

DECOLONIZING GENDER: GENDER, COLLECTIVE  
IDENTITY, AND GRIEVANCE CONSTRUCTION IN  
THE IDLE NO MORE MOVEMENT

By

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Abstract: This thesis examines how gender is portrayed in the Facebook interactions of an emerging indigenous rights social movement in Canada called Idle No More. The theoretical framework presented synthesizes New Social Movement theories of collective identity and grievance construction, theories of gender and social movements, and theories of Native women's resistance against colonial governments. Analysis centers on how the portrayal of gender influences collective movement identity and gender's role in grievance construction. Interactional data was gathered from the Idle No More Facebook page over a six month period, and qualitative content analysis was then engaged to examine the data for important themes and grievances, like decolonization, environment, and sovereignty. This thesis also contributes to a growing body of intersectional research examining how social movement organizations are using social media as an organizing tool to generate new discussion of collective identities and grievances. I find that gender is a major orienting principle in the underlying ideologies and collective identity of the movement, as illustrated through four typologies – Warrior Women, Ending Violence against Women, Mother Earth, and Native Feminism. INM engages in collective identity processes fundamentally rooted in gendered ideologies, thus producing gendered grievances for the broader movement.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The recent emergence of social movements organized through social media has created a new space for activists and sociologists alike to discuss movement dynamics and consider the influence of identities on social movement organizations (Ackland and O’Neil 2011; Clark and Themudo 2006; Cronauer 2004; Diani 2000). Particularly interesting are social movements that center on marginalized groups. Social movement organizations, like Idle No More, comprised of groups marginalized based, on race, class, gender, or identity have made recent use of social media as an organizing tool to generate new sites for the discussion of identities within a movement (Kellner 2002; Niezen 2000; Niezen 2005; Eslen-Ziya 2013; Belton 2010). Idle No More (INM) began in October 2012 to facilitate the online and offline mobilization of Canadian First Nations communities against changes in Canadian environmental policy. As the movement grew online, conversations rapidly expanded beyond environmentalism to include a wide variety of topics, as members articulated and constructed new movement grievances, and posed questions about both individual and collective identities. Social media interactions provide insight into the movement’s grievance construction processes and reveal interesting ideologies of gender within the movement.

When Jessica Gordon, Sylvia Macadam, Sheelah McLean, and Nina Wilson came together to found Idle No More (INM) in late October 2012, they envisioned a movement that called on “all people to join in a peaceful revolution, to honour Indigenous sovereignty and to protect the land and water” (Idle No More 2012). Emerging in response to actions by the Canadian government challenging Indigenous environmental rights and sovereignty, the movement began with a series of teach-ins in Saskatchewan, Canada. Characterized as a grassroots movement, INM takes its place in a long history of nonviolent and violent Native resistance, using a broad range of strategies to challenge colonial governments.

Initial movement concerns focused on the impacts of Bill C-45, formally the Jobs and Growth Act of 2012. Bill C-45 was an omnibus budget bill that made changes to more than 70 different areas of legislation, including the Indian Act, the Navigation Protection Act (formerly the Navigable Waters Protection Act), and the Environmental Assessment Act. The legislative changes to the Indian Act restructured the process for the lease of reservation land, while changes to the Navigation Protection Act amended the definition of navigable waterways, shifting protections away from over a thousand bodies of water. Amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act allowed environmental assessments to be expedited and reduced the number of assessments required (CBC News 2013, Rabson 2013). While these legislative changes were key to the movement’s foundation and initial grievances, INM is structured to address a broad range of social issues outside of the scope of legislation.

Concerned that the legislative changes would “erode Indigenous sovereignty and environmental protections,” INM began to mobilize on social media, especially Twitter and Facebook. INM then made use of these online resources, organizing a National Day of Action on December 20, 2012, which marked the movement’s official arrival in the public sphere. Though

first framed as a response to environmental issues, the grievances presented in the initial manifesto embodied a greater spirit of decolonization, anti-capitalism, and social justice. INM quickly evolved beyond representing environmental justice for First Nations across Canada and became a platform for Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and other issues. On January 16, 2013, *Indian Country Today Media Network* published an article titled “The Idle No More Movement for Dummies (or, ‘What The Heck Are All These Indians Acting All Indian-Ey About?’)” detailing the movement’s premise. Author Ross identified INM’s three central foci: protecting the Earth, protecting Native women from violence, and an emphasis that INM is not an Occupy movement. Bill C-45 was ultimately passed with the protested changes. Despite what many called a failure with regards to stopping the bill, INM continued to organize, grow, and contest both the current government of Canada headed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, as well as the historical colonial structures seen as threats to Indigenous sovereignty.

This thesis examines data gathered from INM’s Facebook page to understand how gender and Indigenous identity influence the emergence and construction of INM’s movement grievances. INM’s Facebook page is self-described as a mechanism “to share information in regards to legislation the Harper government is attempting to pass and impose on First Nations across Canada, plus any other information relevant to First Nations across Canada” (n.d.). Like many other social movements in the last five years, Idle No More (INM) puts a heavy emphasis on social media as a primary mechanism for communication and organization. A critical organizing tool for underserved populations (Eslon-Ziya 2013; Niezen 2005) social media is creating “new terrains of political struggle for voices and groups excluded from the mainstream media” (Kellner 2002:182). Social media and online organizing increases the “potential for intervention by oppositional groups” (Kellner 2002: 182). For Indigenous groups especially, the



Internet provides a site to both expand and connect cross-culturally and transnationally, while also reifying and preserving local and small community structures (Niezen 2005). As of September 2014, the Idle No More Facebook page noted over 132,000 likes, while the Twitter feed maintains over 23,000 followers. These numbers demonstrate the movement's broad reach.

Social movement theory has extensively examined the role of gender in and gendered processes of social movements. McAdam and others have concluded, unsurprisingly, that gender plays a significant role in all aspects of social movements (McAdam 1992; Taylor 1999; Agarwal 2000) offering a strong foundation for collective action because of the overlap between personal identity, cultural identity, and values (Noonan 1997; Taylor 1999; Beckwith 2001; Pandolfelli et al. 2008). Social movements themselves may be gendered processes as grievance construction and organizing efforts may intentionally favor one gender over another (Kuumba 2001). Gender plays a unique role in the lives of Native women especially in the context of Indigenous movements (Monture-Angus 1999; Wesley-Esquimaux 2009; Anderson 2009; Sunseri 2009; Grant 2009; Altamirano-Jimenez 2009; Sillett 2009; Native Women's Association of Canada 2009).

While this project focuses on broader gendered themes and constructions, the role of women at the heart of Indigenous resistance against governments and colonizers, especially because the founders of the movement are themselves women, is central. Women's role in INM's emergence encourages us to examine the importance of gender due to the historical context of First Nations women's leadership in resistance movements. Jaimes (1992) illustrates the essential nature of women in Indigenous resistance to colonization arguing that First Nations women have a long history of leadership in traditional communities, playing a core role in the

development of resistance movements and decolonization linked to preservation of land and sovereignty.

Colonization did not affect only land or systems of government: gender and gender divisions too were colonized. As Canada and other areas of North America were colonized, Native social structures were ruptured and women were shifted away from positions of strength and leadership, into more Westernized gender roles. Gynocratic and matrilineal systems were replaced with patriarchal tribal organizations, where male leadership now dominated. Many Native theorists argue that gender based violence did not exist in Native communities prior to colonization and that the occupation and colonization of Native communities can be held responsible for significant historical gender trauma (Monture-Angus 1995; Tohe 2000; Allen 1992; Mihesuah 2003). Researchers must look beyond colonial, whitewashed constructions of Native women as caretakers and nurturers and look to their “traditional” roles as leaders of resistance, even when these roles may not reflect Western conceptions of leadership. Native women have “reasserted their traditional role as ‘voice of the people’” through new mediums, “playing a decisive role in developing new tools” for Indigenous resistance (Jaimes 1992: 327).

A small but strong body of literature about Indigenous resistance and the resistance of Native women exists in the fields of gender and women’s studies, feminist theories, and American studies. However, current literature in sociology has enormous gaps in the area of Native social movements, especially with regards to gender. This project will address the existing gap and contribute to a growing body of sociology literature focused on the social movement actions of understudied populations. In addition, this research contributes to a growing understanding of the institutional role and influence of gender in social movements. A Native feminist perspective informs this project, as this lens is an essential tool for illuminating

links between gender and colonialism in Native culture, as well as helping to better understand the experience of gender identity construction in the INM movement.

I address the influence of women in the Idle No More movement by asking three key research questions. How is gender portrayed in the social media messages of the newly emerging INM movement? What role does this portrayal play in collective identity processes and to what extent does collective identity contribute to the construction of movement grievances? Finally, what are the implications of gendered constructions of movement grievances and messaging? Based in part on the large number of followers and consistent updates, I focus on the Facebook page of Idle No More as a data source to examine aspects of identity and grievance construction. Data for this analysis will derive from posts and comments from the INM Facebook page from October 2012 to April 2013, the first six months of the movement. Ultimately, this work offers insight into how gender contributes to grievance construction and movement messaging; and how social media may be used as a tool to construct and disseminate movement messages and grievances in a newly emerging movement.

In the next chapter, I review several literatures pertinent to my study. I begin with an overview of previous literature on gender and social movements, highlighting the shift in sociological thought towards understandings of gender as an institution. Using New Social Movement theory, I argue that collective identity theories are critical to understanding grievance construction with regards to gender and First Nations. In the second part of Chapter II, I rely on intersectional theory to address more in-depth Native constructions of gender, Native women's resistance and then discuss the nature of Native feminism clarifying why it is an essential lens for this project. I then synthesize these various theories to provide an analytical framework that features the collective identity processes of boundary making, consciousness raising, and

negotiation as central to this analysis. In Chapter III, I provide an explanation of the research design and data collection process, presenting strengths and weaknesses of both the data and the project design. Chapter IV offers context, analysis and discussion of the movement, using both movement documents and social media interactions to present broader grievances. Chapter V discusses my initial findings, categorizing the data into four typologies of how gender is portrayed in the social media messages of the newly emerging INM movement and briefly discussing how these typologies relate to collective identity processes. Chapter VI examines my second research question, clarifying how the four typologies of gender engage in collective identity processes and lead to grievance construction. Finally, Chapter VII answers my final research question, discussing the influence of gender on broader grievance construction, the implications of gendered grievances, and suggestions for future study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This project draws theoretical grounding from two bodies of literature: New Social Movement (NSM) theories and Native feminism. New Social Movement theory places an emphasis on how and why individuals became involved in social movements, leading to new frameworks to consider critical elements of identity. I first turn to a discussion of this thesis' treatment of gender as an institution, focusing on how the institution is shaped by individual and social experience, and how gender influences social movement organizations and experiences. The basic structures of New Social Movement theory are then articulated, with special attention to NSM literatures on collective identity and grievance construction. Collective identity literatures are used to connect ideas of gender identity and collective experience, leading to a discussion of how grievances are crystallized through identity processes.

This review then turns to an equally critical aspect of literature for understanding Idle No More as a movement: theories of Native resistance and feminism. In order to gain insight into social movement action centered on Indigenous identity as well as gender, I unpack ideas of colonialism and domination, and the ways in which these hegemonic

narratives have reconstructed gender in Native communities. Drawing from black feminist thought and other feminist theories, I clarify that Native women have been at the forefront of colonial resistance and anti-colonial organizing projects for considerably longer than is typically understood. A Native feminist paradigm is constructed and presented as a formative lens for the overall project, clarifying the connection between feminism and the fight for sovereignty and decolonization in Native resistance movements.

Finally, these two bodies of literature are synthesized to present the analytical framework for this project. I offer some preliminary assessments, clarifying how the collective identity processes of boundary making, consciousness raising, and negotiation will be applied to understand collective identity, and grievance construction as simultaneous and critical processes for diffuse and decentralized social movement organizations. I close with a further discussion of Walder's (2009) critique of social movement theory and offer the contributions of this thesis.

## **Gender and Social Movements**

The role of gender in social movements was first examined in the 1970s, alongside the emergence of the women's and civil rights movements. As the subfield developed, literature tended to focus on women's movements, or the gendered division of labor within movements, as opposed to how women and gender issues affect sex-integrated movements. As gendered analyses of social movements have become more prevalent, gendered social movement research has expanded to include women's activism and gender struggles in a global context, specifically through examination of transnational and regional women's organizations (Alvarez 2000; Basu 2000).

In sociology, early scholarship on gender (social) and sex (biological) roles focused on individual attributes (Scott 1986, Staggenborg 1998). By the early 1990s, literature shifted away from a sex role based approach to the study of social movement organizations (SMOs) and began to focus on gender in organizations and institutions (Acker 1990, Lorber 1994). The idea of gendered organizations “allows us to see how gender relations are perpetuated through organizational practices, as well as through socialization and everyday social interactions” (Staggenborg 1998: 3). Rodriguez states:

Gender differences are crucial in understanding why and how women and men organize and participate... Women and men perform different roles, have distinct needs, social responsibilities, expectations and power, and are socialized in different ways. Gender as a social construction explains the social relations between men and women, which are dialectic and vary with class, race, culture, age, and religion. (1994: 35)

This shift from a sex role based approach to one that highlights interaction and socialization reflects a shift in the broader literature towards an understanding of gender as socially constructed. Many theorists began to write under the assumption that gender governs individual and social interactions, playing a critical role in the organization of society, resulting in a gendered study of social movements (Einwohner et al. 2000; McAdam 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Noonan 1997; West and Blumberg 1990). Kuumba (2001) clarifies that there are five areas that the current literatures on gender and SMOs tend to cover: gender as a distinct analytical category as opposed to a mediating or control variable, deconstruction of two-gender sex role models, incorporating gender into established social movement theories and frameworks, intersectional approaches to gender and other institutionalized identities, and the “complex and dynamic nature of gendered processes” (14).

Feminist sociologists have clearly established gender as a social institution (Martin 2004; Acker 1992; Connell 1987; Lorber 1996). This perspective helps us begin to unpack the connections between the micro- and macrosocial processes of gender, and through those processes understand the impact that gender has on other social structures and organizations (Acker 1990; Britton 2000; Britton and Logan 2008). Following the tradition of other sociology of gender theorists, here, an institution refers to established rules, procedures, customs, and routines that are reproduced and repeated across multiple settings resulting in specific beliefs and practices. The institution is constructed at both the macro- and microsocial levels, while carrying significant implications for interactional dynamics. Martin clarifies that operating with the understanding of gender as an institution, as opposed to simply an identity or status, “is beneficial in drawing attention to [gender’s] multiple features – ideology, practices, constraints, conflicts, power – and affirming its complexities and multifacetedness” (2004: 1264). Gender as an institution is then shaped by individual and social experiences, is reified in other institutional structures, is based on an embodied (physical) experience, and is a mediator of all social experience “construct[ing] the social relations and dynamics of other institutions” (Martin 2004: 1266).

Staggenborg clarifies that gender is central to political and cultural organizations and structures; noting that, “these arrangements provide both the motivation and the organizational networks for many social movements” (1998: 7). In McAdam’s study of Freedom Summer, he undertook an individual level examination of gender and activism focusing on the disparate experiences of men and women within the movement (1992). Acknowledging gender differences in socialization and role expectation, McAdam suggests that there is no reason not to assume gender is a mediating aspect of all forms of social life, including social movements. Further,



McAdam indicates that the role of gender can become heightened in social movements based on the political biographies of movement participants (1992: 1235). Thus, gender can be considered to be a significant concept to consider in the SMO context.

Taylor suggests that gender can itself be used as a point of collective identity for movement organization and mobilizations, to the extent that “social movements often appropriate gender ideology to legitimate and inspire collective action because gender symbolism resonates both with individuals’ personal beliefs and larger cultural values that describe the world and what we can expect from it” (Taylor 1999: 21). Taylor provides further insight here with regards to treating gender as an analytic category. While previous work on gender in social movements has highlighted gender differentiation in the areas of political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes, emergent work on gender in social movements must “shift the question from how gender operates in social movements to how social movements contribute to the social construction of gender” (Taylor 1999: 26). Work examining gender and social movements should examine shifts in gender differentiation and stratification as related to the formation of collective identities. In order to examine gender as a mechanism of collective identity, it is necessary to place this thesis within the theoretical framework of New Social Movement theories.

## **New Social Movements**

New Social Movements literature suggests that modern social movements structure their grievances and mobilization around cultural and symbolic identity (Melucci 1985, 1988). The construction of grievances around a set of beliefs, symbols, and meanings associates the individual with a specific social group and with the individual’s personal identity (Johnston,

Laraña, and Gusfield 1994). A NSM framework allows us to establish a connection between grievances and identity, while social movements literature elaborates the preexisting framework necessary for movement organization.

New Social Movements can be understood as containing eight characteristics: not bearing clear relation to the structural roles of participants, not relying on ideology as a unifying factor for collective action, involving the emergence of new dimensions of identity or developing and strengthening previously weak identities, blurring the relation between the individual and the collective, relating to incredibly personal and intimate aspects of human life, involving radical mobilization, calling to light a credibility crisis of conventional channels of protest, and being characterized as segmented, diffuse, and decentralized (Larana, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994). NSMs also seek to examine the connections between micro- and macro-social experiences, and thus examine types of identity, like gender, closely.

Because NSM theory seeks to connect personal and social experience, NSM emphasizes the link between identity formation and grievance construction. While the two concepts are closely associated, they are by no means the same. Both collective identity and grievances organize “how social movement adherents think about themselves... and how shared wrongs are experienced, interpreted, and reworked in the context of group interaction” (Larana, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994: 22). In this sense, Larana, et al., suggest that movements can be understood on an axis of grievance and identity, especially since NSMs tend to involve cultural movements that consider “issues of individual and collective identity via the way that focal grievances affect everyday life” (1994: 23).

## *Collective Identity*

At the heart of New Social Movement theory is the construction of collective identity as an essential element of movement formation and collective action. Individuals do not necessarily bring preformed identities into a movement to construct a collective identity; rather, collective identity is a process and outcome of the movement itself (Klandermans 1992; Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Taylor and Rupp 1999). Collective identity is defined as “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation... distinct from personal identities” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285). Many individuals who engage in collective action arrive at collective identity structures through movement participation. These individuals are often members of marginalized groups previously lacking access to traditional institutional mechanisms. The emergence of a salient grievance can push individuals into a collective identity project, or social movement organization, that offers the network ties necessary for collective action (Minkoff 1997).

According to Polletta and Jasper (2001), collective identity is useful in that it “sheds light on the macro-historical context within which movements emerge.” As collective identity theory developed, it became a tool for uncovering the cultural and normative transformations of various movements. To be clear, this approach is not without challenges. For collective identity, “the analytical challenge is to identify the circumstances in which different relations between interest and identity, strategy and identity, and politics and identity operate, circumstances that include cultural processes as well as structural ones” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285). Identity can be understood as the intersection of the public and the personal; when the connections between an individual’s experiences, relationships, group memberships, etc. become intertwined, individuals can become bound up in the fate of the group (Fireman and Gamson 1979). When examining any

community that has a politicized identity, considering the construction of that identity is essential to understanding the development and emergence of collective political actors (Taylor and Whittier 1999).

Taylor and Whittier (1999) point to three distinct dimensions of collective identity: boundaries, consciousness and negotiation. These three dimensions together shape the social construction of specific collective identities. “Collective identity is the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences, and solidarity.” The construction of collective identity in New Social Movements does not happen through traditionally understood formal social movement organizations but rather through “submerged networks propelled by constantly shifting forms of political struggle and participation.”

In order to provide a sufficient framework for collective identity, it is useful to expand Taylor and Whittier’s three elements. Boundary making and marking occurs when individuals begin to understand themselves as part of a group with a distinct, salient, shared characteristic. This characteristic may be physical or otherwise, and can be existing or emergent. The group must also see this characteristic as defined as important, by members of the group, out-group members, or both. Boundary markers are critical because they identify who is and is not a member of the movement.

Regarding collective identity consciousness, or the vision of the movement itself, Melucci (1988) refers to a similar concept of “cognitive frameworks” of a movement. This aspect includes “political consciousness, relational networks ... goals, means and environment of action” (Taylor and Whittier 1999: 110). Finally, collective identity processes are directly oppositional to the status quo and dominant order and require negotiation. Taylor and Whittier explain that, “The construction of positive identity requires both a withdrawal from the values

and structures of the dominant, oppressive society and the creation of new self-affirming values and structures” (1999: 111). In order for collective identity construction to be successful, group members must find solidarity in resisting traditionally defined categories and replacing them with new constructions of affirming identities.

Collective identity and New Social Movement theory also provide a strong analytical framework for understanding non-traditional, non-bureaucratic social movements. In his research on the Straight Edge Movement, Haenfler builds on existing NSM theory to explain decentralized movements, demonstrating that “a strong collective identity is the foundation for diffuse movements, providing “structure,” a basis for commitment, and guidelines for participation” (2004: 786). These elements of strong collective identity are key for connecting individual and collective experience. INM reflects many structural similarities to the Straight Edge Movement presented in Haenfler’s work – a diffuse, decentralized movement without established or routinized authority or leadership structures. The theories of collective identity help unify interactional elements of INM’s online presence to understand how collective identities are portrayed prior to grievances being expressed.

### *Grievance Construction*

A second key element of NSM theory that this project draws from is the process of grievance construction. Grievance construction and interpretation is key to understanding identity construction processes and critical to the boundary making and consciousness raising processes of collective identity. Larana, et al. indicate that “Grievances are actuated by perceived threats to how one defines oneself” (1994: 22). This constructionist approach to grievances illustrates the close link between identity and grievance forming processes for NSM theorists. Research on the

construction of social movement grievances operationalizes grievances as “feelings of dissatisfaction with important aspects of life such as housing, living standards, income, employment, health care, human rights, safety, and education” (Klandermans, Roefs, and Olivier 2001: 49). In this sense, grievances are the outcome of environmental pressures that come about when an individual or group evaluates their circumstances. Schurman and Munro (2006) offer three critical characteristics of analytical grievance construction: the social nature of grievance formation and knowledge production, the dynamic character of the identity formation process, and a defined mutual motivating cognition. These characteristics point to the emergence of movements as alternative frameworks to status quo failures, and connect clearly the experience of identity construction as leading to grievance construction. Grievances may begin as incredibly varied but “all movements must engage in some degree of idea work to form a social grievance,” slowly thickening and strengthening networks and identities, leading to movement formation (Schurman and Munro 2006: 33).

Walder (2009) critiques the study of political social movement sociology as failing to examine the content of social movements, favoring instead a focus on emergence and tactics. This critique is formative in shaping this project. If the goals and content of the movement are overlooked, then the understanding of the movement’s emergence is incomplete. Walder questions “the relationship between social structure, however conceived, and the political orientations of social movements” (2009: 407). By focusing on gender and the construction of collective identity and grievances, as opposed to the effects of the strategies and tactics of mobilization employed by the movement, this project works alongside Walder’s critique.

Several scholars articulate a need for theory to address the centrality of gender in movement organizations. Taylor (1999) argues for the development of a social movement theory

that specifically addresses the overlap of gender and social movement theory, asserting that it is necessary to “advance our understanding of gender change processes by making explicit the role of social movements in the social construction and reconstruction of gender” (1999: 9-10). The ultimate objective is to provide an intersectional approach combining the understandings of gender hierarchies in organizations, gender stratification within social movements, the inherent collective identity of gender, and the resistance to oppressive gender relations. Taylor’s perspective is highly useful because the development of a gendered social movement approach allows for the preservation of agency that is “missing from strictly cultural and deconstructionist accounts of shifting gender relations” (1999: 26). Using elements of Taylor’s framework offers the opportunity to take a critical perspective towards the existing structures of gender and colonialism and helps to uncover “power dynamics and Eurocentric, middle-class male biases lurking in frameworks and perspectives assumed to be universal” (Kuumba 2001: 35; see also Ferree 1992; Noonan 1995).

In considering social movement collective identities, often more than one identity is constructed and acted upon simultaneously (Collins 2000; Zinn and Dill 1996; Crenshaw 1991; Glenn 2002; McCall 2005; Choo and Ferree 2010). In the case of Idle No More, intersecting identities include gender, race, national identity, Indigenous identity, and class, among others. While all of these identities carry nearly equal importance, I will narrow the scope here to focus on gender and Indigenous identities. Even then, considerable volumes could be written about the constructions of collective identity for gender and Indigenous identities separately. I consider them as working alongside one another and use an intersectional approach to try to clarify discrete understandings. To understand why it is important to examine both gender and

Indigenous identity simultaneously in order to understand how gender is constructed, a brief review of the history of and literature on women's and feminist movements is useful.

### **Colonization, Language and Native Women's Resistance**

One of the first challenges when defining Native resistance is defining "Native."

Language is powerful and can empower or disenfranchise entire groups. Colonialism has shaped the language used to describe Native groups, imposing a common identity on a population that is highly diverse. Ramirez notes that,

In the United States, we often identify as 'Native American' or 'American Indian.' In Canada, Indigenous women claim the terms 'First Nations' or 'aboriginal,' while in Mexico they identify as 'Indigenous.' Many other Native women name themselves only by tribal nation and reject using any of the above terms" (2008: 304).

Thus, Ramirez directly addresses the conflation of terms as containing the same meaning for all individuals. Indeed, selecting the language to be used when discussing Native peoples is sensitive. "In academia, terminology can be used to exclude and disempower various groups. Obviously, this is damaging to Indigenous people who struggle to maintain their sovereign powers" (Ross 2009: 47). In this paper, and in my other works, I have chosen to use the word "Native" to refer to the similar experiences of Indigenous women, though this is not to suggest that all experiences are the same, nor that the term is representative of all Indigenous peoples.

Feminist literature contains significant debate surrounding the destruction of biological essentialism with regards to both race and gender. When addressing the issues faced by Native women, the rejection of biological essentialism is mandatory, especially in the context of decolonization efforts. Much like the "biologically deterministic criteria for the term *black*" settler governments have long relied on a biological definition of Indian identity (Collins 1997:



242). As nations were colonized and new colonial governments defined “Indianness,” the agency of individual tribes, communities, and language groups were removed, barring them from defining their own citizenship within their own nations. This is a source of historical trauma for many Native communities because “to be defined as a race is synonymous with having our Nations dismembered” (Lawrence 2003: 5). Thus, a key element of native women’s identity is bound up in rejecting the racial classifications placed upon her by the settler government under which she exists.

When considering how gender is portrayed in social media messages of a movement involving Native identities, it is important to understand that gender too, has undergone extensive colonization. Unlike the discourse surrounding the deconstruction of gender and who is or is not a woman (and whether or not the category of woman can even be said to exist), the discourses surrounding Native women and their gender concerns are the result of which identity, woman or Native, is more important or formative. Monture-Angus argues that, because of the structures created by colonialism, gender and race are simultaneous things, and could never be considered separately (1995). In her discussions of the Diné (Navajo), Laura Tohe indicates how women are not defined by occupation but rather by kinship status. Colonization and the changing structures of society resulted in a rupture of matrilineal systems (Tohe 2000). Women were shifted from roles where leadership was displayed through indirect strength to positions where direct political action was required. This shift is a result of the decline in the status of tribal women as colonization has and continues to disrupt traditional Native social structures (Allen 1992). Mihesuah (2003) makes a clear connection between resistance to appropriation and abuse of Native environmental resources and women. Colonization has resulted in gender problems

and environmental problems and has thus permanently intertwined the two, most often resulting in disempowerment.

Paula Gunn Allen (1992) also points to the overthrow of gynocratic tribal systems and the imposition of patriarchal structures on tribal organization as a demonstration of the gendered process of colonization. Lawrence has noted that simply focusing on the patriarchy as a source of gender violence is insufficient and “that to simply regard [the issue of gendered notions of Indianness] as one of sexism ignores how constant colonial incursions into Native spaces generate almost unimaginable levels of violence, which includes, but is not restricted to, sexist oppression” (2003: 5). Taken all together, we can clearly see how colonization has directly impacted both non-Native and Native constructions of gender in Native communities, and how the new structures generated a complex web of gender, race, and national identity.

Jaimes makes the case for women as the “backbone of Indigenous resistance to genocide and colonization since the first moment of conflict” (1992: 311). Using a historical perspective, Jaimes chronicles the role of Indigenous women in resistance, drawing from interviews and primary source material of women actively involved in resistance movements. In addition to this important record of activism, the rich primary source data Jaimes presents offers a harsh critique of feminism as a whitewashed presentation of needs that do not resonate with Native women. Jaimes quotes Lorelei DeCora Means, Minneconjou Lakota AIM member, founder of Women of All Red Nations (WARN), “We are American Indian women, in that order. We are oppressed, first and foremost, as American Indians, as peoples colonized by the United States of America, not as women... Decolonization is the agenda, the whole agenda, and until it is accomplished it is the only agenda for American Indians” (1992: 312). Jaimes’ critique of feminism as another aspect of the colonial agenda does not exempt Native women who identify as feminist; indeed,

Jaimes is highly critical of Native women who identify as feminist, calling them out for failing the project of decolonization by assimilating. This illustrates one of the first complications of treating gender and Indigenous identity as separate. Like many early black feminist scholars, for Jaimes and Monture-Angus, race and Indigenous identity are the more salient shared experiences and thus ought to be the orienting ones for collective identity processes.

Moreover, previous understandings of gender within social movement frameworks, especially with regards to the examination of the women's movement as a template for gender in other social movements, becomes problematic when approaching gender in the Native context, in part because of the exclusion of Native women and other women of color from the women's movement. The women's movement, or feminist movement, is theorized to have occurred in three waves. The "first wave" of the movement centered on suffrage and basic workers' rights. Beginning with the so-called "second wave" of U.S. women's protest in the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of feminism(s) became directly linked with the work of advancing women. The second wave is historically criticized for being a whitewashed movement that left behind women and feminists of color. "Feminists of color saw themselves as belonging to a different movement than white feminists did, a self-perception that should be taken seriously" (Roth 2004: 11). Women were motivated not by complaints about their roles within the movement but by the positive desire to extend the vision of the civil rights movement to gender relations. In the third wave, whitewashed versions of feminism in the women's movement were challenged, and intersectional approaches were undertaken to retell the stories of women and feminists of color. Even in these intersectional dialogues about feminists of color, Native women are frequently omitted from the conversation. To understand why this omission is critical to the study of Native

women, examination the structures of colonization and their impacts on Native women's resistance in the context of social movements is beneficial.

For example, while gender roles and the gendered division of labor may be useful for understanding movements with mostly white participants, the complex nature of colonized gender complicates the issue in Native populations. Annette Jaimes explains:

Women's liberation, in the view of most minority women in the United States and Canada, cannot occur in any context other than the wider liberation, from Euroamerican colonial domination, of the peoples of which women of color are a part. Our sense of priorities is therefore radically—and irrevocably—different from those espoused by the “mainstream” women's movement (1992: 335).

Thus it becomes clear that the causes of Native women are bound up in broader discourses of colonization placing Native women outside of the well-researched notion of expectations of the gendered processes of social movements. While it is important to understand that it is problematic to apply women's social movement literature to Native women without a critical understanding of Native female identity, it is also crucial not to write about the Native woman as an “Other.”

While social movement theory has extensively examined the role of gender in and gendered processes of social movements, many racial and ethnic identity dynamics remain understudied. Repin offers that the “theoretical paradigms of social movement literature can provide important insights into Indigenous contentious action events within Canada, but only if supplemented by Indigenous peoples understandings of their own mobilization in contentious action” (2012: 144). While the majority of social movement research related to Native movements has focused on the American Indian Movement (AIM) centered in the United States, the process of “pan-Indigenous” identity that is pointed to as a primary cause for emergence and

success of AIM has not been present in Canada (Wilkes 2006; Repin 2012). Rima Wilkes (2006) points to lack of urbanization, reluctance of the Canadian government to fund urban Aboriginal organizations, and reservation-based constituency as causes of a lack of pan-Indigenous collective identity in Canada. When examining Indigenous SMOs, the intersection of emergent collective identities, like gender and pan-Nativism, are essential to building understandings of grievance and movement action.

### *Native Feminism*

A Native feminist perspective informs this project. Though I identify as a non-Native woman, “Native feminist theories are not limited to the participation of those who are Indigenous, feminist, and/or woman identified” (Arvin et al. 2013: 11). A Native feminist perspective provides this project with a “helpful vantage point for... the colonial context of Indigenous women” (Smith 2008: 311). While I had already intended to use Native feminism in this piece, I became especially committed to the perspective during my first examination of the data. I encountered several comments about the importance of Native/Indigenous feminism. By positioning this work within Native feminist theory, I inform the developing framework of Native feminisms and promote a project of greater decolonization by helping to understand a movement with similar intents.

Many Native and non-Native women have written trying to define Native feminism based on their own standpoint. In a moving article titled, “There is No Word for Feminism in my Language,” Laura Tohe (2000) discusses the matrilineal structures of the Dine (Navajo) society. For Tohe, the lack of a word for feminism in the Dine language is not a symbol of the disenfranchisement of women; rather, it is representative of the high value that is placed on

women in the Dine culture. Paula Gunn Allen's (1992) emphasis on the disruption of matrilineal and gynocratic structures also points towards the understanding that feminism is not a colonialist idea but rather the settlers, much like everything else, borrowed it from Natives, an idea that was later echoed in the work of Andrea Smith (2005).

Smith highlights the connections between Native women activists and theory, drawing on Butler's analysis of post-9/11 rule of law through sovereignty. Though these arguments center on the United States, the position they present is valuable, because these understandings of sovereignty clarify the nature of the Constitution or other legal documents as false founding points. Thus, Native feminism is a "helpful vantage point for destabilizing normative nations and nation-states," which could be considered one of the greater projects of Native feminism (Smith 2008: 311). Smith's work also continues the links between sovereignty and heteropatriarchy. Heteropatriarchy can be understood as "the social systems in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural, and in which other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant, and abhorrent" (Arvin, Tuck and Morrill 2013: 13). Connecting sovereignty and heteropatriarchy, Smith claims,

Because even many Native sovereignty and other social justice movements have not sufficiently challenged heteropatriarchy, we have deeply internalized the notion that social hierarchy is natural and inevitable, thus undermining our ability to create movements for social change that do not replicate the structures of domination that we seek to eradicate (2008: 312).

Instead of Native SMOs challenging discrete aspects of the status quo, Smith suggests Native sovereignty movements ought to directly challenge the whole of heteropatriarchy to avoid re-creating systems of domination and oppression. Finally, Smith offers an understanding of "Native feminism as rooted in the colonial condition of Native women who put squarely on the table the importance of thinking beyond the heteropatriarchal nation-state in our vision of

liberation not just for Native peoples, but for everyone” (2008: 315). This helps position Native feminism as something that can be undertaken by people other than Native women.

Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill argue that a feminist-centric perspective allows the “still-existing structure of settler colonization and its powerful effects on Indigenous peoples and others” to be exposed (2013: 9). An important claim by the authors is that though alliances may be formed between Native groups and other people of color, Indigenous resistance is most often concerned with “achieving substantial independence from a Western nation-state – independence decided on their own terms,” extending the connection between feminism and the fight for sovereignty and decolonization (2013: 16). Further, the authors offer a theoretical connection with intersectionality, clarifying that “Native feminist theories focus on compound issues of gender, sexuality, race, indigeneity, and nation” (2013: 11). The authors argue for feminism to move beyond the forbidden ‘f’ word to a rewritten perspective whose end goal is not just to dismantle “heteropatriarchy, but also the settler colonial nation-states that heteropatriarchy upholds” (2013: 12). This article is very useful as an additional framing tool of Native feminism. While Patricia Hill Collins has established how one might progress through the construction of a definition of feminism, the authors’ specific requests for Native feminisms to meet certain requirements, help build an understanding of feminism squarely rooted in the project of decolonization and Native understanding.

Native feminist consciousness can serve as a critical perspective for examining the position of Native women in colonial societies and a tool to confront sexism within them. While engaging in broader projects of decolonization, current understandings for feminism itself must be challenged. Luana Ross discusses the persistence of racism and how it has shaped feminist sisterhood. She turns to blogger, Viva La Feminista, to explain why feminism provides a

valuable starting point, despite continued struggles with racist dialogues: “Despite its flaws, calling myself a feminist is the truth. Each movement has its own devils to wrestle with... Feminism the philosophy, transcends the bullshit and comforts me” (2009: 49). Indeed for Ross, feminism means “the promotion of tribal sovereignty and the empowerment of women [and] communities... Including female, male, and other genders” (Ross 2009: 50).

Native women then define native feminist thought in many different ways. “Native women—and there are many, many different world views, values, and traditions represented in those words—are the ones who can best describe what it means to be Indigenous women, because... they are ‘those who live it’—not non-Native theorists” (Mihesuah 2003: 29). As they define these Native experiences, it is important to acknowledge the role of academics, activists, and everyday women to define this Native feminist consciousness. “Native women activists are social analysts in their own right... Native women activists have valuable knowledge to contribute to Native feminist theory and praxis” (Ramirez 2008: 305). It is not just Native women activists; Native women who do not engage in activism or academia also help define this consciousness by living Native lives. Non-native feminists too can learn from and contribute to this Native consciousness “but care must be used in researching, interpreting, and formulating ideas about ‘Others’” (Mihesuah 2003: 5). Thus, building a Native feminist consciousness must center on the voices of Native women, and how these voices contribute to broader theory. Native feminism offers a critical perspective that can be used by anyone in the process of identifying colonial narratives, including those within our own disciplines. Shaped by a Native feminist consciousness and the work of non-Native and Native feminist theorists, Native feminism provides a frame for all aspects of life. Like many other feminisms, even when informed by broader theory, Native feminism is highly individual. Most importantly, Native



feminism is a continuing process. As Luana Ross writes, “We must continue to define what Native feminism might mean in our families, communities, and personal lives” (2009: 50).

### **Analytical Framework**

The examination of literatures on gender and social movements, New Social Movement theories, including collective identity and grievance construction, historical Native resistance and Native feminism led to the development of three guiding research questions. Broadly, how is gender portrayed in the social media messages of the newly emerging INM movement? What role does this portrayal play in collective identity processes and to what extent does collective identity contribute to the construction of movement grievances? And finally, what are the implications of gendered constructions of movement grievances and messaging? Gender and collective identity research are closely intertwined, with a wide array of research examining the collective experience of gender in social movements (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Taylor 1996; Rupp and Taylor 1999; Einwohner, Hollander, and Olson 2000; Van Dyke and Cress 2006). Taylor and Whittier (1992) suggest that in order to establish collective identity, NSMs engage in boundary making, consciousness raising, and negotiation. Thus, we can understand *boundary making*, *consciousness raising*, and *negotiation processes* as correlating with the research questions presented. In this thesis, *boundary making* will be considered to contain processes of defining gender in the context of INM, defining who is Native and who is non-Native, as well as how understandings of gender are established within Native and non-Native contexts. Boundary-making processes further examine the extent of colonization and the historical traumas related to identity construction. *Consciousness raising* can be understood as the processes INM uses to raise *oppositional consciousness* (Morris 1990). The constant projects of decolonization that

characterize the broader movement will be analyzed to uncover the influence in the construction of gender. Finally, *negotiation processes* are examined in two ways. First, I will employ an analysis of how groups negotiate identities in *private* versus *public* settings, in terms of how individuals present themselves as members of the movement or how they characterize the movement to other individuals. Second, negotiation analysis will examine the *explicit* versus *implicit* presentation of identity bargaining, identifying interactions that police boundaries.

NSM theory is used to examine diffuse, non-traditional, and decentralized social movements, like INM. Within a decentralized movement, grievance construction is a mechanism that contributes to collective identity. Collective identity is also a useful approach for this thesis because of the site of analysis – the Internet. NSM and collective identity provides an excellent framework for understanding decentralized and dynamic movements. Websites, especially social media websites, “are dynamic (content can change frequently, and with some organizations even the URL of the site is not fixed), and... it is often very difficult to identify the people involved in running a given website” (Ackland and O’Neil 2011: 177). Grievance construction can then be understood as an active element of social movement processes, working alongside collective identity processes. Together, collective identity and grievance construction engage the dynamic nature of social movements and online technologies, coalescing in online media interactions to create a new ultra-dynamic space for interaction and grievance construction.

While the heart of this thesis examines the role of gender in collective identity and grievance construction, it is important to explore and illuminate the other intersecting identities present in this research. Indeed, it would be an oversight to examine gender and Native identity as separately moving parts of Idle No More, especially considering the strong and varied body of previous literature highlighting the historical role of women in Native social movements and

resistance. Taylor and Whittier's basic framework for movement analysis is useful but must be understood through the lens of Native feminism, as this highlights unique and critical elements of the identities of Native women and men. The Native feminist lens provides a broader understanding of historical trauma and the intersection of identities and how these two ideas critically contribute to individual and collective identity construction. Further, this approach allows an opportunity to understand not only the social structures and institutions influencing the emerging INM movement, but the remnants of colonialism that shape movement grievances.

I center this project on Walder's (2009) critique of social movement theory as lacking a focus on movement content versus actions and outcomes. A collective identity and grievance-based framework that examines gender alongside Native identity places constructionist processes at the heart of the research, contributing to a newly emerging subset of research examining complex identities and their interaction in collective identity development. This project further contributes to a growing body of social movements literature that seeks to understand gender as an institutional actor within SMOs, as well as continuing to follow literature that highlights connections between individual gender identity, social structure, and culture.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN

For this project I make use of qualitative content analysis to analyze data collected from the public Facebook page of the Idle No More movement. Part of a broader project examining the emergence and political opportunity structures of INM through the Facebook page, my thesis examines the role of gender and Indigenous identity in collective identity and grievance construction processes. Using Facebook data, I critically examine how gender has influenced the emergence and development of the movement, as understood through the social media narratives.

The Internet and social media have become ubiquitous in their influence of every day interaction. Indeed, the Internet alone has been shifting the locations of interaction, effectively reshaping many of the fundamental structures of society. Generally speaking, online resources are now a mainstream methodological option (Stewart and Williams 2005). Online resources, especially social media, provide a unique perspective for social movements as a new element of organizing strategies and tactics (Kellner 2002;

Wasserman 2007; Eltanway & Wiest 2007; Langman 2005). Social media gives us the opportunity to study the emergence of social movements as they occur, but also to examine the social interactions within that emergence. Social media has changed the way social networks are organized, offering a new form of narrative construction that relies on the authentic voice of rapid conversation (Mann and Stewart 2000; Eichorn 2001; Barassi 2013; Eslen-Ziya 2013). Unlike other forms of online media, social media contains a strong element of instantaneous interaction while also being subject to asynchronous interaction. Social media further tackles and approaches the new geography of identity formation that has resulted in the technological era (Niezen 2005). The technological mechanisms of social media provides a unique opportunity to examine a more authentic voice, though there are interesting factors of social psychological performance at play. This thesis focuses on Facebook, a social media platform with over 1.2 billion monthly active users and 945 million mobile monthly active users (Protalinski 2014). In addition to being unobtrusive, examining Facebook data contributes to emerging literature on social media as an important site of cultural production.

It is crucial that the voices of the researched are heard (James and Busher 2006; Ashby 2011). Facebook, Twitter, and other social media are now primary aspects of the activist toolkit and thus it is critical that social movement, identity, and network theorists incorporate the study of social media into sociology. By using social media sources, researcher interference is mitigated; that is to say, social media gives individuals the opportunity to openly speak their minds without being prompted by the researcher. This gives an authenticity to the voices represented in this paper, while also giving more power back to the subjects being studied. Because of the dynamics of power, the nuance of conversations produced in social media

interaction, and the potential for rich text based content analysis, I used a qualitative methodology for this thesis.

Qualitative methods are appropriate for analysis of my data for several reasons. First, generally speaking, qualitative methods emphasize subjective description, personal experience, and rich description of context (Krippendorf 2013; Schreier 2012). This approach is useful in any analysis of narrative, though especially so when attempting to locate how interactions construct movement ideas because of the interpretive process required. Second, the use of qualitative content analysis “enables researchers to examine patterns and themes within the objects produced in a given culture” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011: 229). Third, the practice of qualitative content analysis is situational and reflexive (Schreier 2012). This is valuable when working with social media as a data source because it requires heavy researcher interpretation to draw out meaning. The epistemological approach of qualitative content analysis provides understandings of researcher assumptions, biases, and positionality as a key part of the interpretive process, and provides the researcher with mechanisms to recognize and overcome those elements. Finally, qualitative content analysis has emergent flexibility allowing the researcher to adapt elements of the research process as it is undertaken (Schrier 2012). This is critical when using social media as a data source because of the ways in which social media narratives can evolve over time.

I focus on Facebook as a source of social media data as opposed to other potential sources for several reasons. First, the data for this project was drawn from a larger project that relied on data from Facebook. This larger project focused on the emergence of Idle No More, the use of Facebook as a tool for organizing and communication, and the political opportunity structures of the movement. Second, while several Twitter hashtags do exist around the INM

movement (namely #IdleNoMore), Twitter limits individual posts and responses to under 140 characters. While this no doubt produces meaningful interactions and contributions, the long form format of Facebook generates more extensive conversational structures. Third, based on current data collection tools, capturing data from Facebook and retaining the conversational structure is more easily dealt with than other social media sources.

Data collection on the broader INM project began in December 2012 and encompasses posts from the first year of the movement (November 2012 - November 2013). For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the data from November 2012 to April 2013. This data captures the critical emergence period of the INM movement, providing insight into the role of gender in emergence, grievance construction, and communication strategies. The data for this time period has been coded into broad thematic categories, addressing such themes as: identity, inequality, strategies and tactics, timing of the movement, and oppression related to colonization, among others.

The data collected for this project is reflective of a six month period of movement emergence. Data was collected, saved, and coded in daily files – meaning each data file corresponds with a single day of each month. The month of November is an exception – there is only one file for all posts from November. Additionally, data for the month of December is not descriptive of the whole month; rather, the data is present for December 30, 2012 and December 31, 2012. Beginning on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, data was available and coded using NVIVO for every subsequent day until April 30, 2013. For the remainder of the document, the word “source” will refer to an individual day of data. This corresponds with NVIVO’s terminology for data separation. On average, each day contained 434.15 references (codes). On the page’s busiest day,

posts and comments generated 286 pages of text; on the least busy day, it produced only four pages of text.

Finally, the reach of the Idle No More Facebook page can be measured based on the number of “Likes” the page has. When a user “Likes” a Facebook page, this page appears in their daily news feed of posts; that is to say, when a user “Likes” a Facebook page, Facebook helps this user track the daily posting and traffic of the page by recommending posts from the page for the user to read. While using the number of page “Likes” is not necessarily representative of the amount of traffic a publicly accessible page like INM’s receives, it is a valuable mechanism for generating basic understandings of movement reach on Facebook. The Facebook page was created on November 29, 2012. On December 14, 2012, just 15 days later, the moderators of the INM Facebook page posted the following message:

Thank you endlessly for your support. We have nearly 5,000 likes, and receive many messages and wall posts a day offering support. This page is run by 8 women; and we all try to update as often as possible, and respond to the messages we see.

This is a time of amazing change for Canada and the world; we are glad to be experiencing it with you.

In Solidarity,

- The 8 Women Who Shall Remain Anonymous (For Fear of Being Sent to Harper's  
Reeducation Camp for Rebellious NDNs)

This post provides critical context for both who the moderators of the page are and helps chart the growth of the movement over time. Just over a month and a half after this post, on January 31, 2013, INM posted again about their page Likes asserting, “90,000 likes in three months isn't bad, right?” This demonstrates exponential growth and interest over the first month of the movement. By April 30, 2013, the page had 107,899 total Likes and has continued to grow, plateauing around 130,000 likes in the last several months.



For preliminary coding, I, along with three other graduate students participated in the initial inductive line by line thematic data coding, establishing intercoder reliability of 90% or greater across themes. The initial themes were developed by the two PIs. Graduate student coders then used a grounded theory approach to add or remove codes as the research group saw fit. For example, nodes that were not used or unclear were dropped from the initial coding process, whereas other codes that were not initially developed but became clear, were added to the process. I will be making use of additional inductive sub thematic coding to address my questions of interest.

Based on the previous coding protocol and my experience with the use of broad thematic coding for the project, I determined that the majority of the data related to gender could be found in one of three existing nodes: IDENTITY, INEQ (inequality), and DEMOG (demography). Additional focus was placed on the ENVIRON, GRIEVANCE, and PARTICIPATE nodes, in an effort to examine how gender intersected with these categories. Additionally, I assumed that not all comments on the broader theme of gender would fall inside those three nodes. To try to uncover comments about gender that may fall outside of the previously coded data, I used keyword query searches for the following terms: BOY, BROTHER, FEMALE, FEMININE, GENDER, GIRL, MAN, MASCULINE, MOTHER, MOTHER EARTH, SEXUAL ASSAULT, SISTER, WARRIOR, WARRIOR WOMEN, WOMAN, and WOMEN. Some of these query searches corresponded directly to individual sub-categories, while others were generated to reflect potential results. I then coded all of the data from these sources using the coding themes as discussed below.

The following codes were then inductively developed based on previous knowledge of data and assessments about potential themes: WOMAN, IDENTITY, GENDER, LEADERSHIP,

WARRIOR, VIOLENCE, SEXISM, and MOTHER EARTH. WOMAN was defined as any comment broadly related to women in the INM movement, especially posts involving images of women participating in protests. IDENTITY was defined to include any comment that identified an interplay between self-reported demographic traits and understandings of identity. For example, many comments in this code began with the phrase “I am a...” and then elaborated how that demographic information informed identity based positions. GENDER was applied to any comments related to gender (as opposed to women), and usually included comments about gender equality or resistance more broadly. LEADERSHIP was defined as any comment or post that related to the leaders of the INM movement and the leadership of women in other strategic efforts. WARRIOR was used to code any comments or posts that referred specifically to the idea of “warriors” as leaders of the INM movement, most consistently in conjunction with the idea of “women warriors.” VIOLENCE was defined as any post or comment that included references to sexual, domestic, or other violence against women. SEXISM was used to code any comment that included gender coded or gender oppressive language. Finally, MOTHER EARTH encompassed any comments or posts that discussed environmental issues using gender-coded language – either Mother Earth specifically or simply using feminine pronouns to refer to the planet.

The strength of this data lies in its rich description of a social movement as it emerges through new media. Using Facebook data allows for a multi-voiced piece that represents a wide intersection of individuals, which is very valuable when studying underserved populations. This data also contributes to a growing body of social media research as well as the development of methodologies used to examine social media. In describing the data, I arrived at one of first weaknesses. Due to human subject regulations regarding protection of confidentiality of individuals posting on a public site, personally identifiable information was not included. This

means that demographic data is only available for those individuals who offered up that information in their comments. For the broader data set, DEMOGRAPHIC was coded 867 times from 149 sources. Not knowing the details about those who provide data creates some concerns for generalizability.

A second weakness is that the data collection process changed several times over the course of collection, due to changes in the way that Facebook presents their information. Posts are separated in two ways: Posts by INM (posts made by the administrators of the official INM page) and Posts by Others (posts by anyone else). Once Facebook made the delineation between Posts by INM and Posts by Others, coding efforts focused on Posts by INM. By only coding data from Posts by INM, I examine only the interactions between commenters on Posts by INM. This is valuable and strengthens the project for two reasons. First, this presents a stronger case for the narrative and grievances constructed by the official movement. Second, this allows me to examine how members and observers of the movement are interacting with the movement. Ultimately, in this project I am most interested in how these interactions between comments and posts contribute to the construction of gender in the context of the movement.

## CHAPTER IV

### ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: THE EMERGENCE OF INM

In this chapter, I offer context for the movement, discussing the story of the Idle No More Movement's emergence. I begin by providing details about the content of Bill C-45. I then elaborate the origins of the movement, focusing on social media organizing and its relation to direct social action. I then discuss the Idle No More Manifesto and Mission Statement, distinguishing between the Facebook Mission Statement and the Press Release Mission Statement, as each offers unique insights for broader movement themes. This chapter closes with a discussion of the two broad thematic elements of INM's grievances: sovereignty and decolonization.

#### **Bill C-45: The Omnibus Budget Bill**

Bill C-45 was a piece of budget legislation initially introduced in March 2012 and then re-presented in the Canadian Parliament in late 2012. The bill was the "second budget implementation bill" and was an omnibus budget bill, meaning it represents a "collection

of proposed legislative changes,” including drastic shifts in the policies of the Navigation Protection Act (formerly the Navigable Waters Protection Act), the Indian Act, and the Environmental Assessment Act (Smith 2012). The bill was championed by the conservative government of Canada, with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and other officials, like Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, leading the charge to push the bill through. Though Bill C-45 was eventually passed, opposition to the bill was an igniter for the Idle No More movement.

Major concerns with the bill relate generally to drastic reduction in environmental protections. For example, the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act removed protections from thousands of Canadian waterways by changing the definition of “navigable waters.” Under new definitions, “only three oceans, 97 lakes and 62 rivers... less than one percent of Canada’s waterways” will be protected (Idle No More 2012). These protections are removed by not requiring federal oversight of projects on the majority of Canadian waterways. The removal of federal oversight continued into the Environmental Assessment Act, where changes meant that environmental assessments will only be required on major projects. These environmental changes included no exemptions or consideration for waterways on First Nations reservations, creating considerable concern about pollution in areas where environmental protection is highly valued for both traditional and subsistence reasons.

Another critical concern with Bill C-45 was a change to the Indian Act, modifying how reservation land could be sold by tribal governments. Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said in an interview that First Nations people “see no movement from the government to work with [them], when [we] see backsliding, undermining, and continuing threats and pressures on an already burdened population, the flames only grow stronger”

(Schoffield 2013). These critical concerns helped garner initial online support for the movement, eventually helping to propel direct action.

### **INM, Social Media, and Direct Action**

On October 30, 2012, Jessica Gordon first used the phrase “Idle No More” in a Tweet.<sup>1</sup> According to the Idle No More “Living History,” a little less than two weeks later, Gordon joined forces with Nina Wilson, Sylvia McAdam, and Sheelah Mclean to officially found Idle No More. This founding is marked by a teach-in event about Bill C-45 at Station 20 in Saskatoon titled “Idle No More” (Idle No More 2014). The official Idle No More Facebook page was created and launched on November 29, 2012. Early posts garnered only a handful of likes and shares but immediately start addressing larger movement concerns like the problem of mobilizing across Native communities. Even at the outset, the movement is concerned with bridging gaps between social media and direct action, as highlighted in a post from November 30, 2012, where the page calls for “those who do not have [Facebook] or internet, our elders and less computer literate. Get the word out by handing out copies and at the same time sharing this link with as many people as possible.” The Facebook page then serves as both a site for interaction and discussion of the movement as well as a virtual community board for exchanging information about various direct action events.

INM continued to build its momentum by organizing a massive social media campaign to promote a direct action event on December 10, 2012. Seeing a window of opportunity in Amnesty International’s annual Human Rights Day, leaders used Facebook to spread the word about events across Canada and around the world. The Facebook page was used during rallies

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<sup>1</sup> “Awesome day of laying the groundwork for rally and petitions opposing #omnibus #billc45 re #indianact please find our fb group #IDLE NO MORE” (Gordon 2012).

and protests to post images of protestors and activists as the rallies were happening, as well as being a site for photos after the close of events. Many of these posts gained hundreds of shares; one image of a man holding a sign that read “Harper Sucks Moose Balls” gained 800 Shares before the image was shared to the INM page, where it gained another 297 Shares. Though the rallies and protests were a direct response to Bill C-45, only some protestors focused on Bill C-45; for example, some protestors carried signs that said things like “Bill C-45 C-U in Hell” or “Bill C-45 is an Insult,” while others held signs simply saying “NO C-45” or the no symbol over C-45. However, other protestors carried signs more related to the environmental or sovereignty aspects for the movement. Several youth protestors held signs reading things like “Save My Future,” “We Matter.”

On December 17, 2012, Idle No More put out a press release summarizing the movement thus far, clarifying major concerns with Bill C-45 and why Wilson, Mclean, McAdam and Gordon started the movement. The press release, published on rabble.ca, an alternative Canadian news source, elaborates that INM is not just about resisting Bill C-45 but that “people [should] continue to oppose and reject all imposed legislation originating from the federal government” citing lack of consultation with Indigenous peoples and nations as a motivating factor for this rejection (Kraus 2012). Featured are discussions about INM’s allyship processes with non-Indigenous individuals in a joint effort to “create healthy and sustainable communities” (Kraus 2012). In addition, the press release includes the INM Manifesto and a variant of the Mission Statement, which are discussed in the next section.

## **INM's Manifesto and Mission Statement**

The launch of the Facebook page also included the posting of the Idle No More Manifesto and the Idle No More Mission Statement, each of which provide important context for the social media messaging of the movement, and will be discussed in depth in the next section. Each clause of the Manifesto represents a different broad thematic grievance of the movement. The first, second, and third clauses all engage in clarifying what the government of Canada is doing that disenfranchises First Nations. The first clause directly addresses issues of colonization, establishing this as a primary grievance for the movement. Especially salient are the Treaty agreements as binding contracts between the First Nations and the government of Canada, which clearly links to themes of sovereignty and distrust of the system. The second and third clauses highlight how the violation of treaties and resource mining have disenfranchised First Nations, leaving them “with nothing but poisoned water, land and air... in an attempt to take away sovereignty and inherent right to land and resources from First Nations peoples.” Finally, the concluding clause indicates a general idea of the communities that might result from the movement, though it lacks in specifics: “We believe in healthy, just, equitable and sustainable communities and have a vision and plan of how to build them.” Thus, the larger Manifesto based grievances emerge: colonization, sovereignty (especially with regards to treaties), environmental pollution, and sustainable futures.

While the Manifesto establishes basic movement grievances, the Mission Statement of INM provides a broader context for the movement's long term strategies and tactics. As mentioned previously, there are essentially two existing iterations of the Mission Statement offered early on. One Mission Statement, is published on the Facebook page's “About” section and is directly aimed at the Facebook and social media audiences. The first section of this



version articulates the goals of the page and a second section establishes a general set of rules of participation for the Facebook page. Herein, this version shall be referred to as the Facebook Mission Statement. The other iteration of the Mission Statement comes from a press release issued on December 17, 2012 on rabble.ca. This version of the Mission Statement focuses on strategies and tactics, as well as offering a call to action. It is important to examine each of these iterations, starting with the Facebook Mission Statement.

The first section of the Facebook Mission Statement highlights the efforts of the movement to engage in grassroots activism, establishing individual forums about Indigenous rights, and offering a forum for communication of strategies, tactics, and events. It also encourages coalition and ally building, relationship building with international intergovernmental agencies, consciousness raising, and acknowledgement of all individuals involved in the grassroots efforts.

The second section of the Facebook Mission Statement delineates the rules of the page and is less related to movement grievances:

- 1) Posting will be deleted if statements and wording contains violence! This is FACEBOOK site THUS this site is monitored by police and intelligence agencies. As a basic security precaution, you should avoid posting incriminating statements against public officials or the specifics of any direct actions that could be deemed illegal.
- 2) Posts that inhibit Natives from organizing and/or our supporters from organizing whether from or inside or outside INM OR that prohibits Natives using space to discuss and organize in this space, will be reviewed, warned and then deleted.
- 3) Anything that is hateful, disrespectful, degrading and abusive and threats will not be tolerated and deleted without review. (Trolls this is you!)

While not specifically engaging in grievance construction, these rules reflect the goals of the movement as an effort to decolonize perspectives and move beyond a culture structured around exploitation, negativity, and harassment.

In contrast, the Press Release Mission Statement delineates what INM is, and then essentially offers analysis as to why each grievance of INM is important in a broader context. For example, the Press Release Mission Statement clearly links damages to the environment to colonial attacks on Indigenous rights stating,

Idle No More calls on all people to join in a revolution which honors and fulfills Indigenous sovereignty which protects the land and water. Colonization continues through attacks to Indigenous rights and damage to the land and water. We must repair these violations, live the spirit and intent of the treaty relationship, work towards justice in action, and protect Mother Earth.

The document continues, elaborating organizing and solidarity efforts as the center of the movement. The Press Release Mission Statement highlights the importance of stemming environmental degradation, pointing to the negative effects environmental harm can bring to Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals alike. The statement reads,

All people will be affected by continued damage to the land and water and we welcome Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies to join in creating health sustainable communities... There are many examples of other countries moving towards sustainability, and we must demand sustainable development as well. We believe in healthy, just, equitable and sustainable communities and have a vision and plan of how to build them. Please join us in creating this vision.

The Press Release Mission Statement strongly “encourages youth to become engaged in this movement as [they] are the leaders of [the] future.” Though the Press Release Mission Statement does acknowledge the potential for backlash against individuals involved in disrupting colonialized status quos, it also “encourages people to stay strong and united in spirit,” playing to both the traditional and spiritual roots of Indigenous movements (Klaus 2012).

The Press Release Mission Statement closes with a direct address to concerns with Bill C-45 and other federal legislation. This section reiterates INM’s broader grievance of

sovereignty, emphasizing the failures of the federal government to respect the treaties by “the unilateral imposition of these Bills.” The statement also points to the lack of consultation with First Nations in developing legislation that may have direct impacts on their communities, connecting nationhood and environmental protection by saying, “When we stand strong and believe in our ways and assert acts of Nationhood, it does not matter what amount of legislation the federal government introduces or passes because it is without consent and therefore is not applicable... We encourage people to advocate for our Mother (the land), the Water (giver of life) and those generations that have yet to come.” These claims clarify various aspects of the movement: sovereignty, traditional governance, and environmental concern.

While the Mission Statements vary in many ways, similarities maintain. First, based on these statements, it is clear that the movement firmly situates itself as a grassroots movement with different branches or chapters of the movement making use of various strategic approaches to direct action. Second, both highlight the importance of mobilizing individuals of all identities and emphasize allyship as a key element of movement success. Finally, both Mission Statements emphasize that INM is at its heart a project aimed at returning dignity and respect to Indigenous/Native peoples through sovereignty restoration and decolonization.

Many commenters posting to the page indicated a similarly aligned set of grievances to the manifesto and Mission Statements, although posts do offer a considerably more diverse range of topics of concern. Not every comment identifies the movement as a site of positive progress. In the initial coding process, over 800 comments were coded for CRITICISM, where over 1,100 comments were coded for SUPPORT. These categories were by no means mutually exclusive because coders recognized the capacity of commenters to criticize some aspects of the movement, while supporting others. These numbers, however, demonstrate that more

commenters on the INM page were supportive of the movement. Further, only posts that explicitly supported or criticized were coded as such.

Broadly speaking, commenters identify the movement as transcending racial, gender, sex, ethnic, and other identity boundaries but rooted in resistance to the oppression of First Nations; being dedicated to the protection and care of the environment; actively engaging in decolonizing processes; and having an overall concern with exploitative political structures. One commenter says that to them, INM is:

... A movement about oppression of the First Nations, of women of children of men. It's about those with and in power over those they disempower through any abuse of power or acts of violence - enough is enough is what this revolution is saying.

The theme of “enough is enough” resonates throughout the posts and comments, and is reflected in the movement’s name. This movement ties itself very closely to resistance against both historical and current oppressions, largely through the mechanisms of colonialism.

On the surface, the movement’s largest grievances, especially in the earliest months, involve opposition to environmental degradation, opposition to colonial structures and institutions, and an emphasis on an inclusive movement for all peoples. Another major emergent theme for the movement is the use of grassroots and online organizing to achieve the project of decolonization. In the next chapter, I explore how gender is presented in Facebook posts and comments and what it reveals about the movement’s structure.

## CHAPTER V

### GENDER AT THE CENTER OF INM

Expanding on the initial grievances I addressed above, I consider my first research question: how is gender portrayed in social media messages of the early Idle No More movement? This question will be answered by laying out the four basic gender typologies I uncovered: Warrior Women, Mother Earth, Violence Against Women, and Native Feminism(s). This section concludes with a brief discussion of how these typologies relate to the broader frameworks of collective identity, leading to Chapter VI's discussion of collective identity and the role of gender in the construction of new movement grievances.

My interest in the role of gender in INM stems from the foundations of the movement. I wondered, did women's early involvement in the movement shape how it evolved, how it was conceptualized, and the way that the movement presented itself? As I undertook this analysis, I found that many other individuals were curious about the role of gender and had similar thoughts and feelings of pride regarding women's involvement. One commenter notes, "I just recently learned from a friend that INM was founded by women, and I am so proud of that fact."

To answer the question of how gender is involved in the emergence of INM and the construction of grievances, comments related to gender can be understood through four thematic sub-categories or typologies. The first of these is "Warrior Women." A recurring phrase and statement throughout the narrative, this typology is related to the

historical resistance and the role of Indigenous women. The second typology uncovered was that of “Mother Earth.” This typology clarifies the effects of the gendered discourse of the planet, connecting patriarchal constructions of gender and environmentalism. The third typology is the emergent grievance of “Ending Violence against Indigenous Women.” This typology is also connected to colonized patriarchal understandings of gender but relates more directly to colonial violence against women and other marginalized groups. Finally, the typology of “Native/Indigenous Feminism” examines conversations of feminism within existing narratives in an attempt to unify theory and praxis, while also exploring whether or not Idle No More might be considered a feminist movement. Together, these typologies represent various elements and understandings fundamental to the anti-colonialism ideologies that shape the collective identity of this movement. This chapter will explore these four typologies in depth, while Chapter VI examines how they contribute to the movement’s collective identity.

### **Warrior Women: Women’s Involvement in INM**

Partially because of the nature of the movement and partially because the movement was started by women, women are at the heart of Idle No More. One of the more interesting sub-themes to emerge was a consistent reference to “Warrior Women,” especially in comments of support for the movement. These comments most frequently occurred with images of women protesting or on articles about female centered protests. Warrior Women are thus those women who are “warriors,” engaged in the process of protest, and connected to their roots and indigenous ancestors.

This common reference to Warrior Women demonstrates a broader understanding of the leadership roles of women in the INM movement. One commenter writes: “You are an

inspiration to our youth and the new blood our elders have spoke of. A true warrior woman! We need more like you! Many blessings to you little sister.” This demonstrates not only the connection with historical Native women leaders but also the desire for women to lead future resistance. Another commented: “Stay stronger than ever warrior woman- ur amazing and everyone (who gets what ur doing) supports u!! Hold ur head high x.” This comment along with others indicates a strong support for the female leadership, though the data is not without a few instances of sexist comments. While the refrain of Warrior Women echoes throughout the narrative, I deconstruct the idea of Warrior Women even further by examining women at the center of INM, traditional roles of Native women, and the impact of the colonization of gender.

The consistent presence of women at the forefront of a movement that is not specifically a women’s movement, or even a movement that is centered on women’s issues, is not unprecedented in Native communities but colonial structures had pushed women into the background (Monture-Angus 1995; Tohe 2000; Allen 1992; Mihesuah 2003; Jaimes 1992). As women found their voice in leadership in the INM movement, some had a strong emotional response. One commenter discussed her experience at a teach-in in London saying:

The event was complete. In it's [sic] lay out and presentation. The stage only used to project images and hold a banner. Women led, spoke, educated. The energetic of the event was so markedly different it was palpable. Unbidden I sobbed. Silently. As if the energy itself had unleashed all that is usually hidden.

This comment illustrates the critical and emotional nature of female leadership (Anderson 2009). The value of women’s engagement is palpable both to the movement and especially to other women participants.

Starting early in the posts to INM’s Facebook page, the key role of women in the movement is illustrated. On December 14, 2012, one commenter says: “It’s a beautiful thing to

know that the voice behind Idle No More is women. These are the stories that we will never forget. Keep fighting the colonistic [sic] ignorance with common sense.” Some commenters begin to encourage the anonymous moderators to reveal their identities. The moderators responded by indicating that they “come from different tribes, different walks of life but carry the same values... our point is theres [sic] no ownership here and it’s about the bigger picture.”

On January 27, 2013, commenters engaged in a heated discussion around whether or not INM was “sexist” because it was posting images and links directly centered on women. The INM moderator replied with this about the identity of individuals involved in the movement:

However, to celebrate Indigenous women's voices (that have long been silenced by colonial male chiefs and male "warriors" alike) as leaders in this movement does NOT represent the oppression of Indigenous male voices. There are plenty of Indigenous men working and organizing with INM - and they realize that acknowledging the strength of women does not negate their contribution by any means.

Commenters then expressed concerns about the movement (embodied here by the moderator of the Facebook page), as excluding male voices, engaging in name calling, and ultimately being a “women’s movement.” The INM moderator responded:

This is a movement for ALL; men, women, children, elders...Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. How do you believe men being negated from the photos, articles, and future solutions that Idle No More has presented? Please provide examples.

While the movement organizers emphasize the role of women as leaders and organizers, they distance themselves from the idea that it is a “women’s movement,” instead taking a position that there is valuable leadership by all who may decide to be involved with the movement.

For INM, power resides in the refusal to participate in colonial practices and instead maintain active engagement in in traditional practices instead (Smith 2008). In many ways, this practice is employed by rejecting structures and understandings of Western gender roles. The



deconstruction and rejection of Western or colonialized gender roles serves as another decolonizing protest. One post by INM for an event called “Idle No More and Indigenous Feminism” states, “Don't forget that analyzing our ideas of gender and sexuality is a necessary part of decolonization, and the strength of our communities.” This directly echoes the work of Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, and their call for total decolonization and its powerful effects on Indigenous identity (2013).

The colonization of gender resulted in a variety of complications for Indigenous identity and understanding in First Nations communities, namely the historical trauma of residential schools, gaps in traditionally female leadership, and the relegation of Native identified women to gender roles constructed for white/Westernized women (Smith 2008; Arvin, et al 2013; Jaimes 1992; Monture-Angus 1995, 1999; Tohe 2000). Throughout the data, many commenters refer to the matriarchal structures that were once predominate among many Indigenous groups in North America. One commenter looks to history claiming that matriarchy existed because “it worked for THOUSANDS of years. Then the Christians came with their opposite ways and we lost. Now we have confusion and arrogant men who can’t listen before they take action.” This commenter places power at the center of this comment, assigning the colonizer as the opponent of the movement but also clearly referencing the structures of domination. Consider the final statement, “Now we have confusion and arrogant men who can’t listen before they take action.” This comment expresses the damage that colonialism did to Native understandings of masculinity. By undoing traditional tribal structures that were often matriarchal, colonialism produced Native men who were uncertain of which roles to fulfill, causing them to experience considerable social strain between Native and colonizer identities. This reiterates to other movement members not

only what the grievance is (colonization) but who is considered directly culpable for this action by the movement.

Understandings of masculinity were also affected in other ways, especially in terms of constructing a hegemonic masculinity associated with aggression. Hegemonic masculinity, understood as “the pattern of practice that allows men’s dominance over women to continue” is maintained through social norms and practices, like the consistent association of masculinity and aggression (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). While the concept of hegemonic masculinity will be explored more in depth in the following sections about Violence Against Native Women, it is important to note here how colonialism imposed hegemonic masculinity, generating negative connotations for male warriors as compared to female warriors. A commenter notes:

Someone has to promote a Positive Masculinity for our people. ... We need to be included, because when men get aggressive, it's either VERY strong or VERY destructive. I want the male warriors to wake up, not to be demonized for being turned into zombies.

Here, the desire expressed by movement participants falls along similar sentiments expressed before – that colonial ideas of gender disrupted Native understandings and practices of gender, resulting in a disjointed understanding of critical Native identities, like the warrior. The commenter desires a masculine warrior that is neither overly aggressive nor destructive in his displays of masculinity, something that requires undoing colonized constructions of gender.

Native women participating in resistance are “Woman warriors of the planet mother earth.” The theme of Warrior Women is again repeated but this time it is connected with the idea that they are *of* the Mother Earth. This indicates an intrinsic connection between female resistance leaders and the cause for which they fight, especially when that cause is related to

environmentalism (Mihesuah 2003). One woman discussed her experience protesting at a small INM rally:

We were approached by a man from another tribe and he told us it would be the women to bring about the change. It's so awesome because we are the givers of life and women need to be respected.

The connection between women as givers of life and bringers of change is established here and extended in discussions of environmental grievances. In other conversations, women discuss their experiences being discriminated against by men, including some Native men. In one exchange, several individuals are discussing whether or not women ought to be allowed to participate in drum circles and a commenter responded with what appears to be a strongly sarcastic remark:

Re- the comment only men can drum....really...how could a woman possibly be able to be in tune with and emulate the "heartbeat of mother earth"...if that's not the most off based concept ever to come out of a manimal...and I know...I used to be one... Stie ewe'-Stay Strong Sisters and all my relations

Here the author of the comment self-identifies as a former “manimal,” indicating that the commenter is likely male. However, the summary of this comment is that women are just as capable of being in tune with the heartbeat of the Mother Earth. They ought not be excluded from drum circles, an organizing and protest tactic used extensively by INM, based on gender. The next typology “Mother Earth” explores these ideas further, expanding on the connections between gender and the environment.

## **“Mother Earth”: Gender and Environmentalism**

While the previous section suggests that women are at the center of INM, it is also possible to argue that environmental grievances are clearly marked as most important by the manifesto and other movement elements. What is not as clearly highlighted in those early statements is how these environmental grievances are closely linked to the role of women in the movement. Earlier, I discussed how women have been essential in historical Indigenous environmental resistance. Women are considered to be the caretakers and sister of the Mother Earth. The term “Mother Earth” was used over 2,800 times (2,843) between November 2012 and the end of April 2013 on INM’s Facebook. Generally speaking, the Earth is considered to be female, while humans are considered to be male. This assumption is strongly rooted in the patriarchal structures of domination. The classic paradigm of environmental domination understands humans as masters of nature, or that the Earth exists to serve human beings. This fatalistic assumption offers up very clear ideas about the matrix of domination and how gender and environmentalism are connected. The matrix of domination and hegemonic masculinity together construct a social understanding of the Earth as “ours” for the taking (Smith 2008; Arvin, et al 2013; Mihesuah 2003). It makes sense then, that comments connect the female identity of Earth with her environmental exploitation. One commenter writes: “‘Mother’ Earth – ah, the reason for the destruction becomes clear. She is a woman, and therefore must be controlled and dominated.”

The theme of domination is further elaborated in the language associated with resource extraction, discussions of mismanagement of resource extraction, or environmentally harmful resource extraction evoking imageries of rape. Two commenters clearly demonstrate this idea, though they are by no means the only two.

Commenter A: “It is all about power...and Idle No More is a vehicle to help our Mother Earth to not be raped and torn ...to rise up and create a change. Where Mother Earth will be protected...Where POWER IS THE HANDS OF THOSE THAT WOULD HOLD ALL LIFE SACRED!!”

Commenter B: “Think of our children and grandchildren before anyone starts raping Mother Earth!”

The symbolism of Mother Earth being “raped and torn” evokes very specific emotions in the reader. Despite the commonality of rape, it is considered socially to be a heinous crime. The broader narrative is of power, in this sense expressed through gender domination. Commenter A, in the second part of their comment, suggests that INM ought to re-concentrate or re-distribute power to those who hold all life sacred. Suggestions to reverse the discourse can be understood as direct challenges to the status quo and thus important to understanding the movement’s oppositional nature. Another commenter states:

the billionaires will corrupt and buy some first nations chiefs/like they've bought every politician they need to/judges where they need to buy judges. however, their dirty, war profiteering, mother earth raping, slave trading money can’t buy everyone.

Comments like this are relatively common and illustrate individual level distrust for the political tribal organizations, as well as the broader political system.

Comments suggesting the Earth requires some sort of fundamental protection are made even when the terminology of “Mother Earth” is not used, as one commenter says, “I honestly believe the only people who are racist are those who support the Harper government of Canada and the one percent who have the most to lose by raping the lands of the First Nations.” This demonstrates an internalized understanding of the planet as having a gender.

Another commenter points to the second class status of women when connecting narratives of environmental domination and gender subjugation: “Maybe that ‘Mother Earth’ name is part of the problem, we all know how women are held in 2<sup>nd</sup> place by most societies.” Other commenters highlight the connection by clarifying that Mother Earth needs protecting, as all women do: “Tapwe Tapwe! Mother Earth is DYING! She needs us 2 protect and save her!” Other commenters chose to take more positive approaches to this connection, making statements about the responsibility of women to care for the Earth both for future generations and because of an intrinsic sisterhood between women and their Mother.

Women are the most beautiful natural resource of humanity: they give life and love to their children. Respecting women is respecting intelligence and life.

As we respect women, we respect the planet and other thing that give life.

Here the association between women and the planet is outright, as it is in various other places. Connecting patriarchal, gendered understandings of the planet is essential to the project of decolonization for two reasons. First, it directly challenges the understood and existing structures of power and domination. Second, it forces individuals to face the social construction of the earth as a woman and mankind as a man. This creates a challenge for movement members to reexamine the relationships between existing attitudes and resulting actions

### **Ending Violence against Indigenous Women**

Violence against Native women is not stated explicitly within INM’s manifesto as a grievance of INM but the topic appears consistently within the narrative of the INM page, both in posts by INM and in post commentary. In a response to a commenter, the moderator of the INM page notes: “In addition, one of the big issues INM strives to address is colonialism.

Colonialism is linked to the disproportionate violence against Indigenous women (as part of the colonized group).” Further, during the months of February and March, numerous posts were made to the page “inviting people to join in creating an inclusive Valentines and organize community events to coincide with The Women’s Memorial March (A national campaign for missing and murdered Indigenous women), One Billion Rising (an international campaign to stop violence against women and girls) and Have a Heart Day (an initiative to support Indigenous children).” As the movement grew, it clearly became a strong rallying point. In an *Indian Country Media Today Network* article from January 16, 2013, Gyasi Ross identifies ending violence against women as one of the two main grievances of INM movement. Thus, the connection of violence against Native women to the larger theme of colonization is essential for understanding how colonialism has impacted Native social structures and institutions.

As early as December 30, 2013, INM was making posts about violence against Native women. In a post about an investigation into a sexual-assault against an Ontario First Nations woman in Thunder Bay, the INM moderator connects colonialism and violence against women: “Violence against our women is a method of continued colonization. Although this story is still developing, there have been many stories exactly like it throughout Canada's history.” In this post, a strong connection is drawn between direct physical violence and subjugation. The persistent subjugation of Native women throughout history is consistently connected to narratives of violence. Not all commenters agree that violence against women is a major issue. As one commenter notes: “What does this crime have to do with anything? I think you idle no more women are starting to lose it lol.” For this person, the connection of a crime against a woman, in this case a brutal sexual assault, with a broader narrative of colonialism does not resonate.

Violence against Women evolves to be a movement concern more slowly than other aspects, like environmental concern. In February, INM begins to share posts related to events focused on the status of women, like One Billion Rising and Women's Memorial March. Prior to February, Violence against Women had not been a consistent or established movement grievance, but rather one based around events and sponsored by other social movement actors outside of INM. Once broad movement concern over violence against women does emerge, it immediately becomes one of the most significant aspects movement discourse. This continues the strong theme of anti-colonial understandings of gender, or of directly challenging the ways that gender has historically been colonized. As such, examining the Violence against Women typology in the contexts of collective identity structures in Chapter VI will give key insights into how the movement incorporates new ideas into existing grievance structures.

### **Native/Indigenous Feminism**

To discuss the grievances of INM without discussing feminism would be to overlook a critical component of the data. As a practice, Native feminism helps unpack how normative ideas and structures are deconstructed and decolonized (Ross 2009; Mihesuah 2003; Arvin, et al 2013). While less common than the themes addressed above, this theme remains salient. Various comments referenced feminism as a central aspect not only to the movement, but to the identities of the individuals posting. For example, in response to a commenter, the moderator for the INM page replied,

‘We’re all in this together, so stop talking about race’ is often used to silence Indigenous women/women of color when they raise issues of race and gender intersectionality. I’ve experienced this first hand as an Indigenous feminist.



While we know little else about the moderator of the page at the time, or which of 8 women who self-identified as moderators, may be responding, we know that the responding individual identifies as Indigenous feminist and that this Indigenous feminism has informed responses to experiences within the movement.

The more subtle aspects of feminism, especially intersectional feminisms, are also in play in INM. Native feminism helps clarify discussions of privilege and race within the conversations on comment feeds. For example, when addressing experiences of violence, one commenter says:

Yikes, this is no time to argue about whether racial or gendered violence is "worse," or if one person's experience of violence is somehow less legitimate than another's. To rally around this woman in support and outrage is one thing but her experience should not be used as a talking point for white/non-native feminists to shed guilt or legitimize white privilege by glossing over the distinctly racialized nature of this misogynistic attack. Here, Native feminism points to the often problematic nature of white feminism as identifying only with the problems of white individuals. This criticism requires members of INM to consider their place and role, especially if they are white or non-native feminists. It is thus an essential part of decolonization efforts, with regards to understanding the complex intersections and aspects of various identities.

In another exchange the moderator and a commenting member of the page, discussed the role of men in Idle No More and the inequalities that INM is both facing and wishes to take before the Supreme Court. The commenter criticized the movement for lack of inclusion of men, suggesting that there was not a place for men in INM. The moderator replied:

Everyone plays an important role in this movement, men included; and indeed, our men are more likely to end up in jail and less likely to receive an education, as well as go missing. These are real inequalities that INM strives to address. For so long, due to colonialism in our Indigenous communities, women have been placed behind male chiefs and warriors - our voices have been silenced. The fact that many women have stepped up and organized rallies, spoken out, and led this movement is a revolution in itself.

In their response, the moderator clearly illustrates the inequalities faced by both men and women as the result of the colonization of gender. The consequences of colonization resonate beyond simply the subjugation of women. The moderator does not claim that INM is a women's movement but only that the leadership of women within the movement is a revolutionary challenge to the status quo of colonized gender constructions.

Amy Blackstone's discussion of activism and feminism are especially relevant here. Blackstone questions whether "we can or should ascribe the label 'activist' to those who choose not to identify themselves that way [and that this] is reminiscent of feminist debates about whether we can ascribe the label 'feminist' to those who do not identify as such" (2004: 352). Clearly, not every member of the INM movement identifies as feminist, and indeed, within the parameters of this dataset there would be no mechanism to assess that claim. However, it is critical to note that there are many individuals and organizations that do feminist activism without labeling themselves as such. Here, there is already one claim by the page that indicates a proclivity for feminism, though making a claim that INM is uniquely a women's movement or a feminist movement is short sighted. Rather, Native feminism seems to play a critical role in establishing paradigms under which members of the movement operate.

Taken all together, these typologies uncover the major contexts of gender in INM. Additionally, the common theme of colonization of gender that runs between each typology helps create a compelling argument for the gendered social construction of grievances. Gendered typologies as grievance mechanisms are not of much use without context, therefore, Chapter VI crystallizes how each typology contributes to the INM movement as a whole.

## CHAPTER VI

### INM, COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, AND GENDER

While Chapter V focused on the four typologies of gender present in the INM narratives, Chapter VI places its focus on my second research question: What role does this portrayal play in collective identity processes and to what extent does collective identity contribute to the construction of movement grievances? Specifically, I rely on the analytical framework I presented in Chapter III, emphasizing Taylor and Whittier's (1999) work on collective identity as a key process for grievance construction. Recalling that collective identity is comprised of three processes – boundary making, consciousness raising, and negotiation processes – I use this framework to analyze how the four gender typologies – Warrior Women, Mother Earth, Violence against Women, and Native Feminism(s) – play a role in the collective identity construction processes of INM. Connecting the narratives of Warrior Women and Native feminism, I highlight the importance of women's resistance for Native social movements, drawing parallels between historical movements and contemporary ones. To finish answering the question, I provide an analysis of the subtle but strong connections between the foundations of ending environmental degradation and ending violence against women as major movement grievances.

## **Collective Identity and Typologies**

Collective identity and NSM theory provides us with a lens for examining a movement. Using Taylor and Whittier's three processes of collective identity, a clear picture of the collective identity constructed through interactions on the INM Facebook page emerges. Boundary making occurs when groups "mark the social territories of group relations by... promoting an awareness of a group's commonalities... that develop among members of any socially recognized group or category organized around a shared characteristic" (1992: 111). Evident boundaries in the INM movement play a critical role in the construction of grievances, using specific gender typologies to create broader narratives of concern. In each section, boundary making is examined first to provide a sub-framework for understanding each typology.

The second process of collective identity, is raising group consciousness or constructing interpretive frameworks as they emerge from group struggle. This consciousness serves to "define and realize members' common interests in opposition to the dominant order" (1992: 1114). In this text, each example of collective consciousness represents a call to action, usually involving elements of social and political marginalization as unifying narratives. To be clear, the collective consciousness processes discussed in each section are parts of a greater whole of oppositional consciousness, rooted in the movement's broader concerns of decolonization and sovereignty rights. Finally, collective identities can be understood as occurring from a process of constant negotiation both within the movement and between the movement and outsiders. In this context of negotiation, we can understand identity as "a fundamental focus of political work" (1992: 118). Discussions of negotiation examine how each typology represents a politicized aspect of collective identity. I address each typology in turn with respect to the dimensions collective identity.

## *Warrior Women*

In the context of Warrior Women, boundary making defines women who participate in the movement as Warrior Women. As discussed earlier, Warrior Women play key roles in movement emergence, development, and action. Their reified existence accomplishes a clear role in establishing in-group and out-group dynamics among movement members. In the analysis of existing narratives, it became apparent that the only requirement of the ideal Warrior Woman type is that the post or image must discuss or present a woman engaged in direct action. Comments as simple as, “warrior woman w00t” appear on images of elder Native women engaging in seated protest, while other labeling of Warrior Women happens in response to the discussion of women engaging in hunger strikes, civil disobedience, or even basic protest participation. Even when the words Warrior Women aren’t used explicitly, there is a clear boundary that Native women, especially those that participate in activism, are central to the movement. As one commenter indicates, “atta girl, you have more brass them [sic] most men, not- withstanding Indian men...” This form of movement engagement serves as a model for involvement and action, something that is critical to a movement where one of the major grievances is mobilization and “waking up” participants.

It’s also important to note that the boundary making processes of Warrior Women do not seem to create new boundaries or understandings around Warrior Women. Rather, this is more of a boundary *marking* practice, where movement participants are utilizing a previously understood and socially agreed upon concept of Warrior Women. For example, several commenters make it clear that “Indigenous woman are symbols of strength and power and do not need men to help lift them up... but welcome the men to stand beside them in unity.” This central understanding of women as key actors in INM becomes clarified.

In terms of consciousness raising, consistent references to Warrior Women establish a call to action to all women (and indeed, all individuals) to become more active members of their communities and INM. Some commenters cite other Warrior Women as important gatekeepers to the movement, reopening a narrative that colonialism had tried to shut down. One woman comments, “From one Warriar [sic] Woman to another, thank you for inspiring me!” Another commenter notes how a Warrior Woman who has chained herself to equipment associated with the expansion of the Keystone XL pipeline is “showing us how to defeat "Tyranny", with courage. Courage, is what it takes to defeat tyranny! Blessings to this brave woman!” Women are then placed at the center of the oppositional consciousness of the INM movement.

The negotiations between “doing” and “being” Warrior Women are clearly complex, in that the very idea of Warrior Women is defined by action. Following the analytical line of thought that “doing” and “being” overlap, we can understand the restructuring of Western understandings of women as passive as the political project of the Warrior Women typology (West and Zimmerman 1987). In this way, Warrior Women negotiate in private spaces with their own individual understandings of their gender and gender identities (which cannot be explored by this project) while simultaneously navigating public conversations around Warrior Women, engaging in action regardless of whether or not these ideas that challenge hegemonic colonial understandings of gender are placed upon them. The identity of Warrior Women is then a site for the political to become personal through the acceptance of Warrior Women as integral members of the INM movement.

### *Mother Earth*

One commenter sums up the boundary making processes of the Mother Earth typology perfectly when they state, “Respect for Mother Earth equals respect for the feminine.” The role

of the Mother Earth typology in terms of collective identity of INM is that it offers a foundation on which individuals can construct their ideologies of environmental protection. Another commenter puts it this way, “Idle No More [...] It is really about our Earth mother, and the exploitation of her resources that we are all the very most concerned about.” Boundary making processes both reiterate the gender of the planet while providing a collective foundation on which to justify individual proclivity to environmentalism. Here a commenter connects religious ideas of creation to the protection of the Earth Mother saying, “Idc about anything else, the creator sent us to live on earth to protect it as our mother & if anyone else is too blind to see that will be the destruction of our natural resources and the meaning of man is lost forever.” Another highlights the relationship between Mother Earth and humans as symbiotic, stating, “Mother Earth is a living entity. She has/continues to watch the destruction caused by humanity. One day she will tell humanity, “Enough! You are a disease that must be eradicated! Isn't that a scary thought!!” While individuals use varied mechanisms for boundary making, the general constructed understanding is that the Earth is the foundation for a “global tribe” or a single unifying factor that ought to unite all peoples under the banner of INM.

Movement members see the personal connections between land and resource extraction in various ways. Some members indicate that the Earth herself is calling for a consciousness raising saying things like, “Do the right thing!!!! We all must. Earth mother is calling!” Other calls to action involve references to the preservation of the planet for future generations. It is important to understand that consciousness must not only be oppositional to the status quo structures but that it also “establishes new expectations” for members who share this new collective identity. The Mother Earth typology exhibits these understandings well in comments that indicate the necessity of behavioral change and support of the broader INM movement. One

commenter says, “the INM movement is fighting for your family too - for the global tribe. we ALL need clean water and land for our survival. The FN peoples are using the Treaties to try to stop the destruction of mother earth from corporate greed. Please support INM.” Another makes it clear that First Nations, “don't want your money. We don't want to be treated any better than you. We just want to keep our elements clean. Mainly our water air and land. Fire; well there's a lake of fire eagerly awaiting those who wish to destroy Mother Earth. GLOBAL TRIBE.” Here, the reference to a “lake of fire” provides an indicator that those who wish to identify themselves as members of INM ought not engage in any practices that might result in the destruction of the planet. The consciousness of Mother Earth can then be understood as advocating for the protection of the planet from a perspective of gendered protection.

One of the challenges of the Mother Earth typology is relating it to personal politicized identity through negotiation processes. However, several comments provided good context for this idea. First, women who stand up for Mother Earth are standing up for their children's futures. The connection of future generations, including the notion of the Seventh Generation, plays an important negotiation role in private and public spheres. At the group level, INM collectively connects the narratives of women and Mother Earth. One commenter puts it this way, “[Stephen Harper] deserves no name to have no respect for elders of woman warriors. Or our planet mother. Earth. Fist high. Woman warriors of the planet mother earth.” The negotiation process and oppositional understandings are further strengthened by the association of elder women warriors as “of the planet mother earth.” This reinforces the historical strength of native women leaders, especially in social movements, and works to tie together the group identity of women elders and the group identities of a younger individuals who have considerably more experience.



Negotiation processes around Mother Earth also occur in conversations about legislation.

A commenter states that:

Removing Protective Legislation is not a practice that will benefit anyone but the Giants Corps who want to rape the earth. If you believe otherwise please enlighten me. This movement is for all people, but some don't understand our treaty rights are different from your rights look it up on line. We are all trying to get on the same page and that page is Bill C-45.

This comment simultaneously engages in all three collective identity processes, clarifying how broader action can be connected to movement understandings, drawing boundaries about who is a member of the movement, raising consciousness about connections between treaty rights and environmental degradation (“Corps who want to rape the earth”), and finally negotiating the arenas of what the movement is and does.

Mother Earth provides a site for collective identity to occur simultaneously with grievance construction. It is perhaps most difficult to treat the three elements of Taylor and Whittier’s analysis as different in this category. While Mother Earth does not challenge the framing of the planet as female in any regard, rather the Mother Earth typology and conversations presents a collective identity centered on resistance towards patriarchal structures that allow for environmental exploitation.

### *Violence Against Women*

The boundary making processes of the Violence against Women typology involve clarifying the cultural system of response to violence against women. The connection between colonization and gendered violence becomes very salient here. Commenters note that “All through history rape has been used to instill fear and shame women and COLONIZE....dilute the culture enough for it to disappear.” A later post by Idle No More indicates that “violence against

native women is not traditional.” Other comments include statistics of disproportionate levels of violence in Native communities including that:

88% of the violence is perpetrated by non-Native men, and up until last week with the passing of the new Violence against Women Act (that now includes protection for Native women) Tribal courts had zero authority to prosecute them. And as of 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 76% (68% in Alaska) of the population living on reservations & Tribal lands were non-Native. Between 2005-2009, U.S. attorneys declined to prosecute 50% of all Indian country matters referred to them, 67% of which involved sexual abuse and related matters...

The boundary that is marked here is an understanding that violence against women was not a cultural institution that existed in Native communities prior to colonization and that since colonization, settler colonial governments have provided Native communities with little recourse. This boundary between what is a Native action and what is not helps construct solidarity along the lines of opposing gender violence.

Consciousness raising with regards to violence against women centers on understandings of the connections between facts and direct cultural action to change violence paradigms. Despite the common thread in Native communities that violence against women is not a “natural” or “Native” thing to do, “violence against native women is a reality. Too many people have turned a blind eye or denial. It will not go away till it is changed.” Individuals posting to Idle No More engage in consciousness raising by offering various direct and indirect responses to violence through a large number of posts. These posts include images of “folks of every colour and race taking the responsibility of standing up to say NO to violence against women.” In these ways, this consciousness bridges identity boundaries to help generate categorical monolithic understandings of violence against women as an inherently negative, counterproductive, and colonial behavior.

### *Native Feminism(s)*

While much of the previous boundary making and other collective identity processes were engaged in on an interactional level by commenters, for Native Feminism(s), much of the rhetoric came from the moderators of the INM Facebook page, and thus tacitly from INM itself. Boundary making for Native Feminism(s) does not seek to clarify who is or who isn't a Native feminist but rather seeks to clarify how Native Feminism(s) play a role in the collective action and understandings of INM. An excellent example of boundary making in Native feminist conversations recalls the experiences of the so-called Residential Schools, which were intended to forcibly assimilate people into civil service. The commenter says,

don't let the racist/misogynist/dividers divide us. in la paz, august 2012, non/Indigenous minority people were not happy with Indigenous blockades tactics/however, 480 years of millions murdered, raped, the slavery, theft of their land and silver, the racism, complete disrespect, and rape of sacred mother earth, well, we know where the hurt and anger comes from. understandable.

Here the designation between “racist/misogynist/dividers” and “us” (the members of INM) helps distinguish characteristics of in-groups and out-groups, establishing that members of INM ought not be any of those things embodied by the other.

Most of the work of Native Feminism in collective identity processes is engaged through consciousness building. This is unsurprising because feminism is itself often considered to be a consciousness raising project (hooks 1984). While few comments have discussions about feminism, feminism is present in many of the events advertised on the INM page. On March 5, 2013, the University of Saskatchewan held an event titled “Idle No More and Indigenous Feminism” which included lectures like “Love Stories for Mother Earth: Artistic Responses to INM,” “INM: Inequalities in Indigenous Education in Sask.,” and “Indigenous Feminism and

INM.” The flyer for this event was preceded by this comment from the moderator: “Don't forget that analyzing our ideas of gender and sexuality is a necessary part of decolonization, and the strength of our communities.” Here we can see the connections between decolonization and feminism as a critical element of consciousness raising around the INM movement. Negotiation processes of feminism are harder to uncover as well because of the lack of interaction within the comments about feminism. In the few conversations that directly discuss the ideas and concerns of feminism, individuals both do and don't identify as feminists. In other ways, it seems more important to negotiate the undoing of colonial gender by negotiating the space and identity of the Native woman into a non-colonialized ideal.

There are several interesting aspects where commenters address issues of collective identity within the movement, questioning who the movement is for, and ultimately who can be a part of the movement. Especially early on in the data, the moderator of the INM page consistently responded to concerns about centering INM on the grievances of women. Some commenters were more concerned with race and a potential Pan-Native identity as being the unifying element of INM. The moderator of the page argues that Native women have a unique intersectional experience, saying:

Racism and sexism together create a double-bind, where a woman is devalued for both her race and her gender. It's important to understand that Indigenous women and women of color have experiences that are different than those of white women. This doesn't mean either is more correct, it just means the experience of being a woman is not universal.

The moderator illustrates that INM might not be representative of any pan-identity structures, because experiences of race and gender are not generalizable across identities. While attempting

to unpack whether race, gender, or some other aspect of identity is the stronger unifier is not the aim of this thesis, it is interesting to examine how the collective identities of femaleness and Nativeness are constructed and discussed as potential opposites.

For some commenters, race and misogyny are more salient and present issues than environmental degradation. This commenter states:

I KNOW this is NOT about raping Mother Earth. This is about race bias and misogyny males steer clear of white women because they may get rejected or punished more so than if they pick on colour or Indigenous women. It is high time that all women stand together and support one another.

This comment demonstrates a small glimpse of commenters who see identities other than gender as more salient but still value gender as a mechanism for solidarity. The commenter rejects previous associations between violence against women and environmental degradation but still acknowledges that power dynamics are key. The commenter finds race as a more critical site for power struggles, in terms of what types of men assault women of color and Indigenous women. Native feminism here helps unpack further the underlying assumption of this comment – which all women should stand together against violence, regardless of race or opinions about environmental degradation.

All four of these typologies work together simultaneously to generate collective experiences and oppositional identities based on concepts of gender, as well as other individual identities. Collective identity, as the shared interests, experiences, and solidarity of the movement is then built in two instrumental ways through these typologies. First, the similarities between ideological understandings of the Mother Earth and Violence against Women typologies, clarifies a collective identity constructed on an anti-patriarchal, anti-colonization

interest. This shared gendered ideology then becomes the foundation for rejecting other forms of colonialism and solidifying the oppositional orientations of INM. Second, the collective identity work done through the Warrior Women and Native Feminism typology reflects a rich, historical tradition of Native women's resistance. This collective identity of Warrior Womanhood is not new; it has simply been revised through the help of Native feminism and imbued with new understandings of anti-gender colonization.

## CHAPTER VII

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: GENDERED GRIEVANCES

As each of these four typologies works to form collective identity, the pairing of Warrior Women and Native Feminism, and Mother Earth and Violence against Women, generate major movement grievances through gendered processes. Acker says that an action or institution can be considered gendered when,

advantages and disadvantages, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender.” (1990: 146)

I have clearly demonstrated the gendered aspects of the INM movement through the presentation of the four typologies, and their connection to broader collective movement identity.

Social movement grievances, in contrast to collective identities, are an outcome rather than a process (Larana, et al 1994; Klandermans et al 2001). Schurman and Munro’s discussion of grievances highlights the social nature of grievance production, the dynamic role of identity, and the importance of shared consciousness (2006). As INM thickened its networks to form the movement, women were placed at the center of

organizing, identity processes, and thus grievance construction. If the major movement grievances are considered to be colonization, environmental degradation, and violence against women, as discussed in Chapter IV, the four typologies of Warrior Women, Mother Earth, Ending Violence against Native Women, and Native Feminism, and the collective identities they generate, clearly facilitate Schurman and Munro's three key elements.

The social production of grievances in the INM movement is carried out through the interactions of the Facebook page. Movement grievances expand with the repeated posting of articles, information, images, and other media, related to a certain topic that is not explicitly stated in the manifesto or mission statements. Violence against women, in particular, is an excellent example of this. As the movement grew, more and more posts included discussions of how to prevent or end violence against women, as did direct action carried out in the name of INM. The consciousness raising processes of Ending Violence against Women and Native feminism typologies can be seen as clearly working to establish the abolition of violence against Native women as a broader movement grievance. Ending violence against Women can then be understood as a gendered grievance – or a grievance whose production relies on socially produced idea work on gender, shared identities of gendered experience, and a shared ideological understanding of the role of gender.

The other two major movement grievances of INM, colonization and environmental degradation, rely on the same gendered ideology rooted in heteropatriarchal colonization. Smith (2008) wrote that, to be successful, Native sovereignty movements ought to directly challenge heteropatriarchy, placing women at the center. This is exactly what INM does. The disruption of the still-existing structure of settler colonization can seem obtuse or unattainable. It requires a fundamental cultural shift. By focusing attention on environmental grievances, INM



attacks the project of decolonization through a gender based narrative of the Mother Earth. This narrative's social construction relies on solidarity within gender and indigenous identities, placing emphasis on the social construction of intersectional experience and shared ideologies (Miesuah 2003; Niezen 2005).

The narrative clearly extends how the movement reflects the historical resistance of Native communities, especially Native women, and women's critical role in decolonization (Ross 2009; Jaimes 1992; Allen 1992; Smith 2005, 2008). While there is work to be done in exploring the role of the women founders of the movement, the placing of Warrior Women at the center of the movement framework resulted in an ideological movement foundation . Placing women at the center of the INM narrative opened up a space to end both harm to Mother Earth Violence against women -- two seemingly unconnected ideas -- to coalesce into a cohesive, if diffuse movement.

Environmental grievances are clearly at the forefront of INM as indicated by the manifesto. What is not as clearly highlighted in early statements is how environmental grievances are closely linked to the role of women in the movement (Mihsuah 2003). Earlier, I discussed how women have been essential in historical Indigenous environmental resistance. Women are considered to be the caretakers and sister of the Mother Earth. Narratives connected the female identity of the Earth with her environmental exploitation. Native women participating in resistance are "Woman warriors of the planet mother earth." The theme of Warrior Women is again repeated but this time it is connected with the idea that they are *of* the Mother Earth. This indicates an intrinsic connection between female resistance leaders and the cause for which they fight.

While environmentalism and decolonization on their surface seem to have little to do with gender, this paper has clearly illustrated the strong links between these two main movement grievances and the institution of gender. It is especially critical to understand that the institution of gender here shapes first collective identity and then the grievances that result from it. Though previous work has examined the intervening role of gender in social movements, little research thus far has connected a subtext of gender to institutional frameworks. That is to say, thus far, all research that focuses on gender in social movements focuses on social movements where gender is an explicit mechanism of organizing. This is in contrast to INM where gender plays a major role in organizing but does so implicitly through ideological and collective identity processes.

I am not of the opinion that gender is the only or even the most important identity to the collective identity process for this movement. Race, class, and national identity play enormous roles in the construction of collective identity. Moreover, traditional understandings of gender can be problematic when examining Native communities. To overcome these challenges, I focused on how gender underwent extensive colonization, and how that colonization created lasting impacts that helped to structure INM. While ecofeminism has illustrated connections between patriarchy and environmental domination, this thesis is one of the first to approach this issue from a sociological standpoint.

I have illustrated the ways in which grievances can be constructed through specific gendered lenses. Through this case study, I articulate how a movement that is not openly or directly a movement about gender may carry strong undertones or subtle conversations about gender in its organization and interactional premises. Second, sociologists now recognize that gender is itself an institution. If we approach the problem of gendered grievances from this perspective, we can clearly see how gender would provide an intervening understanding of the

grievances of the movement. My findings corroborate existing literature – that Native women have a long and dignified history of leading social movements against settler governments and that the lack of women in previous Native social movements has been the result of Western patriarchal oppression. A major contribution of this thesis is the idea of a gendered grievance. In INM, gender is an integral part of grievance construction, even for those grievances that do not directly indicate gendered identities.

Future research may consider the future of Idle No More and other aspects of gender within the movement. I would like to use the four typologies developed here to continue to examine grievances as they emerge in the later stages of the movement. Additionally, I would like to pursue a project that uses the Native Feminism typology to examine whether or not Idle No More could be considered a feminist movement, even if it does not clearly identify as such. Another potential avenue for further research would be to present this work to the founders and Facebook moderators of the INM movement, gathering interview data to compare narratives of grievance construction. This research would examine whether or not the founders and leaders of the movement consider gender to be central to the movement, or whether the critical role of gender in grievance production was an artifact of the Facebook interactions. Finally, a long term research project would undertake the examination of images, videos, and accounts of direct action protests associated with INM to investigate the diffusiveness of the movement, how active movement participants view gender and the role of gender in the movement, and how movement members go about accomplishing the goal of decolonizing gender.

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