessed by individuals vary between groups.

Even if the narratives are not always positive, the knowledge of Indigenous peoples has survived historically over time and continues to exist. This knowledge keeps the door open for Indigenous peoples to imagine a political alternative and become politically engaged. As noted by Nicole: *"Indigenous identity is something that exists…that continues to exist despite the efforts of those who sought to eradicate us from history. Our cultures were attacked…children*

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removed from their families; women forced to leave their communities. Yet, we are still here. Connections strengthen our identities and provide us with support, but these connections change…who we are cannot change." One of the many consequences of colonialism is the separation of Indigenous peoples from specific places.

While Indigenous peoples have ties to the land, their connection to a specific area has been impacted. Regarding her conceptions of political participation, it seems that identity is primary. Her view of identity is significant, as it means that being Indigenous is not restricted to a specific area of land. All issues are Indigenous, and we involve ourselves in activism that may not impact us directly but is an assault on Indigenous peoples as a whole. This can be seen in the Idle No More movement.

Although the results of this research suggest that community connections are not essential for political participation, the importance of community in the lives of Indigenous peoples should not be overlooked. As such, it is not that Indigenous women do not need community, but rather, they create community out of very little and different relationships can mitigate the lack of community connections. Community is a positive influence on the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples and is a supportive structure in identity formation. There have been several definitions of community presented in academic literature, each having strengths and weaknesses and encompassing a wide range of components (Bruhn, 2011; Kenny, McGrath & Phillips, 2017; Rubenson, 2006; Wallace, 2020). Moreover, the global pandemic has undoubtedly shifted and expanded notions of community. For Indigenous peoples involved in this research, community can take on different forms and meanings. Similar to Ermine, Sinclair, and Jeffery (2004), participants defined community relationships in Indigenous societies that extend to include spiritual, ecological, and human origin (p. 5-6).

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, for Indigenous women, community connections are significant sources of resilience, assisting in the development of cultural identity (Dudgeon et al., 2022, p. 5). Community connections are complex, yet they offer motivation and resiliency and are tied to identity. Community connections provide motivation, resources, and support for individuals to engage politically. This feeling of support and connection is a driving force in Indigenous resurgence. Participants highlighted community as a source of strength for their identity, and their identity is a driving force for their participation. While community

connections strengthen Indigenous identity, identity can exist outside such connections. Each can exist separately, but together, as demonstrated by respondents, the likelihood of participation increases. In the following section, identity will be examined in greater detail to understand its importance for political participation.

THEME 2: IDENTITY

When I began this research, I was overwhelmed and unsure where to start. After continually changing my topic and focus, I decided to look within myself to find out what I wanted to accomplish. Issues of identity are the driving force behind this research. Identity has been something that I have always struggled to understand. It took me years to accept my sexuality. It was an excruciating process that I thought I would never be able to come to terms with, let alone be proud of. The older I get, the more I realize that instead of hiding things about myself for fear of rejection, I should embrace everything that makes me unique. My father spent his life avoiding and denying his identity, and now all the chances he had to learn more about his heritage first-hand are gone. When I look back on my life, I would rather regret things I did than things I did not do. That is why I believe we cannot look at the social without addressing the personal.

This research does not attempt to present the findings of participants as information that can be applied equally to all Indigenous women. Instead, participants' experiences will be employed to add to the literature and give a voice to those involved. This inclusion will further assist in understanding identity and its impact on Indigenous women's political participation. Identity was discussed at length with interview participants and included such topics as the impact it has on participation, the impact gender has on identity, and incidents of discrimination and violence one may have experienced based on Indigenous identity. Identity is something that is given rather than something that is constructed, not fixed, but created out of essentializing labelling. The obtainment of Status and Citizenship was also discussed in reference to the affirmation of Indigenous identity and its impact on political participation. Finally, this section argues that while Indigenous women face numerous challenges regarding their identity, they continue to fight for recognition.

An important issue discussed regarding identity was that numerous participants were told or encouraged to hide their Indigenous identity at a young age. Participants discussed instances where they were pressured to hide their heritage and perform a different identity in public. Although pressure was placed on these women to erase their Indigeneity, they could counter this through engagement with other Indigenous peoples. For example, when discussing a sense of belonging and identity, Florence stated: *"not being able to say it when you were younger or*

know that you were. I wish my mom would have allowed my dad to speak about it, I would have learned more because my dad's grandmother was…they lived on the reserves." Individuals faced social stigma and challenges when discussing or claiming an Indigenous identity. This comment from Florence highlights the difficulties and circuitous routes it takes for Indigenous women to accept their Indigeneity and publicly claim their identity.

Some individuals were not only denied an opportunity to learn about their heritage and culture but were also actively told by family members to ignore their Indigenous identity. As described by Gina: *"Growing up, my siblings and I were raised without the culture. It was something the whole family knew about, but they would say "never mind, don't ask any questions, pretend it's not there."* Although Gina did not grow up with information about her heritage or culture, she tried to learn more later in life. This quest for knowledge is echoed in other respondents discussing the need to build connections they lacked earlier in life. Similar to Florence, Gina's statement also spells out how much work has been put into preventing Indigenous women from gaining knowledge about their Indigenous history. As a result of this prevention, more work was needed by these women to embrace their Indigeneity.

In the past, claiming an Indigenous identity was avoided. If someone could pass as white, they would hide their heritage to avoid stigmatization (Richardson, 2006). Hailey: *"For example, my cousin…she would say…well my dad would say he is French Canadian, and I would say back to her, well yeah, because he was told that. I said he didn't hide this, it started being hidden a generation before him or two because if you could pass, you would…just to you know, as I said, to put food in your belly and to keep a roof over your head."* This denial of heritage is something that has impacted a lot of Indigenous peoples at one point or another in their lives. Similar to previous research conducted by Richardson (2006), Métis participants discussed "white privilege" and the benefits they received due to their skin colour. Whiteness, which leads to ambiguous Indigenous identity, also facilitates and motivates women to reconstruct and assert their Indigeneity, increasing their political engagement.

As mentioned by Darlene, once she discovered her Indigenous roots, she wanted to learn as much as she could and decided to go back to school. Darlene: *"During this time…my last assignment for employment was at a Friendship Centre. That was pretty much my goal…to work for my Indigenous community…whether it be Anishinaabe in Sue Ste. Marie or locally."* Darlene

went on to note that while she found out later in life about her heritage, she fully embraced her culture: *"I believe that my spirituality is my strength…it gives me strength in everything, so my spirituality is nature…so I believe that it revitalizes my spirit, my soul…when I practice my traditional medicines."*

Whiteness

Whiteness is multifaceted and complex and has been defined in various ways (Downey, 2017). However, it is commonly discussed as embedded in psychic, sociocultural, and socioeconomic interrelations (Applebaum, 2016; Frankenberg, 1997, p. 1). Many scholars have taken up Whiteness as a term for a location of structural advantage and cultural practices (Rodriguez, 2000). McIntosh's (1990) work critically examines white privilege, often taken for granted by individuals who have not experienced racism. *White privilege* has been defined as the unearned advantages someone is given based solely on their group membership (Feagin & O'Brien, 2010).

No analysis of racism can be adequately completed without looking at the social dynamics surrounding Whiteness (Cancelmo & Mueller, 2019). Scholars have used Whiteness to describe a racialized social identity positioned as superior relative to other "races" (Lipsitz, 2006). With an individual's race constructed socially, Whiteness can be seen as a result of cultural and social processes maintained by various social practices, ideologies, and institutions (Feagin & O'Brien, 2010). Race is rooted historically in imperialism, transatlantic slavery, and European colonialism (Applebaum, 2016). White individuals have received unearned psychological and literal advantages through institutions, traditions, and societal norms (McIntosh, 1990).

While I will address and discuss the racism and disadvantages that Indigenous people experience in upcoming sections of this research, I must understand the other side of racism, which has given me an advantage. This site of structural advantage in which other white presenting Indigenous peoples and I are located has provided opportunities to address the rights of Indigenous peoples and communities. Moving forward with this research, to disrupt colour-blind narratives which deny white privilege, I must address the existence of Whiteness and its effect.

Similar to Downey (2017), I will focus on my white privilege to disrupt the silence often associated with Whiteness. I am aware of how my Whiteness has afforded me advantages that are not given to members of my family and others. I cannot deny or overlook the white privilege that has shaped my life and negatively impacted other family members. My father, nor his parents went to college. I was among the first of many generations to obtain a university education. I cannot deny that my experiences, regardless of heritage, have been shaped by my skin colour. I have not gone through the same type of experiences as those who do not appear white, and therefore I could never understand, to the same degree, the racism and discrimination that others have faced. As such, my appearance has shaped how I see myself and, in turn, my political participation. Unlike my father, since I appear white, I have never grappled with my Indigenous heritage. With my Indigenous heritage, there was no penalty for avoiding it, while my father, due to his appearance, could not hide his Indigenous roots. This brings me back to one of my research questions: how does identity impact Indigenous women's sense of belonging and in turn, their political participation?

Based on the literature, white presenting Indigenous women have different experiences due to the colour of their skin, which may impact their involvement in Indigenous and non-Indigenous issues (Richardson, 2006). The fact that I pass as white has impacted every aspect of my life, including relationships with other Indigenous peoples and communities. Since I have always been viewed as white, I did not spend much time engaging with Indigenous issues when I was younger. I stayed within my own 'secure' space, trying to hide as much as possible. I was invisible…and during my teenage years, that was better than being noticed. I spent so much time trying to be accepted that I had no interest or opportunity to engage in activism. Whiteness impacted not only my political consciousness but also my thoughts about activism.

When speaking to other Indigenous women, I realized they also question how their identity impacts their involvement. Whiteness creates difficult relationalities and divisions, giving some individuals more access than others. Identity not only impacts Indigenous women's political participation; it is also through such participation that they become more secure with their Indigenous identity. This strengthening of Indigenous identity through participation is significant as women become more secure in their Indigeneity. Participants in this research brought the

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issue of Whiteness up in their discussions of participation and identity. As stated by Darlene: *"I grew-up Caucasian, and I don't look Indigenous per se…so I have white privilege."*

Some choose to use the advantages that come along with Whiteness to advance the rights of Indigenous peoples. When discussing what motivates them to participate, Irene stated: *"because I am white passing, because I have grown up in a pretty privileged home, I have the ability to spread that education, and I feel like that is a privilege…I guess with my privilege, I want to make sure that other people eventually will be treated the same way I have been my whole life…"* Growing up Caucasian for Irene impacted her position; however, she can make something positive emerge from her Indigenous heritage by acknowledging her white privilege.

Irene's discussion of privilege is connected to her ability to access spaces as a white-passing individual. Approaching the advancement of Indigenous rights from all angles is essential. Like Irene, I also feel that I need to acknowledge the fact my Whiteness has been instrumental in where I am today, and I need to use my position positively. Individuals are often granted access to spaces based on their perceived Whiteness, which gives them more opportunities. However, being viewed as white can cause a feeling of not belonging among other Indigenous peoples (Applebaum, 2016; Richardson, 2006).

The privilege experienced, whether like Irene, because of perceived race or position (such as educational obtainment or employment), brings a duty to the community and other Indigenous peoples. For example, Brittany discussed her reason for attending Law school, partly because of the hardships her mother, Grandmother, and great-grandmother experienced. She went on to discuss the pressure she felt: *"I also do feel…immense pressure from communities because…I have done a lot of reflecting about law school, thinking to myself…why did I go? I feel that, in hindsight, I was revered as somebody or something…like a voice or force…I almost felt pressured by a lot of people who would just randomly say, "you should go to law school, you should go to law school," and I never really researched or thought about what that meant financially, emotionally…and what would the outcome be of me having a law degree? And I never had an intention of litigating, never had the intention of being a lawyer, but I always had the intention of getting more…I guess power from my name, so I would be taken seriously and so that I could elevate myself from grassroots to bigger platforms, settings…"* While one could

argue that this type of external pressure would not be experienced if one were not tied to the Indigenous community, some struggle with internal pressure.

Indigenous women in positions of power, like Brittany, may feel increased pressure (whether natural or assumed) to advance the rights of other Indigenous peoples. For some Indigenous women, power is the only way to make a difference for themselves and their community. A lack of Status or Citizenship compounds this feeling, further distancing individuals from other Indigenous peoples. While a lack of Status or Citizenship shapes how participants construct their identity as Indigenous women, connectivity also provides them with a renewed sense of being Indigenous. A lack of Status is another crisis/identity-generating issue that galvanizes women to become more involved or claim their Indigeneity. As such, the very lack of belonging they feel results in them working harder to participate to confirm their Indigenous identity.

Lack of Status

Individuals who lost or never had Status had many difficulties connecting with other Indigenous peoples. Moreover, there was a discussion regarding issues with regaining Status. As stated by Andrea: *"So my family has been fighting to regain our Status, and actually, my grandmother…was written a letter from Indian Affairs and we have copies of this letter, saying that you are entitled to Status. And when I am going to apply for my Indigenous Status, with my family, they were like…no, no…we retract that, from the exact same office."* Andrea expressed frustration with the regaining Status and the complications presented during the process. These difficulties were mentioned by numerous participants concerning obtaining Indigenous Status and Citizenship.

Race and gender-based classification systems left some Indigenous peoples frustrated at the idea of state-based recognition and the restrictions placed on membership. For Indigenous women, oppression is embedded within the law as their cultural identities are intertwined with legislation (Gehl, 2000). harder to be involved and participate in developing a newfound sense of being Indigenous. A lack of Status has made some feel less comfortable participating for fear of being challenged about their Indigenous identity. Nicole: *"I think if I had it…I would be a lot more involved and participate more in Indigenous issues. I would feel like it would validate my sense of self. Because I am very pale…when I attend Indigenous events or discuss my heritage with people…they don't believe me. With Citizenship…I could say, hey…I am Métis, and I can*

prove it." For Nicole, Citizenship is a way of validating her Indigeneity. Nicole's comment represents a desire for recognition, not only by wider (white) society but also by Indigenous peoples. It is important to note that Citizenship is different from Status. Citizenship is often designated to Métis people, and Status is associated with First Nations people.

The Canadian State has used Status to control and eliminate Indigenous peoples. However, for Indigenous resurgence to occur, we must look beyond the State and separate from the settler order (Sherwin, 2022). The hegemonic expression of self-determination used by Indigenous in Canada is the liberal discourse of 'recognition,' which is connected to First Nations seeking state validation of their Status and rights (Coulthard, 2014). Scholars have asserted that similar to assimilation, recognition reinforces the dominance of colonial power and is not feasible in transforming the colonial relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples (Hunt, 2016). However, activism around recognition has led to fruitful debates over the relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples, which is shaping Indigenous women's politics and self-understanding about who they are and how they construct Indigeneity.

The issues of Status and Citizenship are often the center of attention when someone identifies as Indigenous. Gina: *"Oh, it is definitely something that I think about often. Physically it is just a card, and it doesn't mean a lot, but it is just the way it is regarded in the eyes of the government and working in different organizations...even when you are applying to anything, are you Status, non-Status, living on reserve, living off-reserve? So, there are different questions, and you are constantly kind of defined on either having it or not."* Status is both an identity and a colonial bureaucracy and procedure enforced by the government. The experience of trying to gain recognition is also helping women construct alternatives different from what is offered in the colonial relations and bureaucracy created by the Indian Act.

Indigenous women have worked towards creating alternative structures and systems rooted in their traditional ways of life, values, and knowledge, prioritizing the well-being of their communities (Asante, 2005; Cornet, 2001, p. 117). Alternatives are often developed in response to the harms and limitations of the colonial structures imposed through the Indian Act, which historically has oppressed and marginalized Indigenous women (Baskin, 2020; Borrows, 2008). For example, there are several alternatives that Indigenous women are constructing, such as

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economic entrepreneurship and development, traditional systems of governance, health and wellness initiatives that are led by Indigenous peoples, and land-based practices (Deschambault, 2020; Simpson, 2017). Indigenous women provide a powerful counterpoint to the patriarchal and colonial structures which historically have oppressed Indigenous communities (Devens, 1992, p. 13). These alternative structures and systems are grounded in the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous women, and they prioritize the self-determination, sustainability, and well-being of the community.

Experience impacts the construction of identity and assists individuals in becoming part of the politically active group of Indigenous women. From my experience, when speaking to others who are not Indigenous, when discussing my father's heritage, a common question is whether I have my Status card. Some participants discussed Status as a colonial symbol of Indigeneity. Gina's discussion of the importance placed on Indian Status that the State defines (based on very restrictive criteria) not only impacts the resources distributed to Indigenous peoples but can also impact individuals' social and political participation. Gina further highlights this fact when asked if Status impacts how she participates politically: *"I would say yes. I have my Band Membership, and I don't have my Status card…but moving forward…thinking about politics and how much I want to be involved because there has been so much scandal with folks being found out that they weren't Indigenous. It just makes me think, oh no, what would happen if someone found out I didn't have Status? Would they question my Indigeneity?"*

Indigenous peoples may fear being questioned if they do not possess State-issued 'Indian' documentation is concerning. Gina, who has a Band Membership, still questions how others view her Indigenous identity. Indigenous identity is already complex and has been subjected to attack by colonial forces. A form of symbolic political violence against Indigenous peoples is perpetrated through disputes over Indigenous identity and contemporary scrutiny of 'authenticity' (Maddison, 2013). Issues of 'authenticity' further undermine Indigenous identity and have caused increased friction amongst Indigenous peoples and groups, strengthening the grip of colonization.

As the statements above have shown, a lack of Status/Citizenship has caused some Indigenous women to feel challenged regarding their identity. Identity issues, in turn, impact

how they participate and their sense of belonging. However, the need for Status/Citizenship can also increase the need for political engagement. Regardless, identity is constantly questioned, formed, and altered and is the basis for power and exclusion (Weaver, 2001). However, there are a lot of positive aspects that are associated with identity. Identities are sites of knowledge and resources, providing individuals with a sense of belonging (Sinding, 2005). Through identity, Indigenous knowledge and culture are passed down to future generations (Simpson, 2017). Moreover, identity is directly in line with the ideologies of resistance. Resistance has been based on examples of preceding generations of Indigenous women who, throughout history, have resisted colonial processes (Driscoll et al., 2007). As demonstrated, a lack of Status impacts how some Indigenous women take up politics.

Engaging with identity politics within the Indigenous community provides a better understanding of how women become political actors and construct their Indigeneity. Engaging with identity politics is vital for understanding how Indigenous women construct their Indigeneity and how they become political actors. Identity politics within the Indigenous community is important because, historically, Indigenous women have been oppressed and marginalized in several ways (LeBlanc, 2015). Indigenous women have faced discrimination based on their Indigeneity, gender, and intersecting identities (Moreton-Robinson, 2021). By presenting and engaging with identity politics, one can understand how Indigenous women have come to navigate these intersecting systems of oppression and how their identities have been used as a source of strength and resistance.

Identity Politics

Identity politics, as a concept, is the creation of political alliances and beliefs meant to further group interests (Knowles & Marshburn, 2010). While most identity politics include assertions about categories of peoples who share an identity, the Indigenous peoples of Canada consist of various peoples and nations (Palmater, 2011). Identity is not static, homogeneous, or naturally inherited; instead, it is a social construction that is dynamic and multiple (Asante, 2005). Identity is a complex topic with negative and positive aspects. Particularly important for this research is how identity provides a sense of comfort and belonging, impacting how people engage in organizing and their methods of political participation.

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When discussing what impacts her involvement, Nicole stated: *"I don't have the networks. I wouldn't just want to show up at an event by myself…it would help if I had someone close to me that shared the same heritage and interests."* Indigenous women in this research showed that they are less motivated to engage in activities when they do not have strong connections to other Indigenous peoples. As such, Indigenous women feel inspired to participate when they connect with other Indigenous peoples. However, Nicole went on to discuss other factors that motivate her to participate politically. In particular, a lack of networks motivates her to become involved and develop more connections with other Indigenous peoples and communities. Through Nicole's own experiences and observations of marginalization, she seeks out community through activism.

There are various ways that identity politics can undermine Indigenous identity claims, particularly, as demonstrated by participants, there are experiences with internal prioritization and divisions. Seeking out other Indigenous peoples or seeking acceptance is crucial in assisting one's identification and can provide avenues and encouragement for Indigenous women to embrace their culture and heritage. For example, Carly noted that when going to events, she is provided opportunities to learn from other Indigenous peoples: *"…it is also great to meet other people who can teach you more…just to have connections that way."* Likewise, Indigenous women can learn from others about Indigenous culture and traditions and share their history. Connections to other Indigenous peoples can also provide support systems for those who experience discrimination.

Debates over legitimacy and authenticity can occur because of identity politics. Conflicts over which political or cultural expressions are viewed as more authentic and who has the authority to represent Indigenous identities can cause tensions, weakening the unity of the Indigenous community. Discussing discrimination against Indigenous peoples and the constant questioning of one's identity, Irene stated: *"It is crazy because I just watched somebody tear down an Indigenous woman who was graduating from the University of Toronto, and she won an award and a person is saying that she is not deserving of this award. And I am like, but you don't know what this person has done in order to do this."* With the publication of material on race-shifting, it is not surprising that some individuals hide their Indigenous ancestry. However,

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Irene's awareness of issues concerning identity plays a role in her sense of Indigeneity moving past the bureaucratic construction of the 'authentic Indian.'

Identity politics, while it is often aimed at advocating for marginalized groups and their rights, it can also undermine or complicate claims of Indigenous identity. The fact that individuals are being questioned and stigmatized for claiming an Indigenous identity is troubling. We should encourage and assist individuals seeking to connect with their Indigenous heritage rather than discourage them based on pre-determined ideas about whether someone is "Indigenous enough." The fear of being questioned about things we do not yet know or understand is all too real for many individuals with Indigenous heritage, who may have little connection with the Indigenous community. Additionally, this causes fractures among Indigenous peoples and groups and further complicates and problematizes Indigenous identity for settler peoples. By looking at the responses of those involved in this research, tensions arise from identity and feelings of belonging. However, these issues also contribute to and are part of what being politically active means.

Some Métis participants discussed the need for greater acceptance and issues surrounding their identity and feelings of belonging. Nicole: *"when you think about it…or when I think about it, there are probably a lot of Métis people who feel the same way. It is like belonging to a group, but not feeling like you belong…Métis are very diverse…and with what is going on in Canada…with people claiming to be Indigenous and trying to gain access to benefits and resources…I feel it has placed Métis people in a category of not being authentic."* This comment by Nicole highlights her attempt at constructing a more complicated personhood and Indigeneity. This statement is something that I can relate to. Previous research has shown that a feeling of never 'really' belonging occurs among Métis peoples (Richardson, 2006, p. 5).

Some have dealt with ancestral denial, experiencing criticism around being 'undeserving' and 'different' (Arnott, 1994). As demonstrated by the interview participants, these feelings can impact how one participates politically. We must acknowledge and celebrate differences among Indigenous peoples and integrate the many insights from Indigenous women's lived experiences. Whether Inuk, Métis, or First Nations, everyone plays a significant part in advancing Indigenous rights. Several issues surrounding questioning Indigenous identity impact Indigenous peoples and communities and Indigenous politics, rights, and scholarship (Evans, 2021).

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Métis people have been subjected to increased hostility due to those trying to gain access to rights and resources that do not rightfully belong to them. This increased hostility has caused Métis individuals from verified lines to question their identity and First Nations peoples without Status feeling that they may be scrutinized. Although increased hostility is negative, some critical contributions and politics have arisen in response. Indigenous peoples try to imagine a common peoplehood, but this is challenging given the numerous categories the colonial system has created to divide people.

A recent example of the tensions created between and among Indigenous peoples in Canada can be seen in the conflict between the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) and some First Nations peoples regarding Bill C-53 (Forester, 2023). The ongoing court battle demonstrates the longstanding conflict over recognizing the rights and communities of Métis peoples (White, 2023). Outside of the northwest, the mere existence of Métis communities is contentious, with John Turner of the Temagami First Nation stating that he is disturbed and offended by Métis peoples using their ancestors (Narine, 2023). In response to the upset of First Nations communities, Margaret Froh, the President of the Métis Nation of Ontario, expressed disappointment in the objections and misinformation coming from some First Nations (Lewis & Ridgen, 2023). Additionally, Froh stated that the denial of Métis existence in Ontario is deeply offensive (Schwientek, 2023).

The resurgence of Indigenous identity, marked by a growing number of individuals who self-identify as such, has been observed in every country built on colonialism's legacy (Forte, 2013). As a result of the resurgence of Indigenous identity, numerous political matters have emerged (Maddison, 2013). These include access to resources and legal definitions of 'Indigeneity' (Asante, 2005). Regardless, the rise in issues surrounding Indigenous identity has impacted the political organizing of Indigenous women. With the increase in Indigenous individuals reconnecting with their culture and heritage, more Indigenous issues and causes are emerging and being addressed. With more Indigenous women coming forward, increased support and attention are given to the diversity of Indigenous identity (Harris, Nakata & Carlson, 2013, p. 22). Additionally, the increase in those connecting with their Indigeneity has resulted in more individuals seeking ways to become involved in Indigenous issues.

Some have highlighted the problematic notions of 'race-shifting' as failing to consider Canada's cultural renaissance and the diversity of Métis identity (Bouchard, Malette & Lawless, 2022). It is crucial that while condemning those who fraudulently represent themselves as Indigenous to gain benefits, we must be aware that we do not conflate issues of ethnicity with the negative behaviours of some people. An important question concerning issues of race-shifting is: Who has the power to get others to adopt their definitions and representations of Indigenous identity? Who has the intellectual, legal, and institutional authority to determine what or who is Indigenous? (Tallbear, 2013).

Overall, even though the intentions behind material on race shifting are significant and address a real problem with identity, individuals who do not take the time to look into the claims being made may become misinformed. While 'race shifting' is occurring and has been leading to a rise in Métis numbers, the assertions made by Leroux (2019) and others have caused a space of suspicion that has plagued Métis people from the beginning. However, this may also be seen as cautioning individuals of the inequities within the Indigenous community produced primarily by colonial structures. While this creates conflicts and tensions, the conflicts have been generative of new liberatory norms and ideas if we focus on a dialogue with diverse people and positions within the Indigenous community. This is not to say that individuals have not tried to claim Indigenous identity to further their objectives, be it trying to encroach on the legitimate rights of Indigenous people to hunt, fish and harvest or accepting monetary rewards under the guise of 'being Indigenous.' This is a problem. I am in no way trying to suggest that this is acceptable. Instead, the issue is that ideas of race-shifting reproduce racial ideologies and hierarchies that are rooted in colonialism.

Identity politics has both negative and positive effects on the Indigenous community and Indigenous women. One of the main positives of identity politics is recognition of the intersectionality of issues, acknowledging how both gender and ethnicity shape the experiences of Indigenous women. As shown in this research, and highlighted by participants, identity politics has the potential to create divisions among different Indigenous groups, where the emergence of competing priorities and interests can occur. Divisions can also lead to discrimination among Indigenous peoples and feelings of not belonging.

When it comes to identity, Indigenous women often experience discrimination. One participant discussed that as a child, she was always treated differently from others but did not understand why. Schoolteachers, other students, and family members ignored or often scorned her. Florence*: "growing up, I found that the nuns were always mean...and I thought, why are they mean? I know we weren't rich, but we weren't poor...my mom and dad both worked, so we had everything that we needed...and the people that...[are] high class...being of good names in Blind River. Those kids were treated differently...I would put my hand up, and the nuns, they never asked us...and I couldn't figure out, and even some of my mom's family...the ones that had the education... that had a lot of money...we were always treated differently, and I never understood why...and that is what it was, later on when I did find out that I was Métis...So, I thought it was because [of my maiden] name, the boys were all...they used to always be on the First Nations...and they were bad, so I thought it was because of that...but I think it was because we were "half-breeds" which is what they called us back then."* The term 'half-breed' has been used as a derogatory term for people of mixed race, particularly a child of Indigenous and white parents (Campbell, 2019).

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Canadian federal government used the term " half-breed " to refer to Métis people (Anderson, 2001). This term has often been invoked negatively by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. 'Half-breed' was used legally throughout the Canadian government's archival records for land certificates (Métis Scrip) to identify Métis families (Fagan, 2010). Florence went on to state that as a child, she grew up hearing very negative things about Indigenous peoples, to the point where if she were walking alone and saw another Indigenous person, she would cross the street to avoid them. It was not until later that she not only embraced her Indigenous heritage but now fights for the rights of other Indigenous peoples in her community.

Like Florence, Irene also discussed being called half-breed and being ridiculed due to her identity. Irene: *"We didn't start looking into our roots and stuff like that until I was pretty much 6 or 7. It has always just been that my mom is super...[from a different background] and would just kind of make fun of the whole half-breed thing...so, like you are not really Indigenous, you just think that you are."* The fact that one's family member would make such comments about being of 'some' Indigenous heritage shows how deeply entrenched the idea of what identity

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means is. This hostility is directed towards Métis individuals and can be seen in discrimination against other individuals of mixed race. Some scholars have suggested that Métis people are typically misrecognized as being of mixed-race descent instead of historically and politically coherent Indigenous peoples (Anderson, 2001).

The feeling of not being accepted is a reality for many and was expressed by numerous participants. Nicole: *"And when you think about it…or when I think about it, there are probably a lot of Métis people who feel the same way. It is like belonging to a group, but not feeling like you belong."* Nicole's comment brings to light the complexities surrounding Métis identity. However, it is important to note that Métis people have made significant strides in terms of political participation as well as legal advancements. In particular, the Métis Nation of Ontario has been instrumental in advancing Métis women's organizing, providing services, connections, and information to individuals across Canada.[7] Importantly, politics arise from identity. Everyday shared experiences of colonialism present Indigenous women with shared cultural meanings and understandings that can reduce negative political mobilizing of identity politics.

Identity and Indigeneity for Indigenous women are deeply connected, and their political participation and activism are often grounded in a commitment to Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2021). As such, the political engagement of Indigenous women is frequently directed towards promoting recognition and Indigenous rights as well as challenging colonialism (Deschambault, 2020, p. 32). Overall, identity politics assists in understanding how Indigenous women have constructed their Indigeneity and their identities in the face of assimilation and colonialism. In order to be recognized as Indigenous, one needs to have their claims accepted through a common understanding of who is Indigenous, such as providing documentation of Indigenous ancestry. As a result, politics are largely constrained within the colonial framework.

Changing politics within a colonial framework which defines Indigenous identity involves a collaborative and multifaceted approach. A fundamental aspect for promoting change is decolonizing political institutions and structures, which includes acknowledging Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty as well as revising laws, practices, and policies that perpetuate

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[7] For more information see: https://www.Métisnation.org/

colonialism. Another way to promote change is by recognizing the intersectionality of Indigenous identities. Advocacy efforts and policies need to acknowledge the diverse experiences within Indigenous communities and the unique challenges that Indigenous women face. Additional ways that change can occur are mentioned by the Indigenous women involved in this research, which includes educational reform, land rights and resource management, and community empowerment.

Discrimination and Violence

As demonstrated throughout the previous chapters, Indigenous women have long been subjected to violence and discrimination, which is part of the common shared experience that brings Indigenous peoples together. This has resulted in the activism that Indigenous women engage in being shaped by the challenges they face and their experiences. These experiences of violence and discrimination motivate Indigenous women to become politically involved, challenging the people and systems in which these injustices are perpetuated.

Indigenous women's activism often centers around political representation, access to education and healthcare, gender and cultural-based discrimination, land rights, and cultural preservation (Pedersen, Malcoe, & Pulkingham, 2013). As such, they may seek to defend and protect their communities from the extraction of resources, exploitation, and environmental degradation. Indigenous women's activism, in many cases, is also focused on addressing specific forms of violence, including human trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence (Picq, 2018; Sethi, 2010). They have worked towards increasing awareness about these issues, pushing for policy changes that will improve the well-being and safety of Indigenous women and will provide support for survivors (Royle, 2017). In the end, Indigenous women's activism is shaped by their experiences of violence and discrimination. Driven by the need to transform and challenge the very systems perpetrating injustices, Indigenous women seek to create a more equitable world for themselves, Indigenous communities, and the future.

Discrimination and violence are common occurrences regardless of how 'Indigenous' an individual is, feels, looks, or is legally defined. Indigenous peoples continue to experience direct and indirect discrimination (de Leeuw, Kobayashi, & Cameron, 2011, p. 17). Violence and discrimination frame the lives of Indigenous women; therefore, it is not surprising that this experience is collectively shared, which encourages and directs them toward certain kinds of

activism. Discrimination was expressed by many interview participants and was discussed in various ways, which will be explored further. Issues of land, discrimination among Indigenous peoples, family discrimination, and indirect discrimination were discussed and found to be a motivating factor in political participation. Moving forward, material will be presented concerning discrimination and violence experienced specifically towards Indigenous women, followed by examples of agency Indigenous women have employed against discrimination.

Land Discrimination

Land rights have been a great concern to many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Instances of violence over land rights can often emerge on various levels. Facing violence at the hands of white anglers is a genuine concern of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada. Brittany: *"The anglers were upset that the Natives…the same thing is happening now in Nova Scotia…we were exercising our traditional rights to fish out of season, and there was these people from our reserve that went out on a Friday night, and they were assaulted…It was like 20 guys beat up four guys, and the cops didn't help."* While Brittany discusses the violence and discrimination that Indigenous peoples have faced from white anglers in Nova Scotia, violence and discrimination can also occur between Indigenous groups.

One participant raised concerns about discrimination and violence towards Métis peoples from a First Nations community. Discussing the actions of a local Chief, Florence stated: *"he [the Chief] saw a Métis family parked and harvesting…and they literally posted it on Facebook with their…license plate. So his people were saying, and he knew it was Métis because he knew who they were, and he said we know it is Métis because no white man should be hunting at this time…he says, "I don't believe they should be on our land"… When I saw it, I sent it to my chief operator, I sent it to her and said what is going on? His people were saying, "we're going to go slash their tires, we are going to find out who it is…we're going to burn their…that's inciting violence."* This type of discrimination is described in the literature as being connected to horizontal hostility and was expressed by interview participants in various ways (Lawrence, 2003).

Overall, land discrimination intersects with environmental issues and advocacy which is an important motivating factor for political participation among Indigenous women. Land discrimination, which includes the denial of land rights, can cause economic disempowerment

for Indigenous women, which can limit their ability to participate in their culture and political matters. The dispossession of traditional lands can lead to the cultural displacement of Indigenous peoples and communities, disrupting overall well-being and participation in decision-making processes.

Florence also discussed her experience of discrimination from other Indigenous peoples while attending a meeting: *"So…the next table goes… what are you doing here? And I said, well…I am the [member of an organization]…and I am just interested in what's going on here with the new changes with the government. Then she goes, "you're Métis?"…she asked me what were the qualifications to be a Métis? And I explained it to her…she says well…she could make her kids (because she married a white man) and they don't have their card, so she is upset over that…she goes, well maybe I will go to one of your meetings, and you can introduce me to a Métis man, and my kids will be Métis…I let that one go, and everyone was… laughing, and I thought you bunch of ignorant people…you know? The next table was on funding, so then they were talking about when are we going to get this money and all this. Then she says something about it again, and says well maybe we can ask the Métis, and they can help us."* The idea that Métis people are trying to gain access to rights and resources they do not deserve continues to be a topic of discussion. Métis are isolated from Euro-Canadian and First Nations societies without the designation of Status, and they often face discrimination from both (Richardson, 2006).

Unfortunately, some people experience discrimination from family members. Discussing discrimination that her mother experienced from her father's family members, Lisa stated: *"Growing up, I was emersed in my culture. My mom's side is Inuk, and she married a white man, which back then was something that they had some issues with…it was more that my dad would hear comments about him being with an Indigenous woman."* While the comments made by her family were not specifically discriminatory, Lisa felt that negative judgment was present. As demonstrated by Lisa, individuals can experience discrimination anytime, anywhere, by anyone, including their family members.

Indirect Discrimination

Participants also discussed the violence and discrimination they witnessed and experienced as Indigenous peoples. There were instances of indirect and direct forms of violence and discrimination that were explored. It is important to note that there has been significant debate

over the definition of indirect discrimination and indirect racism (Khaitan, 2017). It is outside the scope of this research to discuss such debates in detail. However, based on situations explained by participants, indirect racism was described as incidents in which others made discriminatory or racial comments not directed toward the individual. Everyday racism can express gendered discrimination and can also direct attention away from the gendered dimensions of dispossession when examining the experiences of Indigenous women at the micro level. This happens when discussions about the racism of dispossession focus primarily on a broad, general perspective without considering the unique experiences and challenges faced by Indigenous women. As such, in terms of indirect discrimination, gender discrimination can be expressed when it directly impacts Indigenous women.

Explaining differences in the interpretation of everyday racism can be accomplished by examining personal biographies (Ku, 2005). Additionally, each participant will have different interpretations of their experiences of discrimination. While some may seek out other Indigenous peoples, others may completely turn away from their Indigenous identity. All of the participants in this research, however, eventually become conscious and value their Indigenous background. This awareness is attributed to various factors which include the encouragement of family members or friends and the accessibility of information. These biographies attend to individuals' social context and subjective experiences, highlighting the importance of their vicarious experiences with racism. By experiencing racism vicariously, individuals learn about their role and place in society. All the participants in this research discussed the influence that colonization has had on Indigenous peoples and how this, in turn, influenced the treatment of Indigenous women. The institutional and systemic factors which contribute to inequality and racism are learned through observation and experiences of others. Indigenous women have come to realize the ways their own attitudes, beliefs, and actions challenge racism.

As stated by Andrea: *"I have been subjected to a lot of…not direct racism to me, but have overheard people. I was studying in a Tim Hortons and I overheard this older white gentleman, and he was like, "oh I'm tired of my taxes going to these Indians who don't fucking do anything." And I was like who do you think is going to pay for you to be in an old age home."* Andrea presents a critical argument. The fact that this individual positions Indigenous peoples as undeserving of financial assistance granted to all Canadian citizens highlights a kind of racial

'superiority' that fuels an 'Us' versus 'Them' mentality (de Leeuw, Kobayashi, & Cameron, 2011).

Indirect discrimination can divert attention away from the gendered dimensions of dispossession when analyzing the experiences of Indigenous women at the micro level. On the other hand, indirect discrimination can express gender discrimination when it directly impacts Indigenous women. This occurs when discussions about the racism of dispossession focus primarily on specific views with consideration being given to the challenges and unique experiences of Indigenous women. While negative aspects are associated with Indigenous identity, positive aspects must also be presented. As Wade (1997) pointed out, with each history of oppression and violence, there exists a parallel history of determined, creative, and prudent resistance (p. 11). In addition, the intersections of race, class, age, gender, and sexuality contribute to one's identity (Asante, 2005). As highlighted by Darlene when discussing how her identity impacts her participation: *"it would be intersectionally…so…I am a woman, I am a lesbian, I am Indigenous…all those things are important to me, and I have been advocating for marginalized groups my entire life."* For Darlene, she views the intersectional aspects of her identity as strengths rather than weaknesses. The fact that she is a lesbian, Indigenous, and a woman all contribute to who she is and how she participates politically. Although gender has impacted Indigenous women by increasing the barriers they face, they are continuing to challenge and fight for equality.

Some significant findings emerge from the material presented throughout this section. Going back to the research question of whether identity impacts Indigenous women's political participation, the information obtained suggests that identity has both negative and positive impacts on participation. It is shown that the affirmation of one's Indigenous identity is a significant factor in how one views themselves and engages with others. Not feeling "Indigenous enough" plays on the confidence to be involved in Indigenous issues and participate in events. With the rise of identity politics and the questioning of Indigenous identity, a space of suspicion has emerged, ultimately impacting one's sense of self.

Indigenous women realize that their experiences of racism, violence, and discrimination are structural and collective in nature and as a result, they see the interconnections and their place within a larger group. Moreover, Indigenous women construct their Indigeneity and feel a

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responsibility to the community, to care for it and commit to taking action to protect and advance causes. Indigenous women often connect with others and the larger Indigenous community through a shared experience of violence and discrimination that assists them in interpreting their experiences as collective rather than individual. This experience of marginality directs them towards certain forms of activism.

The experience of marginality significantly impacts Indigenous women's activism, often directing them towards certain forms and types of political participation. For most Indigenous women, marginality has led them to engage in activism and resistance that promotes Indigenous sovereignty and rights and challenges oppression (Picq, 2018). Such activism includes issues focusing on resource and land rights, revitalizing Indigenous cultural practices, and environmental justice (Peacock, 2022). Indigenous women's activism is grounded in the intersecting forms of oppression they experience, including colonialism, sexism, and racism (Kuokkanen, 2012). Often community-focused, Indigenous women's activism recognizes the significance of collective action and the need to empower and support other Indigenous women.

Looking Forward

Indigenous women are active agents of social change and have organized locally, nationally, and internationally on various issues (Simpson, 2017). The influence of Indigenous women is demonstrated throughout this research. From daily acts of resurgence, such as community advancement, addressing stereotypes and sharing information about Indigenous issues, to involvement in wide-scale actions, such as engagement in protests and environmental conservation, their efforts contribute significantly to the well-being and empowerment of Indigenous communities. The experiences described by the Indigenous women involved in this research highlight the diverse ways in which Indigenous women have been at the forefront of social change.

Indigenous women's resiliency and lasting contributions to Indigenous rights and resistance must be acknowledged and explored. Indigenous women's resistance is guided by Indigenous knowledge, offering alternative ideas of social relationships (Horn-Miller, 2012, p. 19). However, indigenous women's knowledge has often been 'invisible' due to expressions of power relations that merge into the historical, political, and social structures that shape the lives of Indigenous women (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jimenez, 2016, p. 5). Through this research, I hope

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to contribute to the intellectual space of Indigenous women's knowledge. Moreover, this research aspires to promote Indigenous women's knowledge by highlighting the diversity of their experiences. While this chapter has focused primarily on negative experiences surrounding Indigenous women's identity, I would like to now focus on the positive aspects.

While discussions about identity brought to light the various ways that discrimination and violence are directed toward Indigenous women, the resiliency of Indigenous women should not be overlooked. Indigenous women have and will continue to fight for justice in times of great turmoil. Indigenous women in this research discussed at length their engagement in acts of Indigenous resurgence. While it was not mentioned by name, their involvement in acts of cultural revitalization, environmental protection, and promotion of Indigenous languages demonstrated an active understanding of the importance of reclaiming what has been lost through colonization.

Andrea stated: *"I know that from a feminist perspective that women, in general, are huge promoters of grassroots organizations."* More recently, Indigenous women have become more politically involved and worked tirelessly to institute progressive change. Maggie: *"More Indigenous women are in positions of power. Don't get me wrong, we still have a long way to go, but we are taking steps in the right direction. Indigenous women do so much for the Indigenous movement. Yet, it seems that all the attention is on Indigenous men. Women are still not taken as serious as men. There are a lot of areas that would benefit from having a woman involved in the decision-making process."* As suggested by Maggie, there is still much progress to be made in advancing Indigenous women's rights.

Moving forward, many Indigenous women are at the forefront of paving the way for such progress to continue. Hailey: *"...it is knowledge and it is voice...and that is the important thing. And so, if you are smart, articulate and people hear that you are authentic, and they will get behind you, then those people are rising and most of them are women right now."* This comment highlights the significance of Indigenous women constructing, negotiating, and imagining the future. Part of Indigenous resurgence is advancing Indigenous culture, traditions, and language. As such, Hailey's comment about the importance of knowledge needs to be addressed. There are many reasons why it is essential to highlight Indigenous women's knowledge (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jimenez, 2016, p. 56). The experiences of an individual and a community are

different, and being an Indigenous woman is connected with her community's worldview and lived experience (Arnold, 2017).

When discussing her connection to the Indigenous community and spreading information, Hailey stated: *"I learn from them, therefore I can move forward in my life, sharing accurate information as I have heard it. So, I am not sitting in my own bubble, making up ways to resolve things. I am listening to other women. I am listening to those who are more knowledgeable than me…and taking that and spreading it…I am an amplifier really."* Indigenous women hold essential knowledge which needs to be shared. As highlighted by Hailey, not only is sharing the information that one receives necessary but also taking on the information given by other Indigenous women. Based on this comment, and others, one can begin to think about how participants connect with other Indigenous women and see the larger collectivity based on various previous experiences.

The resiliency of Indigenous women has resulted in progress in many areas, and much more can be done through Indigenous resurgence. Indigenous women have taken on essential roles inside and outside their communities. However, as noted by Andrea: "*I feel that there needs to be a lot more woman involvement or rather acknowledgement, because, like I said, women tend to be people to uphold grassroot organizations."* Acknowledgment of Indigenous women's efforts and progress is a significant step in confirming the actions of those involved and inspiring others. This acknowledgment of Indigenous women and their efforts needs support. Brittany noted, *"I think Indigenous women are really stretched for capacity because there are so few of the time, resources, and capacity to support such efforts…we are needed in so many places."* Support can be given in many ways, such as providing sufficient funding and greater access to resources. For example, when I sought out information about how to become involved politically with Indigenous women's rights groups, there were not very many. Additionally, those groups I reached out to did not contact me back. It is evident that Indigenous women's groups do not have access to sufficient resources or funding. When discussing Indigenous women's groups with participants, only three mentioned that they were or had been involved in groups specifically for Indigenous women.

There is a greater need to understand the value of Indigenous women in leadership positions. As mentioned by Brittany: *"…in Toronto, there are so many organizations, so many women in*

leadership positions, but how are we training the next generation? We also have a growing aging population that were more active. I feel almost compelled to keep going because no one is taking their places." This comment brings to light Indigenous women's responsibility towards their communities. Several of the comments presented demonstrate how Indigenous women carve out a role in the community, which arises from partly a feminist position of intersectionality that is influenced by a decolonial perspective.

The Indigenous women involved in this research have played a crucial role in centring rematriation through acts of political consciousness and activism. It is through such things as leadership in land rights and environmental movements, cultural preservation and revitalization, education and awareness, and community building and networking, that participants are working towards returning land, cultural heritage, and power to Indigenous women and their communities. The current generation of Indigenous women has taken a proactive role in social, communal, and political advancement. Brittany raises an important question: How can we increase the engagement of Indigenous women and future generations? There were several suggestions made for increasing the engagement of Indigenous women. Irene mentioned learning from other Indigenous women: *"...because not everyone learns...through reading either, they learn through hands-on...like if they did workshops where you could learn from another Indigenous woman...explain politics and then they did videos and they did pamphlets or something...I think the workshops would help."* Workshops delivered by Indigenous women have recently become more common, covering a wide range of topics. The issue at hand, however, is whether these workshops are accessible to all Indigenous women.

For Indigenous women to continue their pursuit of rights and justice, there needs to be a place for them to do so. Additionally, we must reach out to those needing help understanding how to be involved. Hailey: *"there is a huge push for rematriation and Indigenous women once again taking their place at the helm and leading things. And it is in my experience that movement is getting stronger and awareness of it is super important."* Indigenous women are going back to their matriarchal heritage to construct a new sense of empowerment and identity. Hailey's discussion of rematriation highlights a sense of pride in the accomplishments of Indigenous women. Rematriation, returning the sacred to the mother, is a fully conscious justice movement led by Indigenous women that can be achieved through community and personal efforts (Nielsen

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& Jarratt-Snider, 2023, p. 4). While Hailey specifically mentions rematriation, the other Indigenous women involved in this research expressed rematriation implicitly by challenging patriarchal values and criticizing the misrepresentation of their Indigenous identities (Leonard, et al., 2023).

The rematriation movement is grounded in restoring the balance of the world through the recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems (Schmidt, 2019). This recognition is also described as reclaiming the political authority of Indigenous women and their roles in Indigenous political structures and orders (Kuokkanen, 2019). Used as an Indigenous feminist paradigm, rematriation is an expressed praxis of return and recovery and a sociopolitical form of refusal and resurgence (Gray, 2022). Similar to Indigenous resurgence, rematriation centers on the empowerment and revitalization of Indigenous peoples, traditions, and cultures. Although both are distinct, both rematriation and Indigenous resurgence share common goals and values of decolonization and challenging colonial systems, structures and ideologies.

Restoring Indigenous women's self-determination is also an essential goal in Indigenous resurgence efforts taking place. Interview participants in this study provided inspiring and powerful words about the future of Indigenous women and their resurgence. I want to end this section with what Lisa noted when talking about issues facing Indigenous women: *"I believe that we are fighting back to get the respect that was taken away from us. We are resilient and determined to bring about change."* Lisa's comment about fighting for change is critical and speaks to the importance of Indigenous resurgence when looking at political participation and resistance among Indigenous women.

As demonstrated throughout this section, identity is a driving force for Indigenous women's political involvement. For Indigenous women, political participation is intimately connected to protecting and preserving traditional and cultural ways of life (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016, p. 114). Facing marginalization, discrimination, and systemic oppression has led to unequal access to opportunities and resources, a lack of political representation, and the destruction of Indigenous women's cultural identities (Palmater, 2020b). Identity is connected to experiences, heritage, and history, giving rise to specific forms of activism.

When it comes to Indigenous women's activism and acts of resistance, identity plays a central role as it shapes their understanding of relationships with others and their place in the

world (Van Meijeren Karp, 2020). Their identity informs how Indigenous women take up issues and their political consciousness (Simpson, 2017). For Indigenous women, identifying as Indigenous is a critical component of their activism, as it is deeply connected to their displacement, marginalization, and experiences of colonization. Indigenous women often view themselves as protectors of their communities and families, and their activism and resistance are driven by the desire to create a better world for future generations. The Indigenous women involved in this research identify this need to assist and support future generations.

Identity is a crucial aspect of political involvement, serving as a foundation for activism and organizing amongst Indigenous women. Moreover, identity helps guide Indigenous women's goals of addressing issues which affect their communities, including the revitalization of culture, self-determination, environmental injustices, and land rights. Through their identities, Indigenous women are brought together, becoming a unifying force working towards the achievement of common goals. A sense of shared identity assists in creating alliances, increasing political strength, and fostering solidarity.

This section has outlined the experiences of Indigenous women concerning their identity and how such experiences may influence their political involvement. The following chapter will look more in-depth into the specifics of Indigenous women's political participation and what motivates and influences their decisions to become involved. It has been argued that while identity presents many challenges for Indigenous women, they continue to demonstrate incredible strength and determination.

Identity can supress or inspire, limit or extend, restrain or inflame an individual to become involved. The issues that one engages in and the ways in which they engage are influenced by their identity. There are several factors which are important for Indigenous women's activism and political engagement. Particularly, as discussed throughout this section, Indigenous women's identity informs their political participation, shaping their understanding of their commitment to preserving their culture, rights, and connections to lands and their communities. Identity provides a sense of solidarity and collective belonging, motivating them to engage in acts of resistance and advocate for their rights. Whiteness, Status, identity politics, discrimination and violence all have a critical role in shaping Indigenous women's political participation in different ways.

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Whiteness as a concept is significant to understanding the dynamics of privilege and power. The recognition of whiteness assists in challenging the structural inequalities that Indigenous women experience and how it motivates some to challenge systems from within to address these inequalities. A lack of status, while it is seen as colonial, impacts the political participation of Indigenous women as it restricts access to services, decision-making processes, and resources. Barriers are created for Indigenous women to engage fully in the political sphere, impacting their ability to advocate for their interests and rights.

Identity politics recognizes that political struggles are often rooted in the experiences of oppression individuals face due to their identity (Knowles & Marshburn, 2010). Moreover, it assists in highlighting the unique perspectives and experiences of Indigenous women, assisting them in their activism to challenge various forms of oppression. The intersecting identities of Indigenous women are deeply connected to their political participation. Indigenous women experience various forms of discrimination and violence that impact how they participate politically and the causes they take up (Picq, 2018). It is these experiences which make them part of a collective group. To summarize, whiteness, a lack of status, identity politics, and discrimination and violence all influence identity and critically impact the political participation and activism of Indigenous women. These factors are crucial for recognizing the challenges faced by Indigenous women and the motivations driving their advocacy and activism for social justice, self-determination, and Indigenous rights.

THEME 3: MOTIVATION FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The theme of political participation moves beyond specific activities that Indigenous women engage in politically to examine why they participate and what it means to them to be politically active. While the types of activities discussed by participants will be mentioned, it is not the acts themselves but the motivations and intentions of such acts that will be explored in greater detail. There are various ways that Indigenous women are motivated to become involved politically. In particular, as shown in previous sections, identity and connections to other individuals provide Indigenous women with support and foster a sense of belonging.

This part of the chapter argues that the motivations of Indigenous women to engage in acts of resistance are rooted in the broader goal of Indigenous resurgence. Moreover, participants demonstrate a sense of history and the need to expand future relations regarding the Indigenous community. Specifically, several participants mentioned the importance of assisting future generations through their participation and positively using their positions (such as education and occupation). There are several reasons why Indigenous women care about future generations, such as cultural preservation and knowledge, community cohesion and well-being, environmental stewardship, and intergenerational responsibility. The actions of Indigenous women are often driven by a deep sense of care and responsibility for the legacy they will leave for future generations. As discussed previously, rematriation is an important lens to view Indigenous women's political activism beyond resurgence. The concept shifts focus from colonial and patriarchal perspectives toward the acknowledgment of the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous women, their roles and communities.

Before looking at what motivates individuals to participate, attention will be given to understanding what being politically active means to Indigenous women. Indigenous women engage in resistance on a daily basis, expanding our understanding of what it means to be politically active. In other words, current standard definitions and understandings of political participation need to adapt to the circumstances and individuals engaging in such acts. For example, attending University and obtaining a degree may not be considered an act of resistance for a white Canadian male; however, for an Indigenous woman, it is. It is resistance because it goes against the colonial structure of Canadian society, which seeks to supress and marginalize

Indigenous peoples. Indigenous women consciously use their education to the advantage of Indigenous peoples as part of their responsibility to their people and their politics.

The concepts of political participation and political activism are related; however, they have distinct purposes and characteristics. Political participation includes any actions by individuals who engage in the political process, encompassing a wide range of both informal and formal activities (Anderson & Herr, 2007, p. 21-22). Participation can be both unconventional (such as civil disobedience, boycotts, and protests) and conventional (voting or joining a political party). On the other hand, activism is a subset of political participation which includes intentional efforts that are more assertive and seek to bring about social or political change (Nolas, Varvantakis & Aruldoss, 2018).

Activists advocate for specific issues or causes and work to influence decision-making, public policy, or opinion (Clark, 2017). Activism is typically associated with more vocal and visible efforts to promote change (Prindeville & Bretting, 1998). Indigenous women involved in this research engaged in both activism and political participation. They engage in activism through engagement in direct actions (such as protests and marches) and they participate politically through routine activities (such as attending meetings and promoting their culture and heritage).

Indigenous women often engage in systems that have excluded them, and the women in this research have made it clear that this is an essential step for them to break down barriers. As expressed by Nicole: *"I feel that getting an education has instilled a sense of confidence in me. They expect Indigenous women to remain unemployed, uneducated…and dependant on assistance. School provides me not only with opportunities to expand my knowledge, but to use what I learn to help others."* While obtaining education for Nicole is beneficial on a personal level, it also assists in her goal to advance Indigenous rights. Indigenous women like Nicole present a strategic plan that acknowledges the colonial context in which their communities exist. By gaining access to colonial resources, Indigenous women can use these resources to better their communities. Education allows Nicole to address and tackle the stereotypes placed on her as an Indigenous woman. Several of the women involved in this research stressed the importance of using their education as a tool to address systemic inequalities.

Participants in this research demonstrated that resistance is based on the identity of those involved and the time and place it occurs. This idea is not limited to Indigenous peoples and can be applied to other marginalized groups. Another example highlighting the circumstantial nature of resistance is the well-known case of Rosa Parks in the Montgomery bus boycott. The act of an African American woman sitting at the front of the bus in current times would not be characterized as resistance. However, in 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat at the front of the bus, she actively resisted the unfair segregation of Blacks and whites in the United States (Kohl, 1991).

This example also speaks to the issue of what is seen as political and what gets politicized in specific moments and contexts. It is no longer political to sit at the front of the bus. For Indigenous women, several issues were not adequately distinguished as political in the past but have more recently gained attention. Through the advocacy of Indigenous women, systemic issues and injustices have been brought into focus. For example, cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls have occurred for decades (Morton, 2016). Indigenous women actively advocated for action, accountability, and justice to address the systemic factors and high rates of violence contributing to the murder and disappearance of Indigenous women and girls (Moeke-Pickering, Cote-Meek & Pegoraro, 2018).

Participants were asked what being politically active means to them. This question is significant; as demonstrated in the literature, what is considered politically active is broad and can depend on an individual's perception (Theocharis & de Moor, 2021). For example, some individuals may view simple, everyday acts, such as buying locally or re-tweeting a news report, as participating politically. Others may view more large-scale actions (which garner immediate recognition), such as engaging in a protest, as participation. While each is very different, one is no less important than the other.

While Indigenous women engage in both large-scale and individual acts of resistance, the women involved in this research placed particular importance on discussing the everyday acts used to contribute to advancing Indigenous women's social, political, and economic positions. As demonstrated by the participants, for Indigenous women being politically active is rooted in everyday actions. These actions include but are not limited to, such things as discussing their

identity, learning about their culture, and making their presence known. How Indigenous women engage in resistance is connected to how they understand and relate to their cultural identity.

Indigenous women participate politically in distinct ways, as their identity impacts their focus and is connected to how they engage. The view of Indigeneity being intrinsically connected to politics is also expressed by Brittany: *"I just feel like being Indigenous is political."* This view speaks to the importance for many to make the claim of being Indigenous, especially when they are told to hide or supress their Indigeneity. The view of one's Indigeneity being political goes back to the history of colonialism. Brittany's comment demonstrates a sense of pride as well as resistance in terms of her Indigenous identity. Being political for many of the women involved in this research is about making their presence as Indigenous known, even when it is difficult. Educating others and being conscious about their Indigeneity has fueled them to use their knowledge to advance the rights of Indigenous peoples and make a better future for proceeding generations. The presence of Indigenous peoples is evidence that the colonial state failed in its efforts to eradicate Indigenous peoples (Tzul Tzul, 2015). In this way, just being Indigenous is an act of resistance.

Despite the States' ongoing efforts to remove the presence of Indigenous peoples, they continue to influence political life (Picq, 2017). Suppose settler colonialism is rooted in the eradication of Indigenous peoples. In that case, particularly the elimination of systems of governance and nationhood, the presence of Indigenous peoples represents a fierce assault on this erasure (Corntassel & Scow, 2017; Wolfe, 2006). Moreover, Indigenous peoples who continue to participate politically to challenge the Canadian State and other injustices are vital to social change.

Being politically active for some means spreading awareness and speaking for those unable to speak. Gina: *"It means that, because of my experiences and community, through engagement with newcomers and Indigenous folks…I can bring the voices of those people with me and speak on behalf of people who don't speak the language or who maybe fear the government. It is all about amplifying voices."* While speaking and advocating on behalf of others is generally not in line with the framework of Indigenous resurgence, the amplification of voices is significant, as it creates a space where Indigenous peoples can present perspectives, ideas, and knowledge. By prioritizing Indigenous views, bringing together and amplifying these voices contributes to

Indigenous resurgence (Simpson, 2017). It assists in disrupting and challenging power structures and dominant narratives which historically have marginalized Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous resurgence is rooted in the revitalization of Indigenous communities and cultural practices (Coleman, 2016; Corntassel, 2012). Therefore, the amplification of voices is needed for the development of appropriate spaces where Indigenous peoples can exercise their identities and connection with each other which is essential for success. In their amplification of voices, Indigenous women are operating on the very real assumption that all issues impacting Indigenous peoples are rooted in colonialism. Gina's comment speaks to asserting her commonality and insider status in the Indigenous community as the justification for her being a community representative and her capacity to amplify Indigenous voices.

The amplification of voices, or speaking for those who are unable to, assists in spreading awareness about issues that may otherwise go undetected. While everyone should be able to express themselves freely in a perfect world, this is not always the case. Some Indigenous women have dealt with significant barriers in challenging systems of discrimination. For example, remote and isolated communities have limited access to support systems. Indigenous women who speak up against injustices may experience more violence and discrimination from the police, the criminal justice system, and even Indigenous community members (Palmater, 2016). Discrimination can be seen in past cases of Indigenous women who reported violence to police and are not believed, ignored, blamed, or even criminalized by the very systems they seek assistance from (Barrett, St. Pierre & Vaillancourt, 2011; Baskin, 2020). Therefore, it is no surprise that while Indigenous women are engaging with Western systems, they are doing so in order to advance their rights. This can be seen in cases where Indigenous women are running for political parties, joining police forces, and obtaining more education.

Being political for Indigenous women cannot be limited to formal political process, as it can include a wide range of actions such as cultural resurgence, community advocacy and mobilization, and grassroots organizing (Corntassel, 2007; Gottardi, 2020). Indigenous women's political engagement recognizes their experiences as intersectional and the significance of addressing multiple types of oppression, including sexism, colonialism, and racism (Wright, 2017). For Indigenous women, being political often means challenging colonial structures, addressing gender-based issues, advocating for Indigenous rights, amplifying Indigenous voices,

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and building solidarity and community (Suzack, et al., 2010). Indigenous women advocating for Indigenous rights engage in political action and resistance to defend and assert their inherent rights, including treaty rights and Indigenous sovereignty, land and resource rights, cultural revitalization, and self-governance (Picq, 2018).

Indigenous women engage in political activities which foster solidarity with other Indigenous peoples and strengthen their communities (Maracle, 2021). This participation involves collective actions, community-led initiatives, and efforts of cultural revitalization to address shared challenges (Sherwin, 2022; Simpson, 2017). The amplification of Indigenous voices is a critical aspect in terms of Indigenous women's political participation. Indigenous women use their experiences and voices to shape public discourse, challenge stereotypes, and raise awareness. They contribute to the narratives and knowledge of decolonization by sharing their expertise and perspectives.

The motivation of Indigenous women to be involved politically is driven by their unique experiences. Indigenous women often experience intersecting forms of discrimination due to their ethnicity and gender. Political involvement allows them to advocate and address complex issues which deal with multiple levels of discrimination and inequality. The women involved in this research advocate for Indigenous rights and community advancement and are politically motivated by a need to educate others, assist in the advancement of future generations, and cultural preservation.

Educating Others

What it means to be political can vary among individuals. For participants involved in this research, there were common themes that emerged. In particular, educating others and addressing misconceptions about Indigenous peoples and cultures was described as an aspect of being political. Educating others about Indigenous culture, history, and issues is important for many reasons, as it can counter discrimination and ignorance, revitalizing and reclaiming Indigenous knowledge, and inspire advocacy and allies. Particularly, educating others about Indigenous histories and cultures is critical to one's attachment and ties to the Indigenous individuals and their communities. Education promotes a sense of pride, belonging and identity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals who respectfully engage in appreciation and learning.

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Education is a significant element described in terms of what it means to be politically active. Educating others on Indigenous issues and culture allows one to feel they are spreading awareness that may otherwise remain hidden. Educating others is an essential element of community. It is a larger sense of oneself as part of the Indigenous community and allows one to position themselves in relation to others. The best way to teach and reach others is to educate them. Andrea: *"I am in very small classes right now and I am the only Indigenous student in these classes…so I just make it a point that everything that I do will relate to my culture in some form…because I am hoping that one day a professor or another student will reach out to me and be like "can I use this information?" and that would mean the world to me."* The discussion above suggests that spreading awareness is an important aspect of being Indigenous, and when this information is passed down to others, as it offers a sense of affirmation.

Educating others on Indigenous issues and culture positively influences one's identity. While this is discussed within the literature, participants demonstrated it through their tone. There was a dramatic change in participants' reflections when speaking about spreading awareness and its importance. For Andrea, her Indigeneity is a driving force in her need to teach others. The fact that someone can use the knowledge given to educate others assists in advancing Indigenous rights. Moreover, Andrea is engaging in everyday resurgence by advancing knowledge and information. Spreading Indigenous knowledge and awareness about culture, traditions, and worldviews to non-Indigenous Canadians assists in decolonization and is critical for resurgence (Arnold, 2017; Simpson, 2011).

Promoting Indigenous culture and discussing issues is essential as it can help break down barriers and dismantle negative stereotypes. When discussing an offhanded comment made by classmates about Indigenous peoples, Lisa stated: *"…I just looked at some of my classmates and was like well, what do you mean? They just said well you hear all these things… I knew exactly what they meant. And that's the thing. I decided to educate them. I feel because I am educated, and I had a chance to teach them, to break those stereotypes they may hold. We are not all alcoholics or poor or in prison. And those who do not know a lot about Indigenous people can hold these negative views about them…which is wrong. Once they know more, they realize that they have built this image based on what others, or how others portray Indigenous peoples…which couldn't be further from the truth."*

As Lisa demonstrated, individuals in higher education still have and believe harmful ideologies associated with Indigenous peoples, highlighting how deeply ingrained racism is throughout society. The fact that Lisa calmly addressed these comments and chose to educate rather than get upset or angry is important. Breaking down stereotypes is an effective way to take control of the narrative. Addressing negative comments in an informative way is an effectively organized mental calculation. In other words, one has to stay calm and look for alternative strategies, where these women actively choose what they do, how they do it, and what they fight against.

Negative perceptions of Indigenous people have existed since the beginning of colonization (Baskin, 2020). Such views have led to many disparities and caused social stigmas associated with Indigenous peoples (Razack, 2000). Addressing negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples is vital in dismantling social and state-condoned discrimination and violence. Becoming more involved in the political arena is one way Indigenous women have begun to stand up for their rights and fight against injustice (Suzack, et al., 2010). This involvement is often defined as engagement.

For some participants, a vital element of being politically active is engagement. Engagement can be accomplished through traditional means of participation, such as voting or protesting. However, it can also be achieved by making others aware of Indigenous issues and promoting Indigenous identity. Nicole: *"I think being politically active is engaging. It is trying to make a difference. Being present…not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. It is working towards an end goal."* This comment goes back to how Indigenous women are engaged emotionally and mentally. Activism and politics engage Indigenous women beyond the obvious performance, but it also involves mental calculations and affective ties and attachments that they strategically deploy.

Feeling connected to the issues one engages in provides motivation that is all-encompassing. The belief that you can make a difference by being involved is important; it drives individuals to participate. Currently, the view that one person can make a difference has been impacted particularly in political matters; not concerning oneself with involvement due to the view that it will not impact the outcome is most apparent in elections and voter turnout. For Indigenous peoples, involvement is more than just physical. Moving past the physical is significant as

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Indigenous involvement goes beyond what is traditionally viewed as political participation to encompass the spiritual and emotional.

Physical, emotional, and spiritual involvement is embedded within Indigenous culture and community. Physical, emotional, and spiritual involvement is significant to Indigenous women's political participation as it contributes to their healing, cultural grounding, holistic well-being, and self-care. It provides spiritual empowerment, connection, and guidance and fosters community support and solidarity. Through nurturing and honouring these dimensions, Indigenous women are better equipped to contribute to positive change in their communities, advocate for their rights, and navigate political spaces.

Maggie: *"even just participating in your culture, being active in your community…it is political. Being proud of your heritage. Since the beginning of colonization, the Canadian state wanted to remove and assimilate Indigenous peoples…presenting your culture, it shows them that we are not going anywhere. Being politically active is asserting your right to be…protesting and standing up against those who wish to silence us. They need to know that we will not be left out of decision-making processes and that we have a voice…they need to listen."* The fact that Indigenous peoples are still present today goes against the goal of assimilation and eradication by European settlers and the very systems they established.

Maggie views her Indigeneity as something to be proud of and intrinsically connected to her political participation. In other words, it is her Indigeneity that drives her to participate. Maggie's discussion of why she believes being politically active is essential highlights vital elements in Indigenous resurgence. In particular, the engagement and promotion of culture and heritage provide an opportunity to reassert Indigenous belonging (Simpson, 2017). As will be shown below, participants indicated that their involvement allows them to build connections and strengthen their identity. They participate not because they are required to but because they want to.

Motivation: Because I can, I should

Earlier sections of this research sought to explain what it means to be political and the forms and content of political participation. Moving forward, attention is directed towards what motivates Indigenous women to be politically active. A significant aspect covered concerning

political participation was motivation. Many factors come into play regarding Indigenous women's motivation for political participation. Each participant was asked what motivates them to participate. Some factors include but are not limited to support from other Indigenous peoples, bringing awareness, educating oneself and others, intersectionality, enjoyment, and empowerment. During everyday acts of resistance, there are instances among Indigenous women of advocating for themselves and others. While in these situations, it may seem that they are acting separately from the larger Indigenous community, their intentions are guided by a broader goal of addressing colonialism and advancing Indigenous rights.

Participation is about a sense of belonging and connection which emerges from a sense of duty and care towards one's community. Motivation differs significantly among individuals and can often be based on personal factors, such as upbringing and interests. Motivation for being involved politically is something that was expressed by all Indigenous women involved in this research. Specifically, they are motivated by their Indigenous identity. Moreover, other commonalities among participants will be discussed in greater detail below.

Motivation for some is based on the fact they can be involved and wish to take advantage of the opportunities they have that others may not experience. As eloquently stated by Brittany: *"Because I can, I should."* Because I can, I should. While it may seem straightforward, the meaning behind this statement is inherently complex. The term 'should,' is used to indicate an obligation, duty, or correctness. This statement is rooted in one's sense of belonging, attachment, and 'being' Indigenous that emerges from their experiences, both a collective and personal history.

Can and should are similar, yet distinct. Just because one should and can do something does not mean they have to. Can also refers to knowing one's capacity and sense of power, and in some ways a consciousness of one's own privilege and being part of the hierarchy. As a result, an understanding emerges of obligation and responsibility to the community. It is an understanding of one's subjectivity as an individual and their connection to the larger community which one wants to uplift. Within the liberal democratic sense of an individual action in relation to the whole, this also speaks to an understanding of the political subject.

The intention behind this statement is important. In this context, they are used as definitive – meaning that for the women in this research, they are used as guarantees of participation. In

contrast, others may use these words as 'possibilities' for engagement. Additionally, should refers to one's obligation to their community which is tied to their sense of being Indigenous and their connection to other Indigenous peoples. As such, being Indigenous instills a sense of 'duty' to promote Indigenous rights and educate others to break down discrimination. This duty may be connected to personal experiences. For example, one is more likely to want to address racism if they or someone they know has been discriminated against based on race.

Bringing awareness about the issues that Indigenous peoples face and working towards creating a more stable future for Indigenous peoples was indicated as motivation for political participation. Gina: *"I hope to bring about more awareness and to get Canadians to be more focused, to think about how their actions and businesses and the government has impacted their lives and the well-being of others."* Speaking to the Canadian colonial administration remains an important goal, one that is centred on recognition politics. Gina's comment points to a sense of responsibility and engagement to better the collective. Resurgence is about Indigenous peoples nourishing their knowledge, stories, traditions, ways of being, worldviews, and languages (Lutz, Strzelczyk & Watchman, 2020). Non-Indigenous peoples in Canada need to critically engage with Indigenous perspectives (Hanson & Hampton, 2009). Bringing awareness to Canadians about Indigenous issues is crucial as it provides a sense of hope for future generations.

A connection can be made between being an Indigenous woman and acting with emotional, intellectual, and physical investment and complex engagement. Indigenous women often use their unique perspectives, strengths, and experiences to their engagement in countless aspects of life, including community, political, social, and cultural domains. Their engagement reflects the diverse ways in which they promote positive change, challenge systemic injustices, and contribute to their communities, acknowledging the holistic nature of the interconnectedness of their activism, knowledge, and experiences.

Caring about and placing hope in the future is central to Indigenous women's activism. Indigenous women's activism is often motivated by the revitalization and preservation of their cultural heritage (Suzack, et al., 2010). This hope for the future relates back to Indigenous women's commitment and concern for future generations. They recognize their ancestor's resiliency and draw strength from their knowledge systems, languages, and traditions (Lane, 2018). For Indigenous women, there is hope for the future which is rooted in ensuring the

continuation of their knowledge, cultural practices, and safeguarding the well-being and identity of future generations. Their activism and participation are discussed in relation to the survival of their lands, cultures, and communities. Intergenerational responsibility is of importance, driven by the need to develop a better future for future descendants (Carlson, Steinhauer & Goyette, 2013).

The idea of an almost inherent 'duty' to be involved is common among Indigenous women. Particularly, those involved in this research demonstrated a desire to promote Indigenous culture and develop a better world for future generations. Providing a more stable environment for future generations was explicitly discussed. For example, when asked what motivates her to participate, Erin stated: *"The future…knowing that there are kids that are being born that…they shouldn't be living in a society where the generation before are not doing things right….we are not doing things right…they should be able to grow up in the world knowing that it is rainbows and sunshine…and some rain…and not that "oh my cousin just got murdered."* The desire to enhance the next generation's lives is completed by creating a better environment for them and training them to continue fighting for the advancement of Indigenous rights.

Indigenous women are working towards creating a future where the rights of Indigenous peoples are realized, recognized, and respected (Carlson, Steinhauer & Goyette, 2013). Understanding the future is important; it is the hope for a better future and an optimism which drives their political participation. There is hope in dismantling oppressive structures and achieving inclusivity, equity, and justice for Indigenous communities by promoting self-determination. Discussing how to increase involvement and the importance of fellowship programs in advancing Indigenous rights, Brittany stated: *"Wouldn't it be amazing if we had a fellowship for Indigenous women in leadership…in Toronto there are so many organizations, so many women in leadership positions, but how are we training the next generation? We also have a growing aging population that were more active. I feel almost compelled to keep going because no one is taking their places."* An important aspect of Indigenous resurgence is preparing future generations to embrace their Indigeneity and continue efforts to advance Indigenous rights. Indigenous women have worked tirelessly to create a more favourable environment for future generations. Therefore, it is not surprising that Brittany is concerned

about how Indigenous women will be prepared to continue to advocate for Indigenous women's rights.

A chance to teach others and learn from them is an interesting outlook given by one participant. Hailey: *"For me, the personal is political as the saying goes…I don't feel that it can be separated. Yes, you can show up at a march and share your presence, your physical body, to take up space and be there, but also every conversation is educating someone on something."* The slogan the personal is political refers to the belief that the personal experiences of women are rooted in gender inequality and their political situation (Hanisch, 1969).

The slogan "the personal is political" was used to highlight the connections between larger political and social structures to personal everyday experiences (Swan, 2020, p. 117). While this slogan is often attributed to the second-wave feminist movement (Lee, 2007), it can be applied to Indigenous women's political participation. For Indigenous women, the personal and the political cannot be separated from wider colonial struggles. This inability to separate political matters from personal struggles makes Indigenous women's political participation unique. As suggested earlier, being Indigenous is political and the fact that Indigenous peoples are still here, despite the continued systemic violence and discrimination they have endured, is resistance in its purest form.

Going back to the statement, because I can, I should, we must look at why Indigenous women take on activism. The ability or desire to be involved is not just physical; it goes beyond physical ability. Going beyond the physical was echoed by several participants. Indigenous women's involvement goes into their sense of who they are as Indigenous. Taking up Indigenous politics beyond the physical refers to an understanding that Indigenous issues encompass concerns that are more than just material or tangible. It includes acknowledging the cultural, spiritual, and deeply rooted connections that Indigenous peoples and communities have with their traditions, history, and land. One may have the financial means, emotional strength, spiritual determination, and personal connections for political involvement. Each of these factors can play out individually or in combination.

Several participants, acknowledging being in a privileged position (through education obtainment), expressed their desire to use their position to advance the rights of Indigenous women and members of the Indigenous community. Some used their position and connections at

work to support Indigenous women. Notably, the desire to support and encourage others is something that Indigenous resurgence thrives from. It is about Indigenous peoples and communities being sites of regeneration and power, moving away from the state (Lutz, Strzelczyk & Watchman, 2020).

This research initially used standard categorizations of political participation; however, after conducting analysis on the interviews and listening to participants, it was found that acts of political participation and resistance are complex. While not everything can be considered participation, participants showed that a significant amount of Indigenous women's actions, which go against colonialism, are political in nature. Frequently, Indigenous women engage in resistance within the very systems that have sought to supress them. In particular, Indigenous women have used educational attainment as a tool to advance Indigenous rights and dismantle settler ideologies. An essential aspect of political participation is the informal nature and community and everyday aspects of participation among Indigenous women.

Chapter Summary

As demonstrated in the sections above, community connections, identity, and motivation significantly influence the ways in which Indigenous women participate politically. While each factor is complex, they often intersect. Indigenous women's informal political activism occurs at the everyday community level, which may also include one's development of Indigenous identity, or a reclaiming of Indigeneity at the personal, individual level. However, the acts that Indigenous women engage in are rooted in something larger than the self, a sense of connectivity and Indigenous historicity.

Theme One: Community Connections showed that Indigenous women who have strong connections to their communities indicated a need to be involved in activities which benefit their community. These connections, in turn, also provide encouragement and support to become involved and build social networks. These connections can assist in amplifying the voices of Indigenous women, creating opportunities for advocacy and collective action. Indigenous women's political participation and resistance are often grounded in their community and cultural contexts. Through strong connections to other Indigenous peoples and communities, Indigenous women can draw on cultural practices and knowledge to inform their resistance and political engagement.

Through their activism and resistance, Indigenous women are trying to address systemic inequalities and advance the rights of their communities. Understanding how collaboration and unity are effective in positive change, the activism and resistance of Indigenous women are often rooted in collective action, community engagement, and building solidarity with other marginalized groups (Simpson, 2017). Fostering interconnected and inclusive movements, Indigenous women work towards a more equitable future by challenging injustice. Reconstructing and reembracing one's personal and Indigenous collective history is part of a remaking identity. This can be full of risks, caveats, and conflict, but it is also practicing and engaging with Indigeneity. Indigenous women are reconstructing their identity, revisioning their sense of self and their connection to the community.

Theme Two: Making identity claims is one way in which Indigenous women come to participate politically. For instance, an individual who strongly identifies with her community and culture is more likely to engage in political activities in which community interests are promoted. Those who feel their cultural identity is not being valued and were told to suppress or turn away from their Indigenous heritage, found these experiences to be a factor in their resistance. Finally, **Theme Three:** Motivation, shows that many factors can influence the motivation of Indigenous women to engage politically. These factors include but are not limited to educating others and creating a more stable environment for future generations.

The strength and determination of Indigenous women are demonstrated daily. It was shown in this research that identity, political participation, and resistance have a mutually beneficial relationship. Meaning that identity promotes activism and activism supports identity. Like walking a tightrope, without identity on one side, and activism on the other, there is a lack of balance. While identifying with Indigeneity influences Indigenous women's activism and vice versa, community connections and resistance can exist separately. It is the need and desire to build a sense of community with other Indigenous women which leads them to activism. Therefore, while not having a connection to the Indigenous community is a barrier, it does not completely stop Indigenous women from becoming political. In some instances, the lack of community may encourage them to further develop their Indigenous politics.

Overall, community connections, identity, and motivation impact Indigenous women's political participation in various and complex ways. Indigenous women demonstrate an

emotional and physical investment in addressing historical and current injustices that Indigenous peoples face. An emotional investment often drives their commitment to resilience, healing, and encouraging positive change within their communities. Moreover, their physical investment is shown through their active participation in collective actions, cultural practices, and community events. In order to increase political participation among Indigenous women, there is a need for programs and policies which support and promote cultural revitalization and preservation, the development of strong Indigenous communities, and encourage leadership among Indigenous women.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The lived experiences and unique perspectives of Indigenous women involved in this research demonstrate the importance of identity and community connections in motivating their political participation. Indigenous women actively promote the needs of their communities and seek to address structural inequalities on both individual and collective levels. Examining what impacts Indigenous women's political participation and resistance is essential for several reasons. By understanding existing barriers, we can promote gender equity and provide better support for Indigenous women's inclusion in decision-making processes.

Understanding the barriers that Indigenous women face can assist in addressing the root causes of these inequalities and create more equitable opportunities for Indigenous women to participate. Moreover, there is a need to acknowledge the importance of Indigenous women's political participation as being crucial for the legitimacy and strength of democratic institutions. In the end, examining and understanding what impacts Indigenous women's political participation and resistance is essential for addressing structural inequalities, promoting gender equity, strengthening democracy, and recognizing unique challenges.

The significance of Indigenous women's political participation, activism, and resistance needs to be acknowledged. Indigenous women's engagement is rooted in their identities, and their identities are a driving force in their activism. They hold deep connections with their communities and are continually working towards recognizing their inherent responsibilities and rights. By engaging and actively participating, Indigenous women are catalysts for transformative change. Indigenous women continue to foster cultural revitalization, challenge systemic inequalities, and advocate for Indigenous rights. Through their activism and resistance, Indigenous women challenge societal narratives, amplify their voices, and reclaim their agency.

Essential to building a more inclusive and equitable society is the recognition of Indigenous women, acknowledging the historical and ongoing marginalization they face, and working actively to dismantle the systems of oppression that deter their full participation (Picq, 2010). As demonstrated and highlighted by those involved in this research, Indigenous women's activism is deeply intertwined with their identity and community connections. They draw strength and support from their relationships, cultural traditions, and heritage, which are the basis for their

collective mobilization and resistance. Indigenous women's activism is fueled by the pursuit of political and social justice, cultural continuity, environmental stewardship, and a commitment to future generations (Simpson, 2017). The contributions of Indigenous women are critical in tackling intersecting forms of oppression that Indigenous communities face. By focusing on Indigenous women's perspectives and experiences, their unique insights can enrich discourse and foster greater recognition of their importance in changing the political landscape.

Limitations of Research

There were several limitations to this research which need to be addressed. These limitations include the COVID-19 pandemic, participants' education, and respondents' political involvement. Each limitation will be discussed, followed by the impact, if any, it had on the research findings and the possibility for future research. The most significant limitation of this research, which led to various obstacles in completing this research, was the COVID-19 pandemic. Right before the interview phase of this research, the COVID-19 pandemic began. The outbreak impacted the recruitment of participants, and due to health concerns, conducting face-to-face interviews was not feasible. As a result, all in-person interviews that were scheduled were postponed. Weeks turned into months and then years. As a result, some individuals who agreed to be interviewed later declined due to personal reasons. Since interviews were conducted over the phone rather than in person, there were disadvantages, such as being unable to observe body language and behaviour, making it harder to develop a personal connection.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the participation of individuals, questions had to be edited to account for these changes. In addition, the global pandemic caused a delay in completing the research in a timely manner. While recruitment and interview methods changed, the research adapted, and a conscious effort was made to allow participants to control the interview process and address concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, individuals were in control of the method (on the telephone or via video conference), the topics (within the area of political participation), the length, time, and the interview date. Importantly, this control further strengthened the decolonizing framework of the research.

Another aspect of this research that the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced is the responses given by participants concerning their connections to the community, feelings of belonging and views about their identity. As shown within the literature, community connections

among Indigenous peoples have been impacted by the pandemic (Burnett, et al., 2022). One of the many impacts that COVID-19 has had on Indigenous women is the disruption of traditional community ceremonies and gatherings, which are important for strengthening connections and maintaining cultural identity. As a result of the pandemic, numerous Indigenous women adapted to new ways of cultural practices. For the women involved in this research, in-person attendance moved to online gatherings. With many meetings and community events being moved online, opportunities for organizing and networking were limited. Moreover, attention and resources needed to address longstanding issues facing Indigenous communities were diverted because of the pandemic, increasing difficulties in advocating for change.

Due to the avenues through which participants were recruited (primarily through the University of Windsor), all interview participants involved in this research were college or university-educated. As such, this is a significant factor to consider, as previous research suggests that education plays a significant role in political participation. Although other avenues of recruitment were used (such as sharing information online, networking, and participant referral), this failed to diversify those interested in participating. Regardless, all those who agreed to participate were included in the research.

The fact that all participants have a post-secondary education, which was expected based on the university as the main recruitment venue, did not significantly impact the purpose and findings of the research – regardless, this study set out to understand the motivations and barriers for Indigenous women's political participation. Future research would benefit from recruiting outside of academia to analyze the differences. Based on those involved, questions were designed to understand these factors – the fact that the questions were – the barriers to participation, and motivations – allowed for the incorporation of factors which impact participation. While all those involved in this research had a post-secondary education, this does not diminish the importance of the research. However, it does open the door to future research to gain information on Indigenous women without a post-secondary education to compare results.

This research began with the goal of speaking to politically active individuals and those who are not politically active. After further reflection and consideration, it was determined that those who understood themselves to not be political may see themselves as political subjects, which does not assist in advancing the goals of this research. Only those who were politically active

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came forward to participate. This could be based on a reluctance to discuss political issues they are unfamiliar with or believe they would not have information to contribute. Based on current literature, this limitation is not surprising since involvement in the study could be viewed as political participation; more involved individuals would be more likely to reach out. Regardless of political involvement, the barriers and motivations for political participation were explored. Surprisingly, some participants did not feel they were politically active, in terms of the standard definition. Before starting the interviews, several participants stated that they did not know how informative or helpful they would be as they did not consider themselves to be politically active. However, based on the information provided by the Indigenous women in this research, their involvement with their heritage, culture, and community is political.

There were several barriers that Indigenous women involved in this research described as impacting their political participation, which included a lack of connections, time, and money. While a lack of financial means and time were physical barriers, a lack of connections is emotional. Financial difficulties and lack of time were dealt with by seeking out alternative avenues of participation that did not require travel, and that could be done online. A lack of connections was more challenging to describe and overcome. However, although a lack of connections prevented Indigenous women from being comfortable with participating, it was a need to develop these connections which influenced them to participate.

Moving Forward

Although the COVID-19 pandemic caused some of the limitations described above, it also opened avenues for future research. Information was collected in this research concerning the impact of the pandemic on political participation among Indigenous women. This addressed barriers attributed to the pandemic and those that exist separately. While it was outside the scope of this research, moving forward it would be interesting to see what long-term impacts the pandemic has had on the way Indigenous people participate and the issues they involve themselves with. Indigenous women need to be given the chance to guide the research process. Although it may take longer and increases the amount of work for the researcher, it provides an opportunity to advance Indigenous knowledge properly.

Overall, as shown throughout this research, Indigenous women not only participate in larger acts of resistance but are also continually engaging in everyday acts of resistance. Often,

everyday acts are overlooked or undervalued within existing literature focusing on Indigenous political participation. However, the everyday acts of resistance carried out by Indigenous women play an important role in Indigenous resurgence. Through such acts, Indigenous women can preserve traditional cultural practices and knowledge, strengthen Indigenous communities, and challenge dominant power structures. Moreover, their activism is grounded by their connection to the land and their experiences of being Indigenous. Indigenous identity and community have provided Indigenous peoples with a larger sense of self. As such, participants provided important information on their involvement, demonstrating various ways in which their everyday acts of resistance are rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and being:

The preservation of cultural practices and traditional knowledge: Everyday acts of resistance can assist in preserving cultural practices and traditional knowledge that have been destroyed or suppressed through colonization (Simpson, 2017). These acts include practicing cultural traditions, such as traditional healing practices and medicines, and passing down traditional knowledge to future generations.

Challenging patriarchy and colonialism: Everyday acts of resistance that Indigenous women engage in challenging the patriarchal and colonial structures of power which have historically oppressed and excluded them. These acts range from large acts of activism, such as engaging in protests, to small acts, such as asserting their rights to speak their language or practice their cultural traditions.

Challenging misconceptions and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples: Indigenous women can challenge misconceptions and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples through everyday acts of resistance. Indigenous women can challenge colonial narratives that have characterized them as sexualized, submissive, or passive by engaging in their cultural practices and asserting their rights.

Building solidarity and community: Everyday acts of resistance also strengthen Indigenous communities by creating networks of support and solidarity. These acts include engagement in political advocacy to tackle issues impacting Indigenous communities, providing support for individuals and families, and organizing community events.

Each of these themes are demonstrated throughout this research, and in the end, understanding and acknowledging the everyday acts of resistance that Indigenous women engage in is critical in assisting Indigenous resurgence. Through the preservation of traditional cultural practices and knowledge, challenging patriarchy, colonialism and stereotypes, and building solidarity and community, Indigenous women have a significant role in Indigenous resurgence.

Future Initiatives

Indigenous women's contribution to the advancement of Indigenous rights is evident. The results of this research suggest that there is a need to develop more programs geared toward Indigenous women that can support political involvement and provide identity support. Based on the information provided by the Indigenous women involved in this research, several initiatives can assist in increasing the participation of Indigenous women and preparing future generations. These include:

- Community Engagement Programs: can provide opportunities for Indigenous women to build support systems for political participation and engage with their community. These programs can include initiatives which promote participation and dialogue through community events, education and outreach campaigns.
- Identity and Cultural Workshops: can help Indigenous women connect with their community and culture, increasing their sense of belonging and identity. These programs can provide Indigenous women with information on traditional ceremonies, language, and knowledge, engaging in discussions of the intersection of politics and culture.
- Advocacy and Lobbying Training: can help Indigenous women learn how to engage with decision-makers and government officials, advocating for their communities. Training can be provided on speaking in public, lobbying techniques, and policy analysis.
- Mentorship Programs: These programs can connect Indigenous women with role models and experienced leaders who can offer support and guidance through political arenas. Additionally, opportunities for networking and building strong relationships with other Indigenous women can be achieved through such programs.
- Leadership Development Programs: can provide Indigenous women with the knowledge and skills needed to participate in leadership roles both politically and within the

community. These programs can address the experiences and needs unique to Indigenous women, which include the discrimination they experience and the impact of colonialism.

Each of these programs, through implementation, can assist in empowering and supporting Indigenous women. Moreover, Indigenous women can be encouraged to engage in political processes while at the same time promoting a strong sense of community and identity. Indigenous women have been subjects and objects of research for too long. It is now time for them to be included as active participants. Their influence and knowledge should not be understated, and moving forward, Indigenous women need to be properly acknowledged as important political actors.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Seeking Indigenous/Aboriginal women (over the age of 18) that reside in Canada as participants for phone interviews, which will focus on political participation. Participants will be given a $25 Amazon Gift Card as a thank you for their time. This research is for a Doctoral Dissertation which seeks to gain a better understanding of political participation among Indigenous women in Canada and their connections to the Indigenous community.

This work will be used to empower Indigenous women by giving them a voice to express their knowledge on issues they have long been excluded from. Moreover, results will contribute to the Indigenous literature from the perspective of Indigenous women. For more information or to schedule and interview please contact: grozellr@uwindsor.ca

It is hoped that results can be used to address barriers that exists around Indigenous women's political participation and work towards advancing methods that have and continue to be used.

Survey Information Letter and Consent 2019

Project Lead: Renée Grozelle.

Mrs. Grozelle is a P.h.D. Candidate at the University of Windsor, Ontario

Purpose of Project: This research is focused on Indigenous women and their involvement or lack of involvement in political matters concerning violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. This survey seeks to understand the ways in which Indigenous women understand political participation concerning combating violence and discrimination.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you identify as an Indigenous woman who is over the age of 18 and currently residing in Canada. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. You may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. If you do choose to withdraw at the time of the survey, any information you provided will be discarded unless you explicitly permit your information to be kept and analyzed.

What are you expected to do? If you agree to participate you will fill out a survey with questions concerning your past and current political participation concerning issues of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women. You are responsible for answering as honestly as possible. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Is there any way that participation in this study could harm you? Any personal information that you chose to share will be kept private and confidential. There are minimal risks or harms. Some questions may be uncomfortable or upsetting as the issue of political engagement in addressing violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls can be a sensitive subject. You have the right not to answer questions that you feel uncomfortable with. Additionally, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that you provide will be destroyed.

Will being in this study help you in any way? This study may help you gain a better understanding about political participation. Your participation in this research may have lasting social impacts concerning how Indigenous women participate in political issues concerning gendered violence and discrimination; the barriers they may experience; and results may assist in identifying future strategies to overcome such barriers. Results from this survey will be used to compose interview questions which will take into account the experiences and knowledge of Indigenous women in regards to political participation. The overall results of this study may be used in future research.

How will privacy be maintained? The answers you provide in this survey will remain anonymous unless you explicitly indicate that you are interested in being contacted (via e-mail) to participate in the interview phase. All material will be kept in a secure location, in a locked cabinet or protected by encryption and password (if electronic) under supervision. Only Dr. Ku

and the primary researcher Renée Grozelle will have access to these documents. Documents will be stored for up to one year after the research is completed, at which point they will be destroyed (shredded).

Results of study: Results of the study will be made available to all participants who wish to view them. Alternatively, you can access the results by contacting the project lead, Renée Grozelle.

Questions, Concerns, or Complaints:

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Renée Grozelle.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the University of Windsor's Office of the Research Ethics Board (ethics@uwindsor.ca).

Participant Consent:

Participation in this survey is completely your choice. You have the right to refuse to participate in this research. If you decide to take part, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact.

By clicking yes, you are indicating:

1. That you have read and understand the information sheet,
2. That you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records,
3. That you have had an opportunity to ask questions to clarify any additional information, and
4. That you consent to participate in this study.

APPENDIX C

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Demographics

I would like to ask you some questions about [yourself].

Instructions: Choose the response that you feel best applies for each of the questions

1. What is your current age?

a) 18 – 25
b) 26 – 30
c) 31 – 40
d) 41+
e) Prefer not to say

2. What gender do you identify as?
a) Male
b) Female
c) Non-Gender Binary
d) Two-Spirited
e) Other (please specify) _____
f) Prefer not to say

3. What is your current level of education?

a) No Education Received
b) Primary
c) Secondary
d) Foundation Program or High School Diploma
e) University
f) Post-Graduate
g) Unsure/Don't Know
h) Prefer not to say

4. How do you identify?
a.) First Nations (North American Indian) non-status
b.) First Nations status
c.) Métis (registered nationally or with an organization)
d.) Métis (non-registered)
e.) Inuk (Inuit)
f.) Other (please specify) _____
g.) Unsure/Don't Know
h.) Prefer not to say

5. Where in Canada have you resided (you can select more than one)?

a) Newfoundland
b) Prince Edward Island
c) Nova Scotia
d) New Brunswick
e) Quebec
f) Ontario
g) Manitoba
h) Saskatchewan
i) Alberta
j) British Columbia
k) Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon
l) Don't Know
m) Prefer not to say

6. If you have resided in Ontario, what region(s) (chose locations that are the closest to the vicinity- you can select more than one answer)?

Northern Ontario
a.) Kenora
b.) North Bay
c.) Sault St. Marie
d.) Thunder Bay
e.) Greater Sudbury
f.) Timmins
g.) Other _____

Southern Ontario
a.) Toronto
b.) Ottawa
c.) Mississauga
d.) Brampton
e.) Hamilton
f.) London
g.) Markham
h.) Vaughan
i.) Kitchener-Waterloo
j.) Windsor
k.) Other _____

REDUCE? – Southern or Northern Ontario

7. Which best describes your past neighbourhood(s) (you can select more than one answer)?
a) Rural
b) Urban
c) Both
d) Suburban
e) A reserve or other Indigenous community

f) Other

g) Don't Know

h) Prefer not to say

8. Which Best describes your current Neighbourhood?

a) Rural

b) Urban

c) Both

d) Suburban

e) A reserve or other Indigenous community

f) Other

g) Don't Know

h) Prefer not to say

9. Have you ever lived near a First Nations reserve community?

a.) Yes

b.) No

c.) Unsure/Don't Know

10. Are you aware of any Aboriginal organizations in your current location, which are run by and provide services for Aboriginal people?

a.) Yes

b.) No

c.) Unsure/Don't Know

d.) Prefer not to say

11. Where you aware of any Aboriginal organizations in your previous locations, which are run by and provide services for Aboriginal people?

a.) Yes

b.) No

c.) Unsure/Don't Know

d.) Prefer not to say

12. Do you personally have contact with Aboriginal people often, occasionally, rarely or never?

a.) Often

b.) Occasionally

c.) Rarely

d.) Never

e.) Unsure/Don't Know

Please respond to each question:

If you strongly agree with a statement, then you would select a number close to 7. If you feel neutral about a statement, then you would select a number close to 4. If you strongly disagree with a statement, then you would select a number close to 1.

1. I am proud of the fact that I am Indigenous
2. My Indigenous ancestry is important to me
3. Being Indigenous is NOT important to my sense of what kind of person I am
4. My Indigenous identity belongs to me personally. It has nothing to do with my relationships with other Indigenous peoples
5. I have a clear sense of my Indigenous heritage and what it means for me
6. Standing up for Indigenous women's rights is an important aspect of being an Indigenous woman
7. Engaging in issues that address violence and discrimination against Indigenous women is important to me
8. There are a number of opportunities for Indigenous women to get involved in political issues
9. I find that discussing political issues is important
10. I am committed to improving the social conditions of Indigenous women
11. I believe my generation can help shape the political and moral directions of society
12. I often reflect on the meaning of my experiences in terms of political and civic issues (for example, decision-making)
13. My personal experiences provoke me to reflect on government policy and the need for enacting social change
14. Issues of violence and discrimination against Indigenous woman need to be discussed more to bring about action and social change
15. I question the effectiveness of individuals' actions in terms of bringing about change
16. Individual actions can bring about awareness concerning issues of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls.
17. I believe that engaging in political matters will help break down negative societal images of Indigenous woman
18. As an Indigenous woman, I feel a sense of responsibility to be politically involved
19. Engaging in political issues has encouraged my sense of belonging

General Involvement/Knowledge

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

1.) I consider myself well informed about Indigenous women's rights
a.) Strongly Disagree
b.) Disagree
c.) Neutral
d.) Agree Strongly
e.) Agree
f.) Unsure/Don't Know

2.) I follow the news (online or in-print) concerning issues of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls in Canada
a.) Strongly Disagree
b.) Disagree
c.) Neutral
d.) Agree Strongly
e.) Agree
f.) Unsure/Don't Know

3.) In the past 12 months, how often have you discussed issues concerning violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls?
a.) At least once a week
b.) At least once a month
c.) Less than once a month
d.) Not at all in the past 12 months
e.) Don't Know/Unsure

4.) I have discussed my views on Indigenous women's rights online (for example, on Facebook, Twitter, Linkden, Instagram, Youtube, etc.)
a.) Strongly Disagree
b.) Disagree
c.) Neutral
d.) Agree Strongly
e.) Agree
f.) Unsure/Don't Know

5.) I am unsure how to get involved with issues concerning violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls
a.) Strongly Disagree
b.) Disagree
c.) Neutral
d.) Agree Strongly
e.) Agree
f.) Unsure/Don't Know

6.) I agree with the ways in which Indigenous women's organizations are addressing violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls in Canada
a.) Strongly Disagree
b.) Disagree
c.) Neutral
d.) Agree Strongly
e.) Agree
f.) Unsure/Don't Know

7.) Overall, how much impact do you think people like you can have in raising awareness about violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls?
a.) No impact at all
b.) A small impact
c.) A moderate impact
d.) Or, a big impact
e.) Unsure/Don't Know

Please answer Yes or No to the following questions

1. I use the Internet to share my views on issues of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls
2. I feel that as an Indigenous person, it is important that I express my views and concerns about the treatment of Indigenous women and girls
3. I would participate more in political issues if there were more ways to engage with initiatives and events
4. I feel that Indigenous women's issues are not discussed enough in general
5. I feel that violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls is not discussed enough
6. I feel that the general public needs to be more informed concerning issues of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls
7. I feel that there are not enough avenues in which Indigenous women can contribute to the advancements of Indigenous women's rights
8. I feel that more work needs to be done by organizations in terms of reaching out to Indigenous communities
9. I feel that education is the best way to address violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls

Levels and Types of Political Activity

Please indicate if you have ever participated in the following political activities:

- Volunteering/volunteered for a political organization (not Indigenous)
- Volunteering/volunteered for an Indigenous community organization
- Volunteering/volunteered for an Indigenous women's community organization
- Joined a club/group
- Sharing political opinions with others
- Signed a petition for/against government or political issue
- Engaged in protest Activity (a demonstration, riot, protest, political gathering, etc.)
- Attending a political gathering
- Attending talks or lectures about political issues
- Posted/discussed political issues on social media (for example, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, etc.) and/or video sharing (for example, YouTube)

- Engaged with Indigenous women's rights groups through social media (ex. following, commenting, liking, sharing posts) or via e-mail
- Engaged/Written to advocacy groups (ex. The NWAC, Amnesty International, etc.) not online

1.) If you answered yes to any of the above questions, which of these activities, if any, deal with addressing violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and/or girls in Canada? (Please circle/click all that apply):
a.) Volunteering/volunteered for a political organization (not Indigenous)
b.) Volunteering/volunteered for an Indigenous organization
c.) Volunteering/volunteered for an Indigenous women's organization
d.) Joined a club/group
e.) Sharing political opinions with others
f.) Signed a petition for/against government
g.) Engaged in protest Activity (a demonstration, riot, protest, political gathering, etc.)
h.) Donated money for a political issue/cause/organization
i.) Attending a political gathering
j.) Attending talks or lectures about political issues
k.) Writing letters to elected officials
l.) Posted/discussed political issues on social media (for example, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, etc.) and/or video sharing (for example, YouTube)
m.) Engaged with Indigenous women's rights groups through social media
n.) Engaged/Written to advocacy groups (ex. The NWAC, Amnesty International, etc.) not online
o.) Other (please specify) _____

2.) In the previous year, how often did you participate in any political activities?
a.) Never
b.) 1-2 times
c.) 3-5 times
d.) 6 times or above

Which of the followings would be the reason(s) for you NOT to participate in political activities? (can select more than 1 option)
1.) Lack of interest
2.) Lack of confidence to change the society and the government
3.) Deficient knowledge on political situation and ways to join
4.) Agreed and satisfied with the current political system
5.) Disagreed and dissatisfied with the current political system
6.) Other (please specify) _____

How prominent do you think the issues of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women are?

Would you be interested in participating in an interview at a later date that will explore the issues discussed more in-depth?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide your e-mail address _____

Do you have any comments or concerns regarding addressing violence and discrimination against Indigenous women and girls in Canada?

Finally, would you like to add anything regarding the themes covered within this survey?

LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW RESEARCH

Title of Study: Indigenous Women's Political Participation in Canada.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Renée S. Grozelle, from the department of Sociology & Criminology at the University of Windsor in which results will be contributed to a dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact *Renée S. Grozelle (519) and/or Dr. Jane Ku (519)-253-3000 x2228 CHS 260-2.*

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research is focused on Indigenous (Aboriginal) women and their involvement or lack of involvement in political matters. The interview conducted seeks to understand the ways in which Indigenous women understand political participation, identity, and community connections.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you identify as an Indigenous woman who is over the age of 18, currently residing in Canada. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. You may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. If you choose to withdraw from the interview, any information you provided will be discarded unless you explicitly permit your information to be analyzed.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to: discuss issues concerning political participation. Personal questions which can identify you will not be discussed. The interview will take approximately 20 minutes and will take place over the phone or video platform, such on Skype, or Teams. The interview will be recorded. Once you have completed the interview, you can choose to have a copy of your responses that will be typed out and you can edit anything you wish. If you have any questions prior to, during, or after the interview, please contact Renée S. Grozelle.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Is there any way that participation in this study could harm you? Any personal information that you chose to share will be kept private and confidential. There are minimal risks or harms. Some questions may be uncomfortable or upsetting as the issue of political engagement in addressing identity and discussion of community connections can be a sensitive subject. You have the right not to answer questions that you feel uncomfortable with. Additionally, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that you provide will be destroyed.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Will being in this study help you in any way? This study may help you gain a better understanding about political participation. Your participation in this research may have lasting social impacts concerning how Indigenous women participate in political issues and the impact that identity and connections to the community have; the barriers they may experience; and results may assist in identifying future strategies to overcome such barriers. The overall results of this

study may be used in future research to assist in increasing the political participation of Indigenous women throughout Canada.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

All efforts will be made by the researcher to meet with interview participants in a location that is convenient for the participant. If a participant wishes to be interviewed using a video conference call or on the telephone this can be arranged. Each individual who participates in the interview will receive a 25$ gift card for either Amazon, Tim Hortons, or Walmart.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

How will privacy be maintained? The answers you provide in this interview will remain anonymous (the use of aliases will only be used) unless you explicitly indicate that you are interested in being contacted (via e-mail or other means) to edit the information you provided. All material will be kept in a secure location, in a locked cabinet or protected by encryption and password (if electronic) under supervision. Only Dr. Jane Ku, Associate Professor, Sociology/Women & Gender Studies at the University of Windsor and the primary researcher Renée Grozelle will have access to these documents. Documents will be stored for up to one year after the research is completed, at which point they will be destroyed (shredded).

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participant Consent: Participation in this interview is completely your choice. You have the right to refuse to participate in this research. If you decide to take part, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Participation may be terminated by the investigator without consent of the participant if there is reason to believe that information given has been falsified. Results will only be collected once all questions are answered and once the interview has been typed, the participant will have one month edit the information they have provided. Once you have completed the interview, you have two weeks to contact the head researcher if you wish to remove yourself from the study. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact the head researcher or research supervisor.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Results of study: Results of the study will be made available to all participants who wish to view them once the research is completed. Alternatively, you can request access to your results at anytime by contacting the project lead, Renée Grozelle.

E-mail address:
Date when results of interview are available: January 20th, 2020

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____   _____

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date:

First let me start by thanking you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

The research you are being asked to complete is for a doctoral dissertation at the University of Windsor. This research seeks to gain a better understanding of Indigenous women's political participation on various issues of importance to them.

The information you provide will be used to assist in my Doctoral research working towards the advancement of Indigenous women's rights and contributing knowledge to the literature. This interview should take approximately one hour. All answers collected will be kept confidential.

I want to guarantee your anonymity. I am using aliases rather than real names. No quote will be directly attributable to you and any identifying information will not be included.

Alias:

Do I have your permission to tape record this interview?

Do I have your permission to use data from this interview for my dissertation and related research?

Can you tell me about yourself?

Prompts:

- Have you always lived in Windsor?
- Past locations of residence
- Connections to the Indigenous community?
- Did you attend university or college? If yes – do you feel that school assisted you in participating politically?

Do you have a status card? Or have you ever inquired about one?

- How has it impacted your life and sense of identity?
- How has it impacted your activism?
- Have you always been in- touch with your Indigenous roots/heritage?
- Was there anything that made you interested in learning about your Indigenous identity?

What do you think is the biggest issue impacting Indigenous women today?

Prompts:

- Role of the media
- Role of government officials

- Indigenous groups
- Individuals
- Society as a whole

What issues do you find important?

How do you take up issues that are of importance to you?

What keeps you motivated to participate?

What made you want to participate politically?

Prompts:

Letter writing, discussions with friends and or family, joining an Indigenous group?

What political activities are you involved in?

When did you first become involved?

Prompts

Why did you become involved?

How did you become involved in political issues?

What are some of the reasons why you participate politically?

Prompts

- What were your roles in these activities?
- Has your involvement changed/impacted you? How?
- Has your involvement impacted any relationships you have with family and/or friends? How?
- What do you or did you hope to achieve?

Are there any barriers which impact your involvement?

- What are the challenges and difficulties for being politically involved?
- Do you know others who are politically active? Have you discussed issues with them?

What does it mean to be politically active?

- Does it mean bringing about social change to the whole group?

- Is it something related to who you are?

Recently, we have moved to a more digital age. Do you believe technology has helped or hindered the advancement of Indigenous rights?

- Do you use technology often?

- Have you used it to become more involved politically?
- Are there any issues you follow online?
- Issues that need to be addressed more often

What do you think about past Indigenous issues that have sparked involvement?

Such as Oka, Idle No More, MMIWG, the Pipeline Protests?

So, you discussed your experiences and engagement…Do you see yourself as politically active?

Connections to the Community

Have you ever lived in an area where you had a greater connection to the Indigenous community? Please explain.

Are you close to the Indigenous community? (i.e., do you have any connections to a reserve, do you practice or possess any Indigenous beliefs and/or customs?)

If No: how do you feel that your lack of connections to an Indigenous community impact your overall sense of belonging? Has it impacted your involvement in political issues? In what ways?

How did you develop a sense of Indigeniety without connections to a reserve?

If Yes: do you feel that your connection to the Indigenous community has assisted, you in your participation in Indigenous issues? Do you feel that if you were not connected to the Indigenous community that you would participate in Indigenous issues?

How important do you feel a connection to the Indigenous community is in terms of a person's political participation in Indigenous issues?

Covid-19 Questions:

- What impacts do you think covid-19 has had on political participation?
- How has it impacted you and your future involvement?
- What do you think can be done?

End of Interview

I would like to thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to say about the issues covered?

INTERVIEW CODES

Physical Appearance and Identity: The feeling of belonging or not belonging linked to one's personal appearance.

Ideas for Increasing Engagement: Ways to promote political engagement of Indigenous women or Indigenous peoples in general.

Colonialism: Discussion of colonialism and its impact.

Life Challenges

Sub Code 1 Physical Challenges: issues that have physically impacted an individual.

Sub Code 2 Mental Challenges: issues that have mentally impacted an individual.

Connection to Community: Discussion around one's connection or lack of connection to the Indigenous community and the impact that it has on their own sense of self and their participation.

Sub Code 1 Lack of Connections:

Sub Code 2 Lack of Opportunities:

Sub Code 3 Connections between Groups:

Impact of COVID: The various ways that COVID-19 has impacted participation among individuals.

Issues of Importance: Issues that the participant feels are important in terms of Indigenous women.

Heritage: Discussion of family activities, customs, beliefs.

Future Generations: Passing down knowledge to future generations or discussing the importance of making things better for the next generation of Indigenous peoples.

Technology

Social Media: Facebook and/or other online platforms.

Impact of Technology: The ways in which technology has impacted political involvement or connections.

Information

Lack of Information: Discussion of how a lack of information is presented to or about Indigenous peoples.

Incorrect Information: Discussion of how incorrect information can cause negative effects on individuals.

Support Systems: Various systems of support which assist in an individuals participation, feelings of belonging and help support their identity. For example, friends, family, community, school, etc.

- Engagement through Family
- Engagement through Friends
- **Engagement through School:** Ways that education has increased a person's participation in Indigenous issues and connections.
- **Engagement through Work (Work Support):** Increased engagement in Indigenous issues which have been fostered by their work environment. Given opportunities to engage through their work environment.

Lack of Support Systems:

Barriers for Participation:

Sub Code 1 BP: Lack of Time

Sub Code 2 BP: Lack of Money

Sub Code 3 BP: Lack of Connections

Education:

Sub Code 1 Education as a Positive Influence: Instances when their education has assisted (supported) them in making connections, becoming more involved, or becoming more aware of issues that need to be addressed or if school has had a positive impact on their sense of identity and the ways they become involved.

Sub Code 2 Barriers to Education: A lack of education contributing to issues with participation or knowledge.

Sub Code 3 Education and Lack of Support: Lack of support given in school(s).

Racism and Discrimination:

Sub Code 1 Indirect Racism: Incidents of racism that is subtle or hidden.

Sub Code 2 Direct Racism: Incidents of overt racism that an individual has experienced first-hand or has knowledge of others experiencing.

Sub Code 3 Discrimination: Incidents of discrimination that an individual has experienced or has heard others experiencing as a result of their Indigenous roots.

Sub Code 4 Violence: Experiences of violence (either first hand or experiences of others).

Sub Code 5 Negative Perceptions of Indigenous: Views about Indigenous peoples that are negative.

Identity:

Sub Code 1 Hiding Identity: Feelings of shame connected to Indigenous identity. Social stigma around Indigenous peoples.

Sub Code 2 Promoting Identity: The ways in which one promotes their identity in a positive way.

Sub Code 3 Sense of Identity: How an individual views their Indigenous identity within their daily life.

Sub Code 4 Issues with Asserting Identity: Feelings associated with belonging.

Family:

Sub Code 1 Family Trauma: Discussion of trauma experienced by family members as a result of their Indigenous identity. Experiences of family members who have been negatively impacted by past incidents, such as residential schooling, disenfranchisement, etc.

Sub Code 2 Family History: Reference to their family and Indigenous roots.

Political Understanding: How one defines political engagement and their role in political issues.

Motivation: What motivates an individual to be involved.

Political Involvement: Types of involvement

- Online
- Protests
- Joining Indigenous government/groups/committees
- Joining government/groups/committees
- Other
- Campus Groups
- Sharing Information

Indigenous Issues/Topics:

- MMIWG
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Oka
- Idle No More
- Suicide Rates
- Overrepresentation in Prison
- Ipperwash

Status/Citizenship: Information on Citizenship, Status, or other recognition of Indigenous identity.

Sub-Code S/C Impact on Participation: The ways in which status or citizenship impacts an individual's participation, either negatively or positively.

Sub-Code S/C Impact on Identity: The ways in which status or citizenship impacts an individual's identity, either negatively or positively.

VITA AUCTORIS

Renée Grozelle was born in 1985 in Scarborough, Ontario. She went to Seneca College for Police Foundations, graduating with honors in 2009. She then obtained her Undergraduate degree in Criminology from York University in 2012. Shortly after, she obtained her Master's degree in Criminology from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, where her thesis focused on the intersectionality of violence against women and hate crimes against lesbians. She is currently a candidate for her PhD in Sociology at the University of Windsor, where her research focuses on identity and political participation of Indigenous women. She hopes to graduate in Fall 2024.