

**‘FRACK’TURING CANADIAN SETTLER NARRATIVES: THE ELSIPOGTOG  
SHALE GAS PROTESTS AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S RESISTANCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

On October 17, 2013, a group of Mi'kmaq people from Elsipogtog, New Brunswick garnered national attention for defending their land against shale gas development. The focal point of the event was the Elsipogtog First Nation's clash with the RCMP, which resulted in the arrest of 40 so-called protestors. By interspersing footage of the protest with images of burning police cars, rifles, and staunchly held blockades, the media portrayed the protestors' actions as radical and violent. Amidst the flurry of mainstream media coverage, the people of Elsipogtog were active in challenging the misrepresentations of their actions and their communities; among them the women of the community were especially vocal and instrumental in continuing the resistance against shale gas. However, despite the active involvement of women from Elsipogtog in the protest, they largely disappeared from the mainstream media. This thesis explores how Indigenous women confront erasure and unsettle the dense mythological terrain of Canadian national narratives.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

On October 17, 2013, a group of Mi'kmaq people from Elsipogtog, New Brunswick garnered national attention for defending their land against shale gas development. The Elsipogtog First Nation's clash with the RCMP, which resulted in the arrest of 40 so-called protestors, quickly became the focal point of the event. By interspersing footage of the protest with images of burning police cars, rifles, and staunchly held blockades, the media portrayed the protestors' actions as radical and violent. The people of Elsipogtog and allies became active in challenging these misrepresentations of their actions and their communities; among them, the women of the community were especially vocal, and became leaders in the resistance against shale gas development. However, despite their active involvement in the protest, the mainstream media largely excluded the women of Elsipogtog from their coverage. I wondered why. This thesis explores that question. In it, I argue that the distinct lack of mainstream media coverage of Indigenous women's involvement in the events at Elsipogtog reveals not only the continuing impact of gender on media representations but also the pervasive implications of settler colonialism on said representations. My thesis seeks to foreground two issues: the underlying conditions that influence the erasure of Indigenous women from mainstream media; and the role of Indigenous women's own narratives in contesting this erasure. Using the shale gas protest in Elsipogtog as a lens, I evaluate the extent to which mainstream media representations (or lack thereof) are colonial manifestations that reveal something about how settler colonialism is gendered. I pursue this inquiry through media discourse analysis, concentrating on the manifestations of colonialism that appear

in the mainstream media coverage of shale gas protests in Elsipogtog. I outline how the media conceptualizes Indigenous peoples, specifically Indigenous women, in protest. While it was evident to me that mainstream media was contributing to the erasure of Indigenous women, I noticed that in other sources they were included as major participants in the protests. In the non-mainstream media, which is comprised of independent news sources, Youtube videos, and blogs, hereafter all referred to as the non-mainstream, the voices of Indigenous women were very present. This gave me the idea of drawing on non-mainstream media sources to provide insights on how Indigenous women are negotiating the identity/subject position of “Indigenous protestor” or “Warrior” to resist colonial constructions of Indigenous women, as non-or undesired citizens.

My research feeds into a growing area of literature, including non-academic works, which attends to the efforts of Indigenous women in resisting the Canadian nation state despite the constraints imposed by colonialism. The literature discussed in this thesis points to the limitations of the forms of belonging offered by the nation state to Indigenous peoples, especially women; the writers, including self-identified Indigenous feminist scholars, challenge settler colonialism as a continuing and pervasive structure of control infusing such forms of belonging (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013). The increasing coverage of Indigenous women’s organizing and protesting<sup>1</sup> by Indigenous and Indigenous feminist scholars speaks both to the power that women are exerting against systems of control, and to the timeliness of work that questions the effects of settler colonialism. My research is aligned with this growing literature, and opens a space for

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<sup>1</sup> This would include the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women solidarity movement, Idle No More, and the various marches and calls to action initiated by these groups.



further discussion about Indigenous women's participation in protest beyond how the mainstream media portrays their involvement.

### **Context of the Protest**

Given the state of overarching unrest in the province of New Brunswick at the times of the protests and the huge response to the shale gas resistance, mainstream media's coverage offers a glimpse into the dominant population's perception of shale gas exploration and Indigenous resistance to said exploration. In order to contextualize the events of October 17, 2013, the underlying economic, social, and political conditions of New Brunswick, including the debate surrounding shale gas extraction, must be examined. At the time of the protests (as is still true during the writing of this thesis) New Brunswick is economically insecure with a high unemployment rate holding at around 10% ("Profile of the New Brunswick Labour Force", 2013). The population of the province is both aging and declining, which intensifies concerns about economic instability in the province ("New Brunswick sees population drop," 2013). In addition to this dismal economic forecast, a failing social sector is increasingly unable to meet the needs of its most vulnerable residents. In an ill-advised effort to garner support leading up to the 2014 election, the provincial Conservative Government promised not to raise taxes, despite a projected 11 billion dollar deficit. This was a seemingly counterintuitive move, which I include here as one example of the lack of foresight the Government exhibited. Instead of implementing a progressive tax system to accommodate the impending financial catastrophe, Premier David Alward attempted to alleviate the deficit by reducing public service options, reducing sick leave among public service employees, and avoiding any increases in university funding (Bissett, 2013c). Extensive economic problems and

bleak development plans paired with the overwhelming concerns of voters fed into a climate of economic desperation and pessimism in the province.

Beyond the grim social and economic climate, New Brunswick has a historically uneasy relationship with Indigenous communities. As is the case in many Canadian provinces, there are ongoing disputes over hunting and fishing rights, treaty rights, and unceded land. Aboriginal residents (as defined by the province) of New Brunswick experience these difficulties in amplification as an economically, socially, and politically marginalized population. The self-identified Indigenous population faces a 20% unemployment rate (Elsipogtog is cited as having up to an 80% unemployment rate), a lower than average income, and lower rates of university degree completion (“Profile of the New Brunswick Labour Force”, 2013). The proposal for shale gas exploration in the province was depicted by the Government as the saving grace for the failing economy, but only further provoked tensions between the floundering government and economically deprived Indigenous communities.

Along with New Brunswick’s economic, social, and political insecurities, hydraulic fracturing remains a fervently debated resource extraction practice. The relatively new practice is either celebrated as the answer for the planet’s diminishing oil reserves, or critiqued as yet another impending environmental catastrophe. In technical terms, hydraulic fracturing is a process to release deposits of shale gas from deep beneath the earth’s surface:

The fracking process occurs after a well has been drilled and steel pipe (casing) has been inserted in the well bore. The casing is perforated within the target zones that contain oil or gas, so that when the fracturing fluid is injected into the well it flows through the perforations into the target zones. Eventually, the target formation will not be able to absorb the fluid as quickly as it is being injected. At

this point, the pressure created causes the formation to crack or fracture. Once the fractures have been created, injection ceases and the fracturing fluids begin to flow back to the surface. Materials called proppants (e.g., usually sand or ceramic beads), which were injected as part of the frack fluid mixture, remain in the target formation to hold open the fractures. (“Hydraulic Fracking 101”, para. 3)

Leading up to the protests, anti-fracking documentaries, such as *Gas Land* and David Suzuki’s *The Nature of Things: Shattered Ground*, drew attention to the possible threats to groundwater as a result of these massive well bores leaking fracking fluid. During the time of the protest, the government of New Brunswick had already accepted bids for territory exploration from large oil and gas companies without consulting any non-Indigenous or Indigenous communities (see Appendix A). Indigenous and non-Indigenous resident-organized groups chastised the secrecy of the Government, and called for action and a moratorium on further exploration. As more research about the long-term effects of fracking pointed to serious dangers, public discourse shifted against shale gas extraction. At the time of publication, New Brunswick’s Premier, Brian Gallant, has declared a moratorium on shale gas exploration, which will be revisited in the next several years (McHardie, 2016).

### **Indigenous Peoples and the mainstream: A history of misrepresentation**

Contemporary scholars who have completed media analyses comparing newspaper articles in Canada over the past 100 years agree on one unfortunate conclusion: the representation of Indigenous peoples has not evolved much over time. Robert Harding (2006), one of the foremost media scholars studying Canada, states that Indigenous issues are “framed, much as they were 130 years earlier, in ways that protect dominant interests and signify aboriginal people as a threat to such interests” (p. 224).

Mark Anderson and Carmen Robertson (2011) add that “many Canadians would be surprised, some might even be shocked, to discover that newspaper imagery has not changed significantly since that time [130 years ago] with respect to the application of colonialism” (p. 267). Despite certain gains in the media’s less overtly racist portrayals of minority groups in general, Indigenous protest continues to be the site of latent colonial misconceptions and stereotyping (Fleras, 2011; Lambertus, 2004). Due to this reality, and given a further proliferation of Indigenous resistance, it is important that mainstream media, one of the most powerful sources for the dissemination of information in society, be critically examined.

Media portrayals of Indigenous peoples in Canada have garnered the attention of researchers in the fields of feminism, Indigenous studies, media studies, and sociology. Many scholars in these and related fields trace an increase in Indigenous mobilization in Canada to the 1969 White Paper, which proposed the elimination of “Indian status” (see Grenier, 1994; Harding, 2005; 2006; Ramos, 2006; 2008; Recchia, 1993; Stuart, 1993). Without this guaranteed recognition of status by the Federal Government, the rights that accompanied this arbitrary, yet binding identity would also be disregarded, including any land claims still in dispute. The unified resistance to the elimination of status “was a critical event marking the birth of contemporary Aboriginal mobilization and in retrospect signaled a new era” (Ramos, 2008, p. 801). From this contemporary collective action, resistance continued to gain momentum with large- and small-scale demonstrations, marches, and blockades around the country.

In the 1990’s a notable surge in Indigenous collective action simultaneously resulted in more media analysis of the increasing coverage. This turn is generally

attributed to the prolific coverage of the ‘Oka Crisis,’ which is evidenced by currently available scholarly works. According to many scholars, the Oka events and ensuing media attention prompted a government inquiry on harmful media coverage of Indigenous peoples (Harding, 2005; Ramos, 2005; Anderson & Robertson, 2011). The Report of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996) blames the stereotyping of Aboriginal people for perpetuating “old and deeply imbedded notions of ‘Indians’ as alien, unknowable and ultimately a threat to civil order” (p. 5). Following the RCAP, the above-mentioned scholars elaborate on the impact of Oka in regards to media framing, the criminalization of protestors, and the harmful legacy of stereotypes.

In particular, the events in 1990 at the Kanesatake Mohawk First Nation (the so-called Oka Crisis) attracted national attention and have since provided ample data for media discourse analysis. Rima Wilkes and Danielle Ricard (2007) argue that due to the escalation of violence and the involvement of military forces, Oka has become synonymous with Indigenous protest, and often-harmful stereotyping processes in the media. Harding (2005) asserts that the media had significant difficulty depicting the complexity of protest that Oka presented, and therefore deployed simplistic and stereotypical representations of Indigenous people to overshadow the deeper issues of land claim contestation. Charles Stuart (1993) argues that the media worked with the government “suggesting that the Mohawks actions posed a potential threat to the more fundamental tenet of a Liberal democratic society—the rule of law” (p. 79). Oka challenged the status quo in Canada by bringing land claims into the public sphere, which lead to increased media attention; this resulted in increased ostracism of Indigenous actions (Boyle, McCluskey, & McLeod, 2005). The mainstream media was able to deflect

attention away from the substantial land claims to the more violent aspects of protest, such as the Canadian military's involvement at Kanesatake, and thus delegitimized the land rights of Indigenous peoples by ignoring the context, historical foundations, and continuing effects of colonization.

The mainstream media's framing of Indigenous protest is credited with accentuating the alienation of Indigenous peoples in Canada through the use of colonial stereotypes and neglect of contextual realities (Fleras, 2011; Harding, 2005; Wilkes, Corrigan-Brown, & Myers, 2010). Augie Fleras (2011) describes framing as "a process for organizing information by drawing attention to some aspects of reality as normal and desirable, but away from others as irrelevant and inferior—in the hopes of encouraging a preferred reading" (p.13). In mainstream coverage of Indigenous protests, the process of framing draws on already available stigmas to maintain discourses that discredit the values, views, and efforts of Indigenous protests. For example, in "support of the *triumph of reason over emotion* news frame, the emotionality and irrationality of aboriginal people is emphasized through lexical choice, considerable repetition and hyperbole" (Harding, 2006, p. 220). Referring back to Oka, the photographs from the protest implied violence between the masked Mohawk Warriors and the Canadian military without equal representation of those who were using non-confrontational tactics (Recchia, 1993). The prevalence of the masks in photos also speaks to the 'unknowable' nature of Indianness for settlers and the fear that accompanies this unknowing. Headlines in the mainstream media mirrored the bias against protestors by continually calling attention to the danger, violence, and illegal activity of the Mohawk Warriors. As Harding (2006) argues, "associating aboriginal people with violence and criminality is an argumentative ploy that

has been used historically to discredit aboriginal people and causes in news discourse” (p. 221). This representational tactic has yet to lose any popularity. If the criminality of Indigenous protestors cannot be incorporated into coverage, then the event will not garner nearly the same attention (Wilkes et al., 2010). When the media constructs Indigenous protestors as inherently criminal, the actions of the nation state in combating their unlawful actions are justifiable. The reader’s attention is misplaced onto the actions of the protestors instead of the reasons for the protest.

The repetition of damaging colonial stereotypes is a defining aspect of the framing practices discussed by scholars. In her work on the Gustafson Lake blockades, Sandra Lambertus (2004) states that the media is “central in defining the position of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples in the social hierarchy and in disseminating stereotypes of this group to the Canadian public” (p. 4). Instances of resistance provide ample opportunity for the media to perpetuate certain stereotypes of Indigenous peoples. Journalists may not intend to replicate harmful stereotypes, however; colonial concepts of Indigenous people are so deeply embedded into the fabric of settler logic they often permeate coverage. Furthermore, when events in the media are not contextualized within a wider understanding of settler colonialism—or any of the structural problems facing Indigenous peoples in Canada—prejudices are not challenged but repeated. Instead, complexity is disregarded for the use of easy discourses that often blame Indigenous people for their problems: *they* are irresponsible with government money, *we* are trying to help, *they* are reckless, *they* get handouts, *they* have privileges *we* don’t have (usually conceived of as free tuition and tax subsidies), *they* are trouble, and when will *they* get over it.

## **Chapter Roadmap**

In Chapter 2, I outline my theoretical approach, which is premised on the recognition of the legacy of settler colonialism as it directly relates to Indigenous women's representation in the nation state. In Chapter 3, I draw from my theoretical foundation in order to explain how I apply a decolonizing feminist methodology to my media discourse analysis of the shale gas debates. In doing so, I suggest that there are parallels between Indigenous and feminist methodologies which makes their combined application to a study of media discourse compelling. In Chapter 4, I present the first part of my media discourse analysis, examining how the mainstream media sets the context of the protests, and how lingering colonial tropes frame the representation of Indigenous protestors—the contemporary Noble Savage and the Criminal Savage. In this chapter I also analyze the noticeable absence of Indigenous women from the mainstream media's depictions of the protest. In Chapter 5, I expand my analysis to closely examine the role of Indigenous women in the protest and how they articulate this involvement outside of mainstream media sources. Finally, in the concluding chapter I consider the implications of these protest narratives on Indigenous women's resistance in the nation state.



## **Chapter Two: The Theoretical Framework**

“To be clear, the objective has never been to create more Indians in Canada, but rather, to eliminate us in order to acquire access to lands and territory”  
(Cannon, 2014, p. 27)

A central theoretical premise of my thesis is the continuing influence of settler colonialism on the lives of Indigenous women. By understanding that settler colonialism is a system that continues to create and sustain conditions of discrimination against Indigenous women, I can understand how certain gendered prejudices manifest in contemporary coverage of protests. The continuing success of settler colonial power in the Canadian nation state is built on the initial conquests of Indigenous peoples by European settlers and thus permeates our current government policies, including the Indian Act, which I focus on later in this chapter. Settler colonialism is nation building; its processes continue to control representations, policies, and citizenship within Canada. Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill (2013) describe settler colonialism as “a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there” (p. 12). Systemic gendered disempowerment, resulting from the naturalization of patriarchy and other social hierarchies, is embedded within these colonial formations. Gendered constructions of citizenship mark Indigenous women as outsiders in their own lands for the purpose of settler nation building. Thus, nation building as a goal of these policies depends on the social, political, and economic erasure, eradication, and conquest of Indigenous women. The theoretical framework that I present

in this chapter provides the context necessary to explore how current iterations of settler colonialism affect the portrayal of Indigenous women in mainstream media.

### **Settler Colonialism, Myths, and Nation Building**

It is imperative to acknowledge genocide and the land acquisition it serves as the broadest frame of my work. Settler colonialism sustains the conditions of nation building through the physical, social, and economic erasure of Indigenous peoples by ensuring the settler prerogative—of complete land and resource control—is met. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005), both well-regarded Indigenous scholars, argue that the process of settler colonial genocide continues today in more subtle ways. In *Being Indigenous: Resurgences Against Contemporary Colonialism*, they state: “Contemporary [s]ettlers follow the mandate provided for them by their imperial forefathers’ colonial legacy, not by attempting to eradicate the physical signs of Indigenous people as human *bodies*, but trying to eradicate their existence as *peoples*” (p. 598, emphasis in original). Settler colonialism began with the physical removal of peoples from their land and expanded to the social and physical removal of children from their families to residential schools. The residual effects of these settler mandates to forcibly dismiss the presence of Indigenous people continue to limit their independence and belonging in the system which still seeks their removal.

Andrea Smith (2008) challenges the legitimacy of the nation state due to its participation in said genocide. She states that the “United States could not exist without the genocide of Native peoples—genocide is not a mistake or aberration of U.S. democracy; it is foundational to it” (2008, p. 311). Canada shares this genocidal creation

story. Furthermore, she argues that the success of Canada and the United States is not only built upon the genocide of Indigenous people in general, but the control of Indigenous women in particular. Other Indigenous feminist scholars echo this sentiment and attempt to deconstruct the particular ways Indigenous women are portrayed to sustain colonial control/violence (see Suzack, 2010; Green, 2001; Lawrence, 2004; and LaRocque, 2010). The message from all these scholars is clear: as a result of this continuing process of genocide and the accompanying state policies of assimilation and control, being both Indigenous and a Canadian citizen is inherently conflicting. For Indigenous peoples, participation in the nation state has involved and involves (the threat of) losing land, culture, and identity, all of which produce “citizenships of grief” (Simpson, 2008). Quotes such as this indicate the gravity of limitations Indigenous women experience as a result of the continued impacts of settler colonialism.

Despite the magnitude of destruction that scholars contend is at the heart of settler colonialism and nation building, Canadian narratives of confederation continue to be framed by an air of benevolence. Canadian mythology is a persistent and adamantly patriotic narrative (Smith, 2015; Mackey, 1997); it ensures that the negative aspects of nation building are hidden so that the settler Canadian (often white) can celebrate discourses of equality, understanding, and unity. In his influential work *The Imaginary Indian*, Daniel Francis (1992) credits Canadian myths with the creation of the settler’s version of Indigeneity. He states, “Our views of what constitutes an Indian today are as much bound up with myth, prejudice and ideology as earlier versions were. If the Indian really is imaginary, it could hardly be otherwise” (Francis, 1992, p. 6). Settler narratives continue to reproduce an idealistic notion of the Canadian nation state and attempt to

disavow colonialism through constructions of the imaginary ‘Indian’ and its counterpart the ‘settler’ (Mackey, 1998). Ania Loomba (1998), a prominent post-colonial theorist, challenges the ‘convenient’ ignorance of settler narratives by pointing out the realities of colonial expansion: “Colonialism...reshapes, often violently, physical territories, social terrains, as well as human identities” (p.185). It is logical for settlers to want to erase the unpleasant foundation to their past to create an identity that can be celebrated. Therefore, in seeking a more idyllic beginning, settlers generate their own mythologies of belonging that ignore the settler origin story.

Myths of national identity must articulate a narrative of acceptance and inclusion to maintain national pride, which is threatened by the realities of colonialism. By supporting a curated national story that the citizen can proudly espouse, this mythology promotes an optimistic remembering, while simultaneously suppressing the terrible histories of genocide (Smith, 2008; Thobani, 2007). Canadians are encouraged to accept that expansion westward was peaceful and in pursuit of progress. However, as previously discussed, conquest can never be a peaceful process (Alfred & Cornthassel, 2005; Lawrence, 2003; Smith, 2008, 2015). In this logic, settlers can (and do) construe the ongoing treatment of Indigenous peoples as acts of colonial benevolence. Following the mandate of colonial benevolence, settlers can understand reserves as spaces *given* to Indigenous nations to protect their cultures; residential schools were institutions created to *help* modernize Indigenous children; and the Indian Act mandated that Indian status be recognized by the state. However, colonial benevolence is an illusion maintained by settlers to eclipse the harsh realities of conquest. Eva Mackey (1998) identifies certain prevailing Canadian myths that establish the notion of Canadian tolerance to protect an

idealistic Canadian identity. In her work on multiculturalism and the control of difference in Canada, she presents the popular myths that construct Indigenous people as gentle, naïve, and kind (Mackey, 1999). These myths draw on—and generate—tropes such as the ‘Picturesque Indian’ (Mackey, 1999) or ‘Noble Savage’ (Berkhofer, 1978; Francis, 1992) in order to portray Indigenous people as subjects who can be passively led to accept the benefits of Canadian nationhood.

The myth of the Noble Savage has deep historical roots and its origin is often credited to Rousseau. However, anthropologists like Terry Ellingson (2001) argue that “the concept has been extended and refined” (p. 2) beyond Rousseau’s original intention. Mackey (1999) draws on the work of Francis (1992) to outline the idealist discourse of the ‘Picturesque Indian,’ a figure who emerges within the story of Canadian settlement and serves as the metaphor for the taming of the Wild West. Similarly, the ‘Noble Savage’ (Francis, 1992) symbolizes the transformation of the unknown wilderness into civilized Canada. Later in this chapter, I explore this trope as well as several other prominent narratives in order to understand how these constructions continue to influence media coverage about Indigenous protestors. These binary and static constructions of indigeneity in Canada contribute to an underlying texture of common knowledge that corroborates settler colonialism and limits Indigenous peoples through the process of othering.

### **Insiders and Outsiders: Creating the Other**

To a great extent, the figure of the Canadian citizen emerged alongside, and in relation to, a mythical other, specifically the Indigenous other (Thobani, 2007; Lawrence,

2004; Carter, 1997). The process of ‘othering’ is vital to settler colonialism as it works to disenfranchise Indigenous people from the settler nation-building project; othering offers an ‘outsider’ in opposition to an ‘insider,’ and thereby enforces accepted perceptions of belonging (Thobani, 2007). The ‘insider,’ or settler in the case of settler colonialism, is the moral, and often physical, opposite of the ‘outsider,’ who is constructed as the Native. Canadian feminist scholar Sunera Thobani (2007) argues that one of the greatest ironies of the Canadian nation state is that “citizenship emerged as integral to the very processes that transformed insiders (Aboriginal peoples) into aliens in their own territories, while simultaneously transforming outsiders (colonizers, settlers, migrants) into exalted insiders (Canadian citizens)” (p.74). The creation of insiders and outsiders relegates Indigenous peoples to the margins of Canada while upholding the boundaries of belonging. The construction of negative binaries—such as the civilized white man vs. the savage, or the feminine white women vs. the Squaw—perpetuates misrepresentations of Indigenous people. Along with negative representations of ‘the other,’ static popularized imagery of Indigenous women reinforces these notions of difference. Indigenous women are often reduced to the sensationalized or romanticized imagery of either the Indian Princess or dangerous Squaw, a dichotomy that I explore further in this chapter. Himani Bannerji (2000), whose work criticizes concepts of Canadian multiculturalism, states that the “situation reveals not only a raced or ethnicized state, but also—more importantly—a crisis in citizenship and a continual attempt to manage this crisis” (p. 66). As a result, the nation state is exclusionary both physically (with the policing of borders) and socially, as only certain individuals and groups are accepted and celebrated as citizens. There is, however, a fundamental disjuncture between theory and practice, as this same nation state

claims citizenship as a universal mechanism to ensure belonging. When the nation state attempts to enforce policies for universal acceptance, belonging, or patriotism, it is done with the history of denying these same liberties to Indigenous peoples. Thus, even well intentioned plans for acceptance are bound to fail, as the nation state continually fails to address the rights of Indigenous peoples.

### **Gendered Colonial Disempowerment**

For Indigenous women, gendered processes of control exacerbate these boundaries to belonging. With the increase of settler control in colonized lands the dynamic of previously accepted trade relationships was replaced in favor of constant physical, social, economic, and political surveillance and control over Indigenous peoples—especially Indigenous women (Carter, 1997). Indigenous peoples became a threat to the settler endeavors of nation building and land acquisition and as a result, settlers questioned and dismissed their presence with political fervor (Lawrence, 2004). Proclamations diminished Indigenous sovereignty and expanded settler hegemony. Beginning with the Royal Proclamation (1763) followed by the Indian Act (1865) and Confederation in 1867, legislation successfully implemented the usurpation of land and sovereignty for Indigenous peoples. After Confederation, the new nation state of Canada included the Gradual Enfranchisement Act (1869) to further restrict Indigenous land. The Act specifically included a “blood quantum requirement...to the definition of an Indian” (Lawrence, 2003) as a policy to decide who was Indian ‘enough’ in the eyes of the state to control Native identity and access to land. These proclamations lay the constitutional groundwork to control and limit Indigenous nations with binding laws and treaties. The

legislative mechanisms of the nation state “marked the bodies of Indigenous peoples as ‘Indians’ through policy-making and through other highly gendered and symbolic practices...that institutionalizes race as a construct” (Cannon, 2014, p. 27). The settler state created the Indian subject and then, through jurisdictional sleight-of-hand, granted itself control over said Indian population. By deciding who was Indian and who was not, then providing support to those who could qualify as such, the settler government scripted the demise of many communities, identities, and social relationships.

Indigenous women carry the full weight of these colonial policies. This is conveyed most notably in the Indian Act (1865), which is arguably the defining policy of Indigenous women’s political, social, and economic disenfranchisement in Canada. The Indian Act

controlled Canadian Native identity by creating a legal category, that of the “status Indian,” which is the only category of Native person to whom a historic nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and the Indigenous peoples is recognized. (Lawrence, 2003, p. 6)

The Indian Act was used by policy-makers in post-confederation Canada to further cement the control of the newly formed government in making decisions about Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women, without their consent. If a ‘status’ Indigenous woman married a non-status man (even if he was also Indigenous), she would lose her Indigenous status and cease to be an Indian under the law (Carter, 1997). Thus, the Indian Act had the power to not only decide a person’s identity as non-status (non-Indigenous) or status (Indian), but also to revoke this status from Indigenous women upon marriage. Regrettably, it was an extremely successful political maneuver that continues to reverberate throughout the lives and nations of Indigenous women. Loss of status was



hereditary; when an Indigenous woman married a non-status man, their children also forfeited their rights to any status claims (Kuokkanen, 2012). Unlike Indigenous women who lost their status when they married non-status men, white women who married Indigenous men became status-Indians. Audra Simpson (2008) argues that the granting of status to white women is a result of the perception that they “were less threatening because they occupied a space of *status* Indian, which meant... that they were [already] disempowered” (p. 119). From this perspective, granting them status did not pose a threat to the nation state or patriarchal hierarchy. Additionally, Indigenous women who lost status also lost any land and voting rights that accompanied status in their communities. With these gendered processes in the Indian Act, future treaty gains remained predominately in the hands of Indigenous men.

Bonita Lawrence (2003, 2004), a renown Indigenous feminist scholar, scrutinized the gendered impact of the Indian Act on social structures and women’s identity. She succinctly describes the Indian Act as a “conceptual framework that has organized contemporary First Nations life in ways that have been almost entirely naturalized [and] has produced the subjects it purports to control” (2004, p. 25). As these imposed classifications became ‘entirely naturalized,’ the separation between status Indians and those who were not ‘Indian enough’ (e.g., ‘half-breeds’) intensified. Indigenous women who married non-status men and had children bore the double burden of this discrimination from both their own nations and the settler state. That is, once confirmed as a ‘Canadian’ within the settler state and removed from their communities, Indigenous women’s new positions did not necessarily translate into social acceptance within settler society.

## **The Legacy of the Indian Act**

The internalization of colonialism is a pervasive legacy of the Indian Act. Andrea Smith (2015) speaks of the internalization of colonialism as an explicit method used by colonizers. She explains, “in order to colonize people whose society was not hierarchical, colonizers must first naturalize hierarchy through instituting patriarchy” (2015, p. 23). Gender hierarchies were introduced through the Indian Act as patriarchal systems of governance and economics replaced previous Indigenous forms of organization (see Lawrence, 2004; Carter, 1997). Loomba (1998) adds that as Indigenous men came to accept the patriarchal system “in colonized lands, often because [they were] increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere, [they] became more tyrannical at home” (p. 168). The social and economic hierarchies implemented by the Indian Act significantly limited Indigenous nations’ ability to function independently. Most notably, the Indian Act separated Indigenous peoples from their identities as well as their territories through the seizure of land and the creation of the reserve system. Over time the Indian Act—and the control it grants to the Canadian nation state—resulted in colonized subjects imposing these systems of control onto their own social, political, and community structures.

The internalization of colonial directives set out in the Indian Act had further material consequences for Indigenous women (Anderson, 2000; Lawrence, 2003; Smith, 2008, 2015). The Indian Act was not condemned for its expulsion of women from their communities; instead the practice was justified with the notion that exclusion was the price women who chose to marry-out should pay (Cannon, 2014). The nation blamed

women who married non-status men and interpreted this choice as their decision to leave the community. This notion bred conflict within communities and ultimately distracted from the colonial discrimination experienced by all Indigenous people. Women who challenged the overtly sexist dynamics of the Indian Act, most notably the “marrying out” rule, faced heavy criticism from Indigenous peoples (Suzack, 2010). Legal proceedings often led by women, I discuss one later in this chapter, sought to repeal the sexist tenets in the Indian Act and reveal the lasting invasions of patriarchy into Indigenous systems of governance.

### **Colonial Portrayals of Indigenous Women**

Colonizers framed colonized women as sexually available, physically enticing, and easily conquered by European colonizers (Loomba, 1998; McClintock, 1995; Smith, 2015). These portrayals directly coincided with the actions of the colonizing nations of Europe because “the four continents were represented as women...available for plunder, possession, discovery, and conquest” (Loomba, 1998, p.151). In order to avoid placing these women in a space of equality, colonizers “repeatedly constructed [colonized women] as libinally excessive, and sexually uncontrolled” (Loomba, 1998, p. 155). Indigenous women in Canada were thus reduced to remarkably damaging tropes—the ‘Squaw’ and the ‘Indian Princess.’ The ‘Squaw’ is constructed as dangerous, highly sexual, morally repugnant, and in need of control by European/Canadian law (Carter, 1997). This trope also served as a reminder to white women that recklessness, promiscuity, and sexual expression would not be accepted in the new Canadian landscape. Canadian feminist historian Sarah Carter (1997) argues that the policing of

Indigenous women both justified colonial missions and kept white women submissive to colonial power. Carter (1997) states “contrasting representations of white and Aboriginal femininity articulated racist messages that confirmed cultural difference and...negative images of Aboriginal women served to symbolize the shortcomings of that society” (p. 160). Indigenous women became the emblem of disgrace in the colonial nation state, as the ‘Squaw’ embodied all the characteristics that white women should fear, and reject. The othering process of Indigenous women worked in conjunction with the settler nation-building project to solidify the ideal female citizen of Canada: a white, feminine, submissive woman.

While constructing Indigenous women as highly sexual, wild, and morally deficient, colonial misrepresentations also exalted and propagated unrealistic expectations of Indian beauty and obedience. The most popular of these representations were stories of the Indian princesses who epitomized the joining of the colonial goals of whiteness, submission, and progress with the fascination of otherness. In her work that seeks to debunk the Princess and Squaw dichotomy, Valaskakis (1999) states that the “fairytale of Pocahontas...absorbs or expresses the Otherness of Indians” (p. 123). Pocahontas is hailed as a beautiful princess who saved a white man, converted to Christianity, and became a member of British society. Yet, by ignoring Pocahontas’ capture, subsequent imprisonment, and eventually her premature death, her (forced) participation in European customs can be celebrated. Thus, the particulars of her capture and death are absorbed into a more idealistic narrative (a maneuver previously discussed in relation to Canadian mythology). Similarly, Sacagawea is celebrated as a young Indigenous maiden who helped to plot the colonial expansion westward on the Lewis and Clark expedition.

However, her contribution is considerably downplayed (Martin-Hill, 2003). In the colonial (re)telling of these women's stories, they are constructed as European success stories, in which the Indian woman is assimilated into the European way of life.

Dawn Martin-Hill (2003) offers another colonial construct that reinforces representations of Indigenous women as compliant: "the 'traditional' woman who is silent and obedient to male authority...a voiceless woman [called] She No Speaks" (p. 108). This image supports the colonial story of Pocahontas and Sacagawea as Indigenous women who were trustworthy, obedient to settler prerogatives, and silent counterparts to colonial control. Andrea Smith (2015) refers to this colonial retelling as a method of assimilation because "the colonized must seem to partially resemble the colonists in order to reinforce the dominant ideology, and establish that the way colonizers live is the only good way to live" (p. 26). In the colonial version of the story of Pocahontas, including the ever-successful Disney version, she accepts European ways while maintaining a fraction of acceptable difference. However, despite the success of the princess in the assimilation process, she would never be far enough removed from the 'Squaw' to be granted full acceptance into the colonized nation-state. Valaskakis (1999) argues that,

contradictory images of Indian women continue to objectify and degrade [through] transformations of the villain or the victim, the torturer or the sufferer; and neither the romanticized Indian nor the primitive squaw allows newcomers to identify First Nations as equals, as owners of this land, Indians with homes and families, jobs, and community institutions. (p. 132)

The contradictory images to which Valaskakis refers, the Squaw and the Indian Princess, are prominent tropes in the colonial narrative that encourage settlers to fear, ignore, or erase actual Indigenous women in their complexity.

These misrepresentations of Indigenous women played an imperative role in the mythology that allowed for the conquest and further alienation of Indigenous peoples in Canada. For example, if the goal was to make Indigenous women seem wild and distasteful, the focus was on their promiscuity and drinking (Carter, 1997). If poor childrearing was the intended critique, then critics chastised the apparent lack of a nuclear family unit (Anderson & Lawrence, 2003). Emma LaRocque (2010) explains that these “[s]pecific words and categories were (and are) chosen to indicate the ranking of Indians as less evolved, less developed, and less ordered in their social and political lives” (p.50). Settler conceptions of the other adapted to correspond with the intentions of the conquest, assimilation, and alienation. Many of the misrepresentations that targeted Indigenous women underscore the gendered realities of colonization in Canada; the fact that they continue to prevail speaks to the success of colonization (Martin-Hill, 2003).

The blending of patriarchal ideals within colonial portrayals of Indigenous women also disrupted the existence of gender equality in Indigenous socio-political systems. Though the pre-contact experience of Indigenous women is certainly not universal, many Indigenous cultures were significantly affected by the introduction of the colonial patriarchal system. For example, Martin-Hill (2003) notes that for the Haudenosaunee in “pre-contact culture, we were regarded as Sacred women and shared in the spiritual, economic, and political authority of our societies” (p. 107). In her discussion of tribal feminism, Rosanna Deerchild (2003) outlines how patriarchy shifted the social structure in favour of male dominance and distorted the roles of women prior to contact. She states, “Although the woman was seen to be the strength, she was by no means at the top of the hierarchical structure. Each [gender] had their ceremonies, roles, and purposes in the

community within the order of life” (Deerchild, 2003, p. 101). The egalitarian principles of Indigenous politics and epistemological traditions were actively rejected by colonialism; this included the explicit rejection of ‘women as sacred.’ Consequently, as patriarchal systems overtook Indigenous approaches, Indigenous women who had previously participated in the political and economic customs of their societies were relegated to the sidelines of trade and commerce.

### **The Noble Savage**

Despite the continued resistance of Indigenous peoples against settler conceptions of the Indian, these constructions have proven hard to dislodge as they serve a colonial purpose. In *The White Man’s Indian*, Robert Berkhofer (1978) explains the utility of symbols like the Noble Savage for goals of European settlement, stating that the “[i]mages of the good and bad Indian proved as useful...to policy makers and others who wished to exploit Native American minds, bodies, or resources” (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 119). These images, including those of the ‘Squaw’ and the Indian Princess, are limited one-dimensional caricatures that reduce the complexity of Indigenous identities. The Noble Savage is the most prominent of these depictions, as it illustrates the colonial ambition of assimilation (see Berkhofer, 1978; Francis, 1992; LaRocque, 2010; Mackey, 1999). For example, Daniel Francis (1992) specifically shows how the Noble Savage developed as a symbolic portrait of the vanishing and submissive Indian in Canada. He exposes the Noble Savage as “the forest philosopher, [that] stands by stoically while the forces of civilization invade and disrupt his land and foreshadow his ultimate destruction” (1992, p. 46). In this sense, the Noble Savage occupies a space of fantasy wherein the ‘Indian’

could either comply with European standards of learning and dress, or completely disappear as a figure of the past. The settler does not need to fear the Noble Savage because the latter recognizes the impending destruction of Indigenous peoples and has adapted. In the settler's conception, the Noble Savage can also recognize the benefits of civility thus he is almost *like* a White settler. In popularized media the Noble Savage can often appear as a likeable father figure either in his role as the Chief protecting his peoples or as an actual father protecting his children (see Disney's *Pocahontas*, 1994). However, the Noble Savage can never shake the savagery that marks his inferior difference. According to Francis (1992), the instruments of white civility could never completely transform a savage, as this identity must always be maintained in distinction to the settler. In other words, the instruments of white civility are only successful when they are used to build up settlers and tear down Indigenous peoples. The colonial binary depends on the notion of the irreconcilable difference between the Noble Savage and the White man, and is upheld through maintaining this discourse in literature, history, and society.

In her book *When the Other is Me*, LaRocque (2010) discusses what she calls the 'Civ/Sav' dichotomy, a framework to understand the ongoing dehumanization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Within this dichotomy, the Noble Savage is an unobtainable and constantly shifting measurement that was present in early depictions of Indigenous peoples and remains in contemporary settler perceptions of Indigeneity. She argues that settler society persistently measures the Native community against the fabricated ideal of the Noble Savage. Consequently,



the image of the noble savage carries social, political, and intellectual consequence... [as] Native peoples must contend with non-Native Canadians who often express confusion or disappointment, even anger, when they must reconcile their stereotypic expectations with reality. (LaRocque, 2010, p. 129)

This convention and imagery persist in mainstream media coverage. The Noble Savage appears as the voice of reason: the stoic reminder for Indigenous peoples to remain calm and for settlers to not fear the savage.

For Indigenous women, the imagery of ‘the savage’ manifests in different constructions that target their sexuality, gender, and humanity. In the construction of the Noble Savage and the Squaw/Princess dichotomy discussed above, there remains a disjuncture in time separating Indigenous people from white settlers—the ‘Indian’ could never become civilized enough, white enough, or good enough to be considered equal. These depictions perpetuate the notion that Indigenous peoples no longer exist, are disappearing, or exist somewhere ‘out there’ wearing a costume of our own colonial design (King, 2003; LaRocque, 2010). Ann McClintock (1995) describes this projection of time separation between the colonized and the colonizers as “anachronistic space: prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity” (p. 40): the “[g]eographical difference across *space* is figured as historical difference across *time*” (McClintock, 1995, p. 40, emphasis in original). It must be noted that constructing Indigenous peoples as people of the *past* is not an accident, but rather a deliberate action. If the nation state can control the perception of Indigenous people as ‘disappearing’ or ‘non-contributors to modernity,’ the illegitimate foundations of colonial policies do not have to be confronted. Moreover, the oversimplification and essentialization of Indigenous cultural traditions, political systems, and goals of

nationhood allow for Indigenous struggles to be more readily dismissed (Francis, 1992; LaRocque, 2010; Mackey, 1999). Instead, Indigenous ways of being may be understood as relics of the past not modes of being for the future.

### **Indigenous Women and Resistance**

Despite the overarching systems of colonial control that are designed for the assimilation of Indigenous peoples, there has always been strong Indigenous resistance to the goals of the nation state. For example, LaRocque (2010) explains how Indigenous writers have “protested their dehumanization, refuting in particular the charge of savagery, which is at the heart of the colonial discourse” (p. 96). Though vast in social, economic, and political traditions, there are many instances in which Indigenous nations have unified in order to confront the colonial mission set by Europeans. Lawrence (2003; 2004) cites examples of Indigenous nations coming together, including the Wabanaki Confederacy, which is most pertinent to my research. Established in 1776, the Wabanaki Confederacy included the Mi’kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy nations in what is now called New Brunswick. Recognizing that colonization could not be stopped without developing relationships with local governments, the Wabanaki Confederacy took the concerns of their people to the British. This is but one example of the rarely acknowledged history of Indigenous political organizing; Indigenous nations identified the impending threat of colonization and utilized political alliances in order to stave off political assaults by settlers. These instances of political organizing also emphasize the continuing capacity of Indigenous nations to protest against the project of the Canadian settler nation state. The notions of Indigenous naiveté purported by settler narratives are contradicted by alliances such as the Wabanaki Confederacy. Indigenous women’s

resistance to mainstream media representations must be contextualized within this broader history of Indigenous peoples' challenges to settler colonialism.

As I discussed previously, Indigenous women experience settler colonialism differently due to the imposition of patriarchal hierarchy—and thus resist the oppression uniquely. As such, their resistance is often directed against the gendered and racialized discrimination of the nation state. For example, it was an Indigenous woman who challenged the sexist tenets of the Indian Act that suspended Indian status from those women who married non-status men (Lawrence, 2004). Sandra Lovelace, a Maliseet woman from New Brunswick, became a critical figure in repealing the original prejudicial gender distinction of the Indian Act through her efforts of lobbying both national and international governing bodies (Suzack, 2010; Lawrence, 2004). After her marriage to a non-status man dissolved, Lovelace had intended to move back to her home reserve with her children but was denied housing and access to the social services available to status residents. Ultimately she was forced to take her case to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations (Lawrence, 2004) where her appeal was successful. The decision of the United Nations eventually precipitated Bill C-31, which “abolished enfranchisement and restored status to those who had had status removed through enfranchisement” (“Bill C-31”, para. 5). Thus, Lovelace was instrumental in changing the Indian Act, restoring identity for Indigenous women and repealing the gendered discrimination in the Act.

More examples of such opposition are prominent in the work of Leanne Simpson (2008; 2011), Bonita Lawrence (2004), Kim Anderson (2000), and Lina Sunseri (2009). These Indigenous feminist scholars confront the impacts of colonization in Canada

through life writing and scholarship. Over the last several decades, the stories, theories, and contributions of Indigenous women have been recognized increasingly within and outside the academy. In these spaces Indigenous women are combating negative stereotypes by offering counter-hegemonic representations and fracturing colonial logics. Collections such as *First Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader* (Monture & McGuire, 2009), *Strong Women Stories* (Anderson & Lawrence, 2005), *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Green, 2007), and *Lighting the Eighth Fire* (Simpson, 2008) are reclaiming space not only in white academia but also in Indigenous communities. Embedded within these anthologies is a call to reclaim the traditions that empower Indigenous women through recovering identities, rejecting stereotypes, and deconstructing settler conceptualizations of belonging in the nation state. In the works of these scholars, Indigenous women are the vocal protagonists of resistance and essential leaders in the decolonization of the settler nation state.

Though there is literature on resistance from Indigenous women who reject the feminist label,<sup>2</sup> I draw primarily on literature from self-identified Indigenous feminist scholars. Many Indigenous women use feminism as a theoretical platform to undertake gender-based analyses of colonial processes due to the undeniable gender discrimination in the patriarchal colonial system. Joyce Green (2007) argues that Indigenous feminism is “a theoretical engagement with history and politics, as well as a practical engagement with contemporary social, economic, cultural and political issues” (p. 25). Through

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<sup>2</sup> Feminism is critiqued by Indigenous women (some of whom do adopt the feminist, in fact) for its preoccupation with the abolishment of patriarchy, the inability to address colonial relations, and overall western understandings of power and resistance (Fiske, 2000).

reclaiming Indigenous women's voices, Indigenous feminist writing is a method of political action: as a feminist praxis it becomes another strategy for Indigenous women to further decolonize—on their own terms (Green, 2007; St. Denis, 2007).

One of the main actions of resistance proposed by Indigenous feminist scholars is the reclaiming of empowered identities and roles. As Patricia Monture and Patricia McGuire (2009) point out, there is neither a universal 'Indigenous woman' from the past nor one that exists in the present: "[Through] studying these stories you can begin to know the complexities of our identities. There is no single 'authentic' Aboriginal identity or Aboriginal women's identity" (p. 3). However, many scholars cite general commonalities shared by many nations, including the former prominence of Indigenous women as powerful leaders who were active participants in the socio-economic and political structures of their tribes (Carter, 1997; Fiske, 1996, 2000; Monture, 2009). Indigenous women, who previously enjoyed high levels of autonomy and authority, lost their positions of power and influence (see Baker, 2005; Lawrence & Anderson, 2005; Maracle, 2003; Sunseri, 2000; 2009). Many scholars emphasize the necessity of sharing stories that acknowledge this past in order to foster connections, recover traditions, and reclaim Indigenous women's roles in the community. Therefore, acts of resistance acknowledge, "that the role of women in traditional Aboriginal societies had been one of the most impacted as a result of colonization processes" (McGregor, 2009). Emerance Baker (2005), a theorist and storyteller, argues that Indigenous women's stories contradict the stories that colonization imposes on women. She states that women's stories "focus less on how we are continually disappeared from our own cultural imagery, and more on the ways that we are going to witness to generations of ongoing cultural 'survivance' in

spite of the cultural genocide that surrounds us and marks us ‘Indian’” (p.111). This notion of ‘survance’ is also essential to my theoretical framework and data analysis as it is a recurring theme in the non-mainstream media. Despite colonial pressures to admit defeat and retreat from their lands, Indigenous women continue to stand against attempts at erasure.

In order to address the space between reclaiming and reimagining identity, scholars caution that Indigenous women should respect the past without limiting possibilities. Lina Sunseri (2009) argues that Indigenous women are reclaiming their responsibility “by participating in the ongoing struggles of decolonization, by working for the revitalization of our cultures and political systems, and by nurturing our communities” (p. 25). Furthermore, reclamation is an action that must continue to *be done*—it is a process as well as a product. Indigenous women’s identities can never be completely ‘reclaimed’ and to assume so disregards the pervasiveness of power structures. These structures, especially colonialism, sexism, and racism, are changing just as those who work against them change. Additionally, as tradition is not static, identities must retain degrees of fluidity. As McGuire reiterates, because Indigenous women’s “knowledge(s) are not frozen in time... [but] robust and active” (2009, p. 75), the process of reclamation must also be ongoing, active, and complex.

Coinciding with reclaiming identities, the rejection of negative stereotypes is another crucial act of Indigenous women’s resistance. Discrediting harmful colonial stereotypes is a continuous and arduous process that must be done at the individual, community, and national level (Baker, 2005). Recent iterations of Indigenous women’s resistance include movements such as Idle No More and the campaigns for Murdered and

Missing Indigenous Women (see #MMIW). These movements and their actions continue to garner both national and international attention with Indigenous women at the forefront. Amanda Morris (2014) describes Idle No More as an Indigenous feminist movement led by Indigenous women that continuously exposes colonialism, sexism, racism, and the interrelation of all these structures as they affect Indigenous women's lives. Morris (2014) states that Idle No More "presents an Indigenous feminist alternative to this patriarchal deconstruction of a healthy society by asking the government to reverse course and respect the sovereignty and treaty rights of First Nations" (Morris, 2014, p. 248). The popularity and impact of the Idle No More movement is a testament to the ability of its advocates to use social media, online media outlets, and grassroots organizing to garner support and solidarity across Indigenous nations, the Americas, and into settler-controlled spaces. Likewise, Baker (2005) argues that "Native women are forming spaces for us to reclaim our power, spaces that are safer for Native women to occupy in the world today, spaces that are created with a perception of loving Indianness" (p. 112). These spaces, which include Indigenous-led social justice groups and community centers, are inherently decolonizing and resistant to hegemonic power because Indigenous people are in control. When Indigenous women are vocal social activists and in positions of power, they direct the conversation away from destructive stereotypes and towards the real concerns faced by Indigenous women. Additionally, these are spaces where "longstanding colonial relations between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals are abolished and new relations [can be] formed" (Sunseri, 2000). Combating stereotypes is difficult without the support of settler-allies who can participate in solidarity movements *with* Indigenous women, not for them. Native Friendship Centres,

Idle No More, and #MMIW are examples of opportunities for recreating relationships between Indigenous women and settlers in Canada.

As a writer, speaker, and editor of works that address Indigenous resistance, Leanne Simpson (2011), offers a perspective on protest that broadens its definition. In *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*, Simpson (2011) makes reference to a solidarity march through the main street of Peterborough, Ontario to celebrate the presence of Nishnaabeg people on Nishnaabeg land:

This was not a protest. This was not a demonstration. This was a quiet, collective act of resurgence. It was a mobilization and it was political because it was a reminder. It was a reminder that although we are collectively unseen in the city of Peterborough, when we come together with one mind and one heart we can transform our land and our city into a decolonized space and a place of resurgence. (p. 11)

In actions such as this, Indigenous peoples, often with Indigenous women at the helm, are resisting centuries of colonial control within both their communities and the settler nation state. Though they often disappear from mainstream media—and from media analyses—Indigenous women are actively resisting the domination of settler colonialism in their embodied, on-the-ground practices. As Sylvia Maracle states, “it has been women who have led the challenge to change discriminatory practices” (2003, p. 74). It was Indigenous women who successfully changed the gender discrimination stipulations of the Indian Act, and it is Indigenous women who continue to challenge the exclusion of women within their own communities. I think Emma LaRocque (2010) encapsulates perfectly the obligations and challenges of reclamation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in the colonial state, when she states that “inasmuch as we must seek to recognize the faces of both the colonizer and the colonized, we must at the same time



acknowledge that we are human beings and, as such, are more than the sum of our colonial parts” (p.13).

In this chapter, I have presented the theoretical ideas that influence my analysis of media discourses concerning the Elsipogtog protests, specifically the impacts of Canadian settler colonialism on Indigenous women. Furthermore, I have connected these impacts to settler colonialism in an attempt to illustrate the pervasive nature of colonialism in the contemporary nation state. I have unraveled the threads that connect settler colonialism to other forms of oppression, and thus shown that settler colonialism is not autonomous but rather intertwined with patriarchy. More broadly, I have sought to highlight settler colonial policies that operate to control citizens through the erasure of difference and the management of participation. Finally, I have highlighted the continuing resurgence of Indigenous women against the colonial ties of patriarchy, sexism, and racism that bind us all.

**Chapter Three: Methodology**  
“Everything needs to be seen within the  
context of the relationships it represents”  
(Wilson, 2008, p. 43)

For the purposes of my methodology I draw on the principle ideological connections that exist between Indigenous and feminist methodology. I draw from both feminist and Indigenous methodologies in order to pursue research that can decolonize, while paying particular attention to the uniqueness of gender issues. My approach to this research begins in the overlap of these methodological frameworks, in the space where feminist practice is decolonizing and Indigenous methods challenge the heteropatriarchy in settler colonialism. Admittedly, feminism based in Western traditions has not avoided the influence of colonialism, racism, or the scourge of academic privilege. Yet, more often than not, feminist and Indigenous methodologies are able to meet in a manner that offers possibilities to enrich the praxis of each. It is in these meetings that meaningful, mutually beneficial, and decolonizing practices can be nurtured. In this chapter, I continue to center settler colonialism, decenter dominant discourses, and apply these intentions to the rejection of the notion of objective research. To do so, I provide an extensive explanation of how I understand Indigenous methodology, feminist methodology, and discourse analysis and how I use them in my research.

**Indigenous Methodologies**

The foremost reason to use a decolonizing approach in research involving Indigenous peoples is “to create space in the everyday life, research, academia, and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked,

or dismissed” (Kovach, 2009, p. 85). Westernized institutions and researchers have both ignored Indigenous views of the world and taken knowledge from communities without regard to the significance of Indigenous ontology or epistemology, causing irreparable damages to those communities. Despite this tradition of exclusion, Indigenous methodologies continue to make space in the academy for alternative research practices, which are: decolonizing, accountable, and relational. To combat exclusionary tendencies in my research I center Indigenous voices in my analysis, by pursuing non-hegemonic sources and highlighting any discourses being circulated by Indigenous women. In these ways I am accountable to the practices and principles of Indigenous methodology.

Before entering further into an explanation of how I apply Indigenous methodologies and methods in my research, I think it is important to first, honour Indigenous ways of being through relationality (Wilson, 2008). To begin to do so, however, I must locate myself in relation to my research and recognize how my position as a white-middle-class-settler informs this relationship (Wilson, 2008). As a white-settler, I am connected to the topic and subjects of my research via New Brunswick, which is also my home. All of my family as far back as I know have lived in New Brunswick and depended upon the land and sea for their survival. However, because of my white-settler status I will never know what it is like to grow up on a piece of land that is a mere fraction of what my ancestors lived on. I only know how it feels to lose hope for the province that still sustains all my family and dearest friends but continues to fail to protect them. These are my connections to New Brunswick, where I began my life and located my research. With this short piece of my own story I have sought to put in practice both Indigenous and feminist methodology through self-reflexivity and

relationality, and therefore placed myself in relation to my research and the relationships that may grow from it.

Indigenous research is not merely about telling stories, though stories do play a crucial role in most iterations of Indigenous methodology—it is about recognizing how harmful research has been to Indigenous people (Kovach, 2009; Martin, 2003; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Decolonization requires that the researcher acknowledges and respects the values, beliefs, and worldviews of the Indigenous group or persons that are connected to the research. Prominent Indigenous feminist scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), explores decolonization throughout *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012) and advises colonized people to “decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop an authentic humanity” (p. 25). So too, settlers must decolonize our minds and recognize how our knowledge continues to be shaped by colonial logics that are meant to expunge those we colonize. As a reflection of the inherent attempts at removing Indigenous peoples, Western research continues to focus on Indigenous people as the problem to be studied, observed, and used. This approach reproduces the colonial power structure between the researched (Native-Other) and the researcher (White-Colonizer). Researchers are tasked to find ways to ‘fix’ the Indigenous people through studies, papers, policy changes, and countless projects—most of which will fail to fix anything. In fact, it is under the perceived neutrality of research that prejudices against Indigenous people can be reinforced. Historically, the researcher can (and did) corroborate any number of pseudo-scientific or social explanations to expedite the seizure of land by the Canadian government (Carter, 1992; Smith, 2015; 2008; Lawrence, 2003). As research is never separated from the systems it exists within, any research done in

settler locations (i.e., universities, governments) is predisposed to perpetuating colonialism. Therefore, Indigenous communities throughout the world have been (and are) alienated as a result of research that claims neutrality while maintaining colonial constructions of subjectivity.

Indigenous methodologies disrupt Western research models by acknowledging the ongoing effect colonialism has on research (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Goertz & Mazur, 2008; Lazar, 2005). Specifically, decolonizing methodologies challenge Western definitions of what counts as knowledge and how that knowledge is valued (Wilson, 2008). Scott Morgensen (2012) contends that “exposing normative knowledge production as being not only non-Indigenous but colonial, [Indigenous methodologies] denaturalize power within settler societies and ground knowledge production in decolonization” (p. 805). Exposing the colonial undercurrents of research within university-supported academic endeavors, of which I am a part as a graduate student, is exceedingly difficult. Despite the fraught nature of this act—writing a thesis while acknowledging the role academia has in perpetuating colonialism—ironically it is through my writing that I am able to contribute to exposing the colonization present in academia.

I would be remiss to discuss Indigenous methodologies in academia without again paying particular attention to Smith’s (2012) contributions toward unsettling academia, and recognizing the tendency for research to be taken as truth without question. Smith (2012) states that researchers’ acts are “always justified as being for the ‘good of mankind.’ Research of this nature *on* indigenous peoples is still justified by the ends rather than the means, particularly if the indigenous peoples concerned can still be positioned as ignorant and undeveloped (savages)” (2012, p. 26). Even researchers that

may have had the best intentions to ‘help’ Indigenous people fell short as the focus was not on the relationship between participants and researchers but on the end goal of a paper, a policy, or a project. Instead, research with Indigenous communities needs to be predicated on the “notion of struggle and what it means to live a life in struggle” (Smith, 2012, p. 199). Therefore, as a researcher drawing on Indigenous methodological approaches, I have a responsibility to challenge the colonialism present in my own understandings of the knowledge, truth, and the world.

I draw on the concept of relationality in my research to consider the interconnected and often complicated relationships present within protests, the media, and the settler nation state. The concept of relationality is the crux of Shawn Wilson’s (2008) proposal for Indigenous methodologies but Kovach (2009) and other scholars offer similar examples. Relationality, as defined by Wilson (2008), relates to the connection of Indigenous peoples to each other, to the land and even to ideas: “rather than viewing ourselves as being *in* relationship with other peoples or things, we *are* the relationships that we hold and are part of” (p. 80, emphasis in original). Everything must be understood through relationships. In order to know a person you must know who they are connected to, where they came from, where they intend to go, the places they call home and so on—the full context/complexity of their relationships. Wilson even seeks to challenge mainstream (settler) thinking about how we see concepts and ideas, which are “not as important as the relationships that went into forming them” (2008, p. 74). That is, relationality includes our relationships with objects, spaces, and ideas: “Knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us [and] theories and ideas are only knots in the strands of relationality that are not

physically visible but nonetheless real” (Wilson, 2008, p. 87). Applying a method of relationality means that any protest must be understood within a network of interacting relationships—the protestors with the issue, all those involved outside the protest (governments, companies, lawyers), and in the case of shale gas, the non-human objects that are at stake and in need of protection, such as water.

Finally, as a researcher participating in Indigenous methodological practices, I am part of a larger narrative of decolonization. Smith (2012) argues that “[d]ecolonization must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonialism” (2012, p. 204). I see overlap between Indigenous and feminist methodologies, however, the union will not always be an easy one. To avoid engaging in research that enhances settler colonialism, I must be sure to avoid erasure or appropriation of Indigenous methodologies under the banner of feminism. Simply put, merely saying that I use decolonizing methodologies without critically examining my own participation in colonialism would be an appropriation of the approach because I would not be confronting my own privilege. Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) warn against such moves because “the easy adoption of decolonization as a metaphor (and nothing else) is a form of anxiety, because it is a premature attempt at reconciliation...one way the settler, disturbed by her own status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of complicity” (p. 9). That is, the settler is attempting to make amends without critical and uncomfortable confrontation with the privilege and harm made possible by colonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012). I must not only confront my colonial privilege within the confines of this work but beyond its pages, constantly. Through drawing on an Indigenous/feminist approach, I hope that my reflections are not as deeply rooted in the harmful Western research practices discussed,

but rather a direct response to them.

### **Feminist Methodology**

Feminist methodology is a spectrum of practices that can be adapted to fit a variety of research. Carole McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim (2003) state that despite its limitations, challenges, and ambiguities, “the term [feminist] nonetheless signals an emancipatory politics on behalf of women [and] involves the implicit claim that the prevailing conditions under which women live are unjust and must be changed” (p. 1). Following McCann and Kim (2003), we can point to some fundamental principles of feminist methodology including but not limited to the following: challenging hierarchical forms of research that propagate male dominance; ensuring that marginalized perspectives are accounted for; challenging hierarchical relationships among women through recognizing the impact of racist and colonial discourses on feminisms; and always recognizing the impact that social location and subjectivities have on research (see also hooks, 2003; Wickramasinghe, 2010).

Feminism in its most basic iteration is dedicated to dismantling patriarchy, yet the methods with which to achieve this have been at times contrary or irrelevant to resolving the issues of women of colour, non-Western women, and Indigenous women among others. Feminism has not been immune to colonialism and racism, that is, of constructions of the non-White, non-Western woman who needs to be saved by her white, Western ‘sister.’ Gender as a category of analysis remains disputed theoretical territory as any “universal claims to gender oppression that define the characteristics of the gender group women in terms of their difference from the gender group men” (McCann & Kim, 2003,



p. 15) oversimplify differences among both groups and can minimize the effects of other categories of social difference such as race. Simone de Beauvoir, one of the first feminists to challenge the category of woman commented that “no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other against itself” (cited in McCann & Kim, 2003, p. 35). Therefore, feminist’s commitment to a specific definition of ‘woman’ results in a dichotomization—those who are and those who are not. Navigating the ongoing discussion of the legacy of feminist interrogation of gender is beyond the scope of my current work; nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge these ongoing conversations. In order to dismantle settler logics in feminism, feminist researchers must engage in self-reflexive practices that critique how feminism has been involved/benefited from systems of power, including colonialism (Lazar, 2005).

Despite the shortcomings of feminism, feminist methodological approaches have constantly evolved to incorporate various disciplines, such as sociology, geography, and political science, and the scholars within them who seek to challenge hierarchical research practices (Goertz & Mazur, 2008). Strictly objective research methods that seek to separate the researcher from the researched—and therefore do not take into account the presence of colonialism, racism, sexism, ableism, and other systems of discrimination, and generally disregard the positions of power involved in research—are disrupted by feminism. Feminist research methods attempt to mitigate power relationships and reconfigure research by creating spaces of equal interaction where the researcher must be held accountable to those involved in making the work possible. Much like decolonizing practices offer a way out of colonialism, feminism offers a way out of patriarchy and other systems of power. Throughout my own research process, I have applied those

principles to my work with the specific intention of demystifying the notion of objective research in a settler society.

### **Discourse Analysis**

I approach discourse analysis through Derek Hook's interpretation of Foucault, feminist critical discourse analysis, and media discourse analysis theories. The most important aspect of this approach is the notion supported by Foucault that *discourse is an action*; it is constantly being both done and undone (Hook, 2007). Furthermore, in the *action* of discourse, power is reproduced via the continual retelling of certain knowledge in dominant discourses. The discourses are that are dismissed, rejected, or even ridiculed lack power and this marginalization is directly correlated to the status of those who are associated with the discourse. Derek Hook states that "[t]hese rules, systems, and procedures comprise a discrete realm of discursive practices—the order of discourse—a conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced" (2007, p. 101). Certain ideas (e.g., notions of spiritualities) can be relegated to the periphery of society as some concepts can be seen to lack both truth and proof, and therefore do not often appear in mainstream media spaces. As previously discussed, colonial constructions of 'truth' and 'knowledge' have achieved hegemonic status in the West. These conceptions of truth and knowledge purposefully exclude, misrepresent and/or appropriate Indigenous ways of knowing and being; therefore, despite how universal 'truth' may seem, it is subject to dispute. Hook (2007) speaks directly to the valorization and distribution of truths as "a vital component in the workings of a successful discourse...what counts as 'the truth' is a product of discourse and power" (p. 105). Furthermore, he states that "to realize that truth

is a function of discourse is to realize that the conditions of truth are *precisely* rather than *relatively* contingent on current forms of discourse” (Hook, 2007, p. 105). Based on this disruption of the universality of ‘truth,’ any truth must be liable to debate, reconsideration, and rejection. Consequently, there is no *universal truth* to discover or apply because truth is dependent upon the discourses that substantiate the contexts, within which truth is understood. In a settler society, settlers have the power to influence the perception/creation of truth but due to the fragility of settler logic, resistance is constant. Discourse analysis, as argued by Foucault, offers a way to pull at the threads that form ‘truths’ in order to find the seams that reveal power structures (cited in Gavey, 1989). It is a way to identify, center and/or produce counterhegemonic discourses that directly confront these power structures, even those as formidable as the nation state and whiteness.

### **Media Discourse Analysis**

Based on the premise that discourse is an action, it follows that discourse leaves traces in various mediums, including the media. For the purpose of my work, the texts produced by various media are the objects of discovery. Stuart Hall, a founder of cultural studies and discourse analysis, states that “reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language, and what we can know or say has to be produced through discourse” (cited in Talbot, 2007, p. 7). In this regard, anything that can be known rests on those discourses that are already accepted as truth. If you are reading a newspaper article there are many ‘givens’; if there weren’t, you would struggle to make sense of the statements. Thus, the seemingly simple act of reading a newspaper comes

with a set of assumptions, including but not limited to the idea that the newspaper is a place to find out the news. A particular discursive order is being created in newspapers through the deployment of forms and tropes that reflect established power structures, in ever so subtle ways. Feminist discourse analysis scholar Nicola Gavey (1989) states “discourse analysis proceeds on the assumption that these processes are not static, fixed, and orderly but rather fragmented, inconsistent, and contradictory” (p. 467). The task is to identify when discourse is being fragmented, what is leading to this fragmentation, what actors are involved, and what are the results of this interaction. For my own foray into the media surrounding the shale gas debate, I identify the inconsistencies within the mainstream media and the reproduction of colonial tropes, and I also look at the narratives Indigenous women express outside of the confining space of mainstream coverage.

I am interested in understanding how colonial discourses are in themselves processes that continue to evolve in the mainstream. Borrowing from one of the foremost scholars in media discourse analysis, Norman Fairclough, I explore how these processes are simultaneously rejected. Fairclough (2000) argues that the way “discourse is being represented, re-spoken, or rewritten sheds light on the emergence of new discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power” (cited in Blommaert & Bulcaen, p. 449). The media coverage surrounding the protest provides a distinct opportunity to consider the action/process of colonial discourses, its silences regarding gender, and how Indigenous actors worked against its power.

It is in the context of the media, that discourses are revealed through the lexical choices made by journalists to describe events and the headlines that frame this content.

However, as Foucault points out “there is more to a text than its concrete, physical form. It only exists in relation with other texts, as a node within a network in a mesh of intertextual relations” (cited in Talbot, 2007, p. 12). Discourses build on one another or clash to create other discourses. Fairclough, and another prominent media discourse theorist Ruth Wodak (1997) outline that discourse is “socially *constitutive* [emphasis in original] as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people” (p. 258). I apply this understanding of discourse in my research, concluding that the discourses within the media are not separate from the situations in which they appear. Furthermore, just as dominant discourses are being perpetuated so too are others being created that challenge their dominance (see Wodak, 1997).

### **Feminism and Discourse Analysis**

As I previously discussed, feminist practices offer another strategy for challenging dominant (male) discourses. Feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) theorist Michelle Lazar (2005) argues that FCDA reveals how gender is part of the complex network of power in discourses. The focus of FCDA is “concerned with demystifying the interrelationships of gender, power, and ideology in discourse” (Lazar, 2005, p. 5). As a part of this demystification, Jan Blommart and Chris Bulcaen (2000) argue, “Power depends not only on access to resources but also on access to contexts in which resources can be used” (p. 458). In the context of protest, the mainstream media is both a *powerful* resource and *has power* due to the ability to disseminate knowledge. For the Indigenous women involved, their absence from the coverage is a reflection of their lack of power in the mainstream and speaks to the way power is being reproduced. The discourses of

dominance in the mainstream media that limit Indigenous women can be identified with a gender lens. Gavey (1989) argues “discourses provide subject positions, constituting our subjectivities, and reproducing or challenging existing gender relations” (p. 466).

Understanding the specificities of power is essential in considering the construction of subjectivities and subject positions, as well as how discourse reinforces or challenges these locational realities. As Hook (2007) states, “Discourse itself is both constituted by, and ensures the reproduction of, the social system, through forms of selection, exclusion, and domination” (p. 101). I look at the ways those who are excluded from the mainstream, specifically Indigenous women, are resisting dominant discourses from the periphery.

However, identifying alternative discourses in the mainstream requires attention to what is often left unsaid in news articles. In terms of a feminist methodological perspective, there are silences that must be accounted for and finding them is “[s]ometimes as much about the unknowing as the knowing” (Gavey, 2011, p. 187). Deciphering this suggestion of “unknowing” translates into finding what is not being included in the coverage and attempting to uncover the potential motives for this dismissal. Similarly, discourse analysis is also about the “search for the scarcity of meaning, with what cannot be said, with what is impossible or unreasonable within certain discursive locations” (Hook, 2007, p. 527). When voices do not appear in the media coverage, these silences can reveal just as much about an event as do those that occupy considerable space.

## Methods

For part of the discourse analysis I draw mainly from the work of Jonathan Potter (1996) to identify how the media uses descriptions to produce a certain version of the protests. Particularly, I apply Potter's (1996) notion of "categorical entitlement" as a practice to define those who are imbued with unquestioned authority in the protests. Potter defines this as "the idea that certain categories of people, in certain contexts, are treated as knowledgeable" (1996, p. 133). Of course, understanding what context *entitles* certain people is essential in determining when and why they are categorically entitled. For example, during protests some community leaders experience categorical entitlement in the mainstream media as they are already established in positions as leaders. However, this entitlement may not always extend beyond the community.

In addition, I apply a lexical analysis to the coverage to identify "consistent patterns which suggest preoccupations within the particular discursive context" (Matheson, 2005, p. 22). For example, how are the protestors most often described? Are the journalists using lexical choices that follow a pattern or imply certain readings? Following the language (words, statements, phrases) used frequently in the description of the actions taken by different actors (i.e., the protestors, Chief Aaron Sock, community members, the RCMP officers, and Premier David Alward) allows me to identify the discourses, preoccupations, and tropes present within the coverage. Not every detail of an event can be included in an article, and the details that are included point directly to the discursive motivations of the media outlet and journalist. The details deemed most important are included in the story, or draped across the headline; however, these details may not correlate with those deemed important by those directly involved in the event.

Donald Matheson (2005) states, “the news is constrained to follow a lexical map in which the complexity of life is reduced to a particular vocabulary of crime and punishment” (p. 23). Therefore, finding prominent lexical themes is often not exceedingly difficult as journalists present the information through already known tropes, sayings, and phrases. For example, since a journalist has limited space, only certain perspectives and voices are included. Therefore, analyzing the descriptions is just as much about what is included as what is *not* included, what questions are *not* asked, and what is being understood as common knowledge in the discussion.

In my discourse analysis I draw from both feminist and Indigenous methodologies in order to approach the media coverage with the specific intention to disrupt the knowledge being presented. Due to the notoriety of the protests, there were hundreds of articles in these mainstream sources on Elsipogtog; therefore, I had to refine the selection of data for analysis. To do so, I removed any duplicates as some journalists have articles featured in more than one online or print newspaper. From there, I continued to filter articles by focusing on the major Maritime news sources: *Times & Transcript*, *The Telegraph Journal*, *The Guardian*, *The Chronicle Herald*, *CBC News NB Online*, *The Daily Gleaner*, and *The Telegram*. These sources offer insight into the political, economic, and social climate surrounding the protest, compared to other national or provincial newspapers that do not have a local Maritime focus. Consequently, my mainstream data is comprised of the 107 articles that fit the criteria of a Maritime news source, with exclusive coverage on the events of protest and proceeding court, provincial, and public activity. Supplementing the mainstream media coverage, I examine non-mainstream media. The non-mainstream media offers Indigenous perspectives, including



Indigenous women's perspectives, on the protests. The Al Jazeera documentary *Elsipogtog: The Fire Over Water* (2014), and a YouTube video featuring Mi'kmaq Warrior Suzanne Patles and filmed at Simon Fraser University during a Mi'kmaq Warrior speaking tour, are also included in my non-mainstream media analysis. Though there are many other examples of video coverage of the protests in Elsipogtog, these two sources were of particular importance. Only the Al Jazeera documentary offered in-depth analysis of the events and only the YouTube video with Suzanne Patles focused on the experience and insights of a Mi'kmaq woman protestor.

### **Conclusion: Indigenous Feminist Discourse Analysis**

The fusion of Indigenous and feminist methodology that I propose focuses on the mutual principles that each share: the centering of settler colonialism, the decentering of dominant discourses, and the rejection of the notion of objective research. Methodology conceptualized in this manner is a way to explore a part of the story and not a means of uncovering a universal truth. The crux of my methodology is in connecting Indigenous and feminist principles to the practice of media discourse analysis. In the subsequent analysis chapters I apply the methods discussed with specific attention to settler colonial mentalities. In the inclusion/exclusion process of the media, a very unique and complex network is created: a web made of hegemonic discourses, information, and resistance. By using the discourse analysis discussed, I attempt to untangle this web in order to identify both the dominant and hidden discourses being deployed in the shale gas protests.

## Chapter Four: Mainstream Media and Maintaining Settler Order

“We’ve been pushed into such a little corner in Elsipogtog.  
A little postage stamp is all we have left...  
It’s no longer about shale gas”  
John Levi (cited in Taber, 2013, para. 18)

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the mainstream media coverage of the shale gas protests in Elsipogtog, New Brunswick. Here, I have chosen to focus on the mainstream media as a location of power wherein the perspectives of the dominant non-Indigenous groups in the province can be replicated typically without concern for the perspectives of Indigenous citizens. As discussed above, I consider ‘mainstream’ to be the articles from popular provincial newspapers (*Telegraph Journal*, *The Moncton Times and Transcript*), Maritime newspapers (*The Chronicle Herald*, *The Cape Breton Post*, *The Telegram*, *The Daily Gleaner*, *The Guardian*) and the larger national news outlets (*The Globe and Mail*, *CBC News*, *Canadian Press*). In this chapter I focus on the mainstream media’s use of three major tropes: the settler keeper of colonial order, the ‘Noble Savage’ and what I label the ‘Criminal Savage.’ I argue that these tropes frame the protests in Elsipogtog and in turn perpetuate colonial stereotypes of Indigenous peoples. From this analysis of the mainstream media’s coverage I set the stage for my exploration of the role of Indigenous women in these same protests (see Chapter 5). As I discussed in the preceding chapter, I draw predominantly from Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and Jonathan Potter’s (1996) work to analyze mainstream media’s coverage of the protests. More specifically, I use Potter’s analysis of the processes involved in building *descriptions as facts* in the media: “truth can be treated as a commodity which is worked up, can fluctuate, and can be strengthened or weakened” (p. 5). Media is a location where

journalists describe events, which are then told and retold by the general public until a body of fact is established. Through this process the mainstream media is building description as facts and then repeating these facts as truth. In other words, in this chapter I identify the ways in which discourses in the media both produce and replicate certain ‘common knowledge’ or ‘truths’ about Indigenous protests and protestors. The use of descriptive techniques such as tropes, combined with the principle of categorical-entitlement<sup>3</sup> creates a powerful instrument of description in the mainstream media (Potter, 1996). The articles included in this chapter are representative of the discursive space created by the mainstream media articles I analyzed.

### **Shale gas and the duty to consult in a struggling province**

As I explain in the introductory chapter, disputes about the land and water surrounding Elsipogtog First Nation became the motivation for protests. Elsipogtog residents made claims about the availability and vitality of the land for traditional hunting and fishing practices, which could be harmed by shale-gas extraction, and these claims seemed to be simultaneously denied by the Provincial Government. In short, without delving too far into a discussion of treaty rights and their undemocratic foundations, I want to point out that the land was and is contested: the Mi’kmaq consider this land to be unceded Indigenous land and the federal and provincial governments deem the land Crown property (Howe, 2014; 2015). Despite the residents’ insistence on the necessity of the area for their livelihood, their concerns about seismic activity were largely ignored. At the time of the protest, Premier David Alward (2010-2013) and his government affiliates

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<sup>3</sup> Potter (1996) uses the term categorical entitlement to describe certain categories of people, such as community leaders, who are considered experts in certain contexts without the requirement of being questioned.

followed Canadian governmental procedures to address the concerns of the community. However, the Government's actions only seemed to exacerbate the discontentment of Elsipogtog residents and provoke more objections.

To provide further context, I again emphasize that Canada has a long history of delivering colonizing legislation at both the federal and provincial levels. So much so, that in more recent years Canada has been highly criticized by international organizations such as the United Nations for its shortcomings with respect to Indigenous nations (Hansen, n.d). Despite international pressures, the Canadian Government has been reluctant to admit wrongdoing. Reflective of Canada's stubborn stance against Indigenous rights is the Government's refusal, until recently, to commit to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).<sup>4</sup> In fact,

The UNDRIP was adopted by 144 countries, with 11 abstentions and 4 countries voting against it. These four countries were Canada, the USA, New Zealand, and Australia. Since 2009 Australia and New Zealand have reversed their positions and now support the Declaration, while the United States and Canada have announced that they will revise their positions (Hansen, n.d., para. 4)

Given Canada's colonial history and the high stakes of protecting settler nation-state sovereignty, one could surmise that settler anxieties limited the possibility of this international declaration. Canada's initial reluctance to sign the UNDRIP illustrates the perceived threat Indigenous rights pose to Canadian colonial governance. It seems that when the opportunity arises to fracture settler controls over land and national sovereignty, the settler government prefers superficial measures of inclusion (Bannerji, 2000; Mackey,

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<sup>4</sup> Canada has only recently adopted the UNDRIP without reservation. See Carolyn Bennett (2016) *Speaking Notes for The Honorable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs: Announcement of Canada's Support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

1999). Inevitably, these measures fail, at which point Indigenous peoples must confront the significant lack of government actions to respect their rights; protests, blockades, and sit-ins are the material response to generations of governmental failures. To suppress the growth of these confrontations current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau campaigned on promises to strengthen relationships with Indigenous nations. As a symbol of his commitment he advocated for clean drinking water on reserves and launched an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. However, it is unclear if his commitment will last as his term progresses and the reality settles in that fixing the colonial relationship means fixing the colonial system.

In New Brunswick the colonial relationship between the Provincial Government and the residents of Elsipogtog was further strained by the failure (or perceived failure) of consultation. Leading up to the events in October 2013, Premier Alward and members of the Elsipogtog Council, including Chief Aaron Sock, were in consultation meetings regarding shale gas exploration. In the deliberations, one of the main points of divergence between the Province and the Council members was differing interpretations of the duty to consult legislation. This legislation vaguely outlines the rights of Indigenous nations regarding their lands; it was an added provision by the Federal Government in March 2011 to *The Aboriginal Consultation and Accommodation Guidelines for Federal Officials*. The updated section of the duty to consult states:

The duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate is part of a process of fair dealing and reconciliation that begins with the assertion of sovereignty by the Crown and continues beyond formal claims resolution through to the application and implementation of Treaties. The Crown's efforts to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Aboriginal groups whose potential or established Aboriginal or Treaty rights may be adversely affected should be consistent with the overarching objectives of reconciliation. ('Duty to Consult,' 2011, p. 6)

Interestingly, this amendment specifically mentions the duty to consult in relation to reconciliation and accommodation ‘where appropriate’ and yet, the definition of appropriateness is visibly lacking. Therefore, without specific measures detailed in the policy there is space for confusion, delays, and ignorance from those who translate this duty in vastly different ways. The ambiguities of these guidelines are an example of the ineffective legislation created for governing Indigenous lands. In adhering to their (colonial) interpretation of the duty to consult legislation, the New Brunswick Government did consult with the Elsipogtog Band Council. However, the consultation was minimal and divisive. As a result this legislation, like so many others, failed because it attempted to navigate land treaties and dictate boundaries in the best interest of the Crown—not Indigenous sovereignty.

This discrepancy between the duty to consult legislation and the expectations of the people of Elsipogtog bolstered tensions with the Provincial Government, as the two seemed on opposite sides of the debate. Chief George Ginnish, of the Assembly of First Nations, conceptualizes the continuing miscommunication as insurmountable. In an interview about the Elsipogtog protests with *The Moncton Times and Transcript* he stated, “First Nations in New Brunswick have been attempting to work within the confines of a restrictive compartmentalized consultation process that is completely unworkable because it runs counter to our customs and traditions” (cited in Chilibeck, 2013, p. A6). If the Government is to build genuine relationships with Indigenous nations—and create legislation that reflects this commitment—then there needs to be a complete shift in thinking. The duty to consult would instead be understood by the

Government as a consultation *at any cost*, not just where appropriate. However, as I discuss later, the mainstream media frames government responsibilities differently. The Provincial Government's duty to consult as depicted in the mainstream media seemed to be understood as necessary until economically arduous, at which point the Government would dismiss the requests of Elsipogtog residents as unreasonable. As I show below, the mainstream media relied on preconceived notions about land and tropes about Indigenous people to subtly craft a problematic protest narrative. The failure of the duty to consult legislation to sufficiently address the concerns of Elsipogtog residents provides important context to my analysis of mainstream media portrayals of the conflict.

### **The Central Figures in the Mainstream Media**

During the coverage of the negotiations, both Chief Aaron Sock and Premier Alward emerge as central figures. From the early negotiations to the later protests, these men are the main focus of the mainstream media. To support this assertion, one only need look at the numbers. Articles mention, quote, or reference Chief Aaron Sock over 150 times and Premier David Alward over 120 times over a one-year period. The result of this (over) representation is a perpetuation of their categorical entitlement, or as purveyors of the unmitigated 'truth' (Potter, 1996). The positions they hold influence how their knowledge is valued, as opposed to a protestor who has no title or government position. It is important to note that the media chose these men to be the voices of protest and the Government due to their respective positions, not necessarily for their insights on shale gas and protests. In other words, as community and provincial leaders, both men are

marked in the mainstream media as valuable informants into the ‘truths’ of the protests without having to account for their knowledge to the broader public.

### **The Premier: Keeper of the Settler Order**

The mainstream media painted Premier Alward in such a way that he came to represent all New Brunswickers, not just conservative New Brunswickers. And by doing this, the mainstream media in effect represented Indigenous persons as not belonging to New Brunswick, or as persons who were not on board with what was best for New Brunswick. Premier David Alward was a Conservative Party member and an early supporter of shale gas development in New Brunswick. Throughout mainstream coverage, he is depicted by journalists as unwavering in supporting the RCMP and shale gas development, with the added resolve that his Government followed the mandated federal legislation. In this sense the articles portray the Premier as the keeper of the settler order, the man in charge of maintaining economic growth, ensuring the rule of law are followed by citizens, and ultimately the person who knows what is best for the province.

In one particular article from the provincial newspaper *The Moncton Times and Transcript*, Premier Alward was quoted as insisting that, despite the concerns of the people of Elsipogtog, the rules—one could add, the colonial rules—were followed to the letter. This article’s message is representative of the overarching theme associated with Alward in the mainstream media that the Government was not to blame for the protests. In the article Alward is cited as saying, “This government has been engaged with First Nations communities, from my perspective, without a doubt, more than any other government in New Brunswick history” (cited in Mazerolle, 2013a, p. A1). With such



statements, the Premier (and his government) can be interpreted as having done *everything* possible to consult with communities. This is a subtle yet effective lexical choice made by the journalist, which can minimize the expectations from the public, as doing *more* can become a relative marker of success. Alward's use of the term 'engaged' without an explanation of how the Provincial Government actually did so functions to deflect attention away from him or his Government's actions. This statement is an example of the subtle persistence of colonial benevolence that is present throughout the mainstream coverage. This logic, premised on alleged benevolence, incorporates the notion that Government is doing better, trying harder, and attempting to fix the mistakes of former (colonial) governments. Another example of the notion of colonial benevolence comes from a journalist who commends Alward's consultation efforts by stating, "Not long ago, Premier David Alward and First Nations leaders in the province made a good start" (Bruce, 2013, p. D6). Again, this statement seems to support the notion that the Government did its best, which should have been enough, thus, doubt can creep into public discourse: perhaps the protestors demanded *too much* consultation.

Following this reasoning as presented in the mainstream articles, the Elsipogtog community should have been satisfied with the process. One journalist remarked, "Despite the differences, Alward said yesterday he was hoping to renew discussions with Elsipogtog and all the First Nations chiefs about shale gas exploration. The Tory government is deeply committed to developing the industry" (Chilibeck, 2013, A6). In this statement the Premier is presented as both the benevolent leader and the keeper of the settler order. The Premier is willing to meet with "all the First Nations chiefs", while remaining committed to increasing economic prosperity. The Premier and the journalist

seem to be drawing on the settler narrative of colonial benevolence to assert his innocence while maintaining commitments to economic growth. After all, it is always growth through land (and now resource extraction on that land) that marks the continued motivation of settler colonialism (Alfred & Cornthassel, 2005; Cannon, 2014).

This commitment to consultation *and* economic development is central to the mainstream media vis-à-vis coverage of the Premier. One journalist condenses this somewhat double-sided commitment from Alward stating, “But Alward asserted on Wednesday that the provincial government has sufficiently consulted to date, adding he will not back down from allowing companies to explore for shale gas in New Brunswick” (Huras, 2013, A6). Again, in this statement the reader can accept the efforts of the Premier’s consultation process as fair while supporting his economic plans. In another article the reader can begin to see the difficulty of these promises:

Alward has held a number of meetings with Elsipogtog Chief Aaron Sock, but said he saw no point to meet with the chief of the St. Mary’s First Nation, who has set up a traditional longhouse across the street from the legislature in protest of shale gas development, because he doesn’t see what would be achieved from such a meeting. (Bissett, 2013c, B6)

Though Alward was once quoted as willing to meet with all First Nation Chiefs, the offer did not last, despite the request from a Chief who was at the Premier’s doorstep. Thus, the Premier is presented in the mainstream media as the protector of governmental processes whose actions (and perhaps intentions) also have limits.

In addition to the concentration in the mainstream media on consultation processes, the possible benefits of shale gas for the province appeared throughout the coverage. In an article from *The Moncton Times and Transcript* the Premier remarks on the presumed concern of New Brunswickers over the lost economic opportunity of shale

gas. Paraphrasing Alward, the journalist states, “But Alward said he’s hearing a much different response than what might be seen at the protest sites” (Hobson, 2013, A1). The article continues with a direct quote from Alward to further this assertion:

On the ground I’m hearing day after day after day that New Brunswickers are saying, don’t give up, keep moving forward, we cannot afford to continue to see our young people leaving for other parts of Canada...So I have full confidence that the people of New Brunswick understand the opportunity before us and are saying yes [to shale gas exploration] (Hobson, 2013, A1).

The inclusion of such a statement can subtly remind the settler population (the white population) of what is at stake—prosperity. Continuing with shale gas exploration is framed as a necessary condition for New Brunswick to ‘keep moving forward’ and keep the young people in the province. Furthermore, the Premier seems to think residents ‘cannot afford’ to miss such an important economic opportunity and to do so would be perilous for the future of the province.

Regardless of the intention of the Premier or the journalist, in a province that has been experiencing record levels of unemployment, blaming the protests/protestors for lost potential revenue effectively pits protestors against those desperate for work. In an article on CBC News the Premier is described as taking a more direct stance against the chance that the protest could hurt economic development: “Premier David Alward has called the fight a ‘beachhead’<sup>5</sup> [sic] in his vision of economic development” (“Shale gas injunction ruling” 2013, para. 11-12). In this statement, the Premier is depicted as becoming more accusatory to those who stand in the way of ‘his vision.’ In another CBC News article Alward was quoted as stating, “revenue from a future shale gas sector could pay for social

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<sup>5</sup> A beachhead is defined as a defended position on a beach taken from the enemy by landing forces, from which an attack can be launched. Thus, in this statement, the fight for shale gas becomes essential to Alward’s economic vision (“Shale gas injunction, para. 11-12).

programs and employ citizens who are currently looking for work” (“Anti-shale gas protest resumes” 2013 para. 39-30). Here, the unemployed citizens or those who require social services (a large majority of the population) are described as the probable beneficiaries of shale gas development. Thus, the statement included by the journalist correlates the Premier’s anxieties with those of the province’s residents. With a failing economy and little prospects for development, playing on the fear of lost revenue and jobs operates as an important discursive strategy that undermines the protests. The statement can not only contradict the efforts of the protestors but also place their wants in direct conflict with other ‘New Brunswickers.’ Unfortunately, the Premier’s statements can also feed into harmful discourses that pit Indigenous peoples against the economic stability of other vulnerable populations (unemployed or underemployed non-Indigenous residents) in the province. As I remarked earlier, the problems in New Brunswick are large, complex, and undeniably grim and shale gas could not be the saviour that it is often portrayed as.

By emphasizing the Premier’s version of events, the mainstream journalists can elevate his claims and, however inadvertently, subvert the efforts of protestors. Consequently, as his voice becomes the loudest his words have the likelihood of being the most powerful and unquestioned as truth. Therefore, although Premier Alward may not have intended to reinforce colonial ideas about Indigenous peoples, his words could have that effect. His statements are already imbued with power and meaning due to his position and the Government’s intentions to use the land for economic gain, despite the concerns of the people of Elsipogtog. Thus, these discourses of colonial benevolence and economic prosperity as the ‘way forward’ have the ability to misplace responsibility for the

province's economic woes onto those who are already the most alienated—Indigenous populations. Instead of supporting the protestors, settlers may consider the protestors' actions to be impediments to provincial progress. The continuing struggle of Indigenous nations through protests can further settler notions of Indigenous people's failure to progress and participate in the nation state, instead of provide proof that the nation state fails to create meaningful space for their participation. The discourse suggests that Indigenous people should be grateful that the New Brunswick Government is doing the best it can; in fact, they should appreciate that they were *even* consulted. If Indigenous residents demand that these actions are not enough, then this is read as further proof that Indigenous people are hostile, ungrateful, and reckless—all depictions which connect to the underlining historical colonial constructions of Indigenous peoples as savages (Berkhofer, 1978; Francis, 1992; LaRocque, 2010). In this sense discourses in the mainstream media about Indigenous peoples can become a vicious self-fulfilling colonial prophecy.

### **Chief Sock: A Contemporary Noble Savage**

As I discuss in the theory chapter, the Noble Savage is a popularized representation of Indigenous peoples in North America. If Indigenous peoples displayed some 'civilized' tendencies (i.e., reading, writing, or speaking English), settlers reasoned that they could transcend *some* of the boundaries of savagery. As Ellingson (2001) argues, the "term is rather obviously a forced union of questionable assumptions" (p. 7)—what constitutes savagery and what creates nobility. The philosophical, sociological, and anthropological debates on the Noble Savage are vast (see Ellingson, 2001). However, I

draw mainly from the works of LaRocque (2010) and Francis (1992) to identify how this trope appears in the mainstream media. It is important to note that the Noble Savage is a masculine incarnation. Indigenous women are not exempt from this treatment in the mainstream media, but subject to unique manifestations of the trope due to the presence of other colonial characteristics ascribed to Indigenous women. With this understanding, I focus on what I consider to be the most prominent discursive personification by the mainstream media of the contemporary Noble Savage trope—the Chief of Elsipogtog, Aaron Sock.

As I discussed in the methodology chapter, groups or individuals who have significant categorical entitlement greatly influence the description process as their viewpoints become understood as facts and thus shape the truth—the Chief was once such a voice. Bolstered by his categorical entitlement due to his position as a major community leader, Chief Aaron Sock occupies considerable space in the coverage, appearing over 150 times in just over 100 articles. Chief Sock was relatively new to his position when the protests began to intensify in the summer of 2013, but his expertise was never questioned in any article. His entitlement as a leader intensified his representation in the mainstream media and not surprisingly with each article, interview, quote, and photo of the Chief, his status as *the* leader in the mainstream media was further cemented. The mainstream seemed to fixate on Chief Sock as the leader of his people without any critical investigation into other possible leaders, activists, or community members who participated in the protests. This fixation could be understood as journalistic accessibility because Chief Sock may have been the ideal character to celebrate in the mainstream media; the non-threatening Indigenous man in power. Of course, without the perspectives

of journalists involved in the protests such a statement is only speculative. Yet, regardless of journalists' intention, without the exploration of other leadership voices the *effect* is the Chief becoming the sole voice of his people in the mainstream media. It is a voice that I argue is imbued with the colonial trope of the Noble Savage and more contemporary iterations of this construction.

Mainstream journalists use lexical mechanisms to perpetuate the assumption that the Chief is instilled with certain power and thus the only leader that should appear in their coverage. In the articles covering the Elsipogtog shale gas protest, certain information about the Chief and his leadership seemed to be common knowledge. It is this presumed authority, which is perpetuated by mainstream journalists, that is essential in the construction of the contemporary Noble Savage. Chief Sock is highlighted as the only voice of reason and thus, possibly misunderstood as the only person capable of making a decision in the community. For example, the idea that Premier Alward and Chief Sock should be the only ones to answer questions about shale gas could be a consequence of their over-representation. Continuous representation in the mainstream media begets notions of respect, and this respect begets appearances of singular responsibility. In reality, decision-making would not rest entirely on their shoulders. Furthermore, by focusing on the Chief as the only leader, any complexity or diverging opinions on shale gas are ignored. The emphasis on the Chief with little consideration of other community members who may know more about shale gas, or who have similar social capital, has the effect of reducing these perspectives. All other decision makers and leaders in Elsipogtog, including the Band Council, were overshadowed by the mainstream media's fixation on the Chief.

Along with over-representing Chief Sock in their articles, journalists often remark on his instant popularity and likeability, an essential aspect of the contemporary Noble Savage trope—the non-threatening and likeable other. The article that I focus on here is from the Saint John, New Brunswick newspaper *The Telegraph Journal* and it illustrates the mainstream media’s emphasis on (and reproduction of) the celebrity status of the Chief. To begin the article, the journalist sets a tone of fanfare stating that “Aaron Sock walked into a crowded community centre room Sunday afternoon to a thunderous ovation of cheers and applause” (Berry, 2013a, p. A1). Here the build-up is important; the article was written only days after the largest outbreak of the protests. However, the journalist does not begin by contextualizing the protest or introducing the community involved. Instead, he chose language that directs the reader to focus on the Chief entering the ‘crowded community centre’ to ‘thunderous ovation.’ Later in this same article the journalist uses anecdotal evidence to further bolster the Chief’s accessibility to the general readership. The journalist remarks, “[t]hose who know him say the 36-year-old father of three, who took over as Chief in March of 2012, leads from his heart” (Berry, 2013a, p. A1). From this description the journalist creates a scaffolding to support the Chief’s qualifications as a beloved leader because he “leads from his heart.” Furthering the trustworthy/likable framing, the journalist adds that Chief Sock is a father of three, something that can contribute to a sense of camaraderie with readers. As I discuss in the theory chapter, in contemporary versions of the Noble Savage he often appears as a leader and a father, highlighting both his knowledge/power and resemblance to the settler. Journalists in the mainstream seem to portray the Chief as not so *different* from their largely white readership. He too has children and friends; he is well liked, and at times



celebrated for his leadership. Some of these descriptions are irrelevant to his ability as a leader or protestor, yet all are essential to the mainstream media's ability to frame Chief Sock as a contemporary iteration of the Noble Savage.

The statements made by Sock featured in many mainstream articles support an underlying construction of the Chief as the current likeness of the Noble Savage. During a press conference in Elsipogtog, Sock reiterates his determination about the protests to a room full of residents and mainstream media. Among the flash of cameras he declares that "[o]ne thing is for certain, the resolve remains. I stand behind them 100 per cent and I will stand in front of them, as you all know" (Mazerolle, 2013b, p. A1). This statement underscores the notion in the mainstream media that Chief Sock's arrest is somehow not criminal; but instead, his arrest can be understood as an act of selflessness and dedication to his people. Unlike the arrests of dozens of other protestors who also put their bodies on the line in protest, Chief Sock's arrest was portrayed by this journalist as a symbol of his sacrifice, not his unlawfulness. This move by mainstream journalists to separate the Chief from any savagery has the effect of protecting this image of the calm, likeable, and sensible leader. Further to this point, the Chief's arrest is barely mentioned, only four times in the almost 150 references to arrests relating to the protests, though he was one of the over 40 protestors arrested on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013. As I discuss in more detail later in this chapter, many of the other protestors who were arrested faced lengthy court battles and negative attention in the mainstream media. The charges against Chief Sock were quickly dropped and he did not face the same retribution for his actions, nor the same media attention, as there were only sparse mentions of his arrest. Thus, readers could recognize his tenure in jail as more of a symbolic action, not a punitive consequence. As a

formally incarcerated protestor he can balance his role as both a committed protestor and a trustworthy (non-criminal) Indian.

Chief Sock's arrest is often intermingled with his calls for peace in the mainstream articles, which can lead to subsuming one with the other; the arrest was not criminal but an action for peace. Again, Chief Sock appears as the solitary voice calling for a peaceful process and a calm response from protestors, occupying space as the Noble Savage amongst the ignoble savages. Much like the 'forest philosopher' that Francis (1992) describes who "stands by stoically while the forces of civilization invade and disrupt his land" (p. 46), Chief Sock's reported insistence on peace can be read as a submission to the settler order and a relinquishing of power. Mainstream journalists include claims from Chief Sock that "every effort would be made to keep [Elsipogtog] opposition peaceful" (Bissett, 2013b, p. A1); with comments that he "hopes [that] the battle against shale gas exploration in New Brunswick will remain peaceful" ("Elsipogtog Chief hopes protest remain peaceful", para. 1) and that time was needed "to focus on healing" (Mazerolle, 2013b, p. A1). Other mainstream articles include direct quotes to supplement calls for peace from Chief Sock with him stating, "I still call for peace and I hope that we can come to a peaceful resolution. We're still trying to accomplish that" (Berry, 2013b). These calls for peace can be seen as acts of compliance, a signal to the settler public that Indigenous people will behave and a reminder to Indigenous people to remain calm, and to not incite fear amongst the settlers. However, the Chief cannot guarantee the peace so often referred to in the mainstream, reminding readers, "I'm just one man. I hope and pray that it remains peaceful" (Berry, 2013c). Representing Chief Sock as the solitary Noble Savage can have detrimental consequences, as the heightened

focus can result in readers or the community having higher expectations. LaRocque (2010) discusses these expectations on the Noble savage as unachievable—the savage will always fail the settler conception of nobility. The more the mainstream media directed attention at the Chief, the more pressure he could have faced to deliver on his words, leaving his actions more liable to fall short. Along with the overwhelming inclusion of the Chief's words in the mainstream articles, the images circulating during and after the protests reinforce his portrayal as the Noble Savage. Most obviously, these mainstream images highlight both his physical and social stature by literally erasing anyone else around him. Even if he is in a large group with fellow protestors or community members, the Chief is usually the only person in the frame of the camera. This is shown in the following photo:



(Genuist, 2013)

In the images featuring the Chief during the protest, or in subsequent rallies, he is physically *leading* the (mostly male) crowd behind him (see Appendix B). This sort of sensationalizing of the Chief as the sole-protector/power player of Elsipogtog overshadows the many other individuals involved, especially the women. As I alluded to earlier, the masculine nature of the contemporary Noble Savage can erase the presence of

Indigenous women, as does the underlying patriarchal colonial structure of the province. In the print and picture of mainstream coverage where the Chief is the focus, all those around him become a blurry after-thought. Through the use of categorical entitlement the mainstream media bolsters the contemporary Noble Savage trope, which becomes the picture of the submissive, reasonable, and controlled Indian. This figure portrayed as such also functions to elevate male leadership, favor a male perspective, and largely erase Indigenous women's contributions.

### **The Indigenous Protestor: The Criminal Savage**

The protestors who did not fit the Noble Savage trope used in the mainstream media occupied space in the coverage as the 'Criminal Savage'. In juxtaposition to the Chief, the other predominately male protestors appear in the coverage as wild, reckless, and violent—the ignoble savages. Anderson and Robertson (2011) argue that in attempting to avoid outright racist writing in the media, the *actions* of minorities mark their difference: "The savage becomes one who engages in behavior that defines savagery but is not referred to openly as a 'savage,' an iterative of savagery-in-itself" (pp. 270-271). Harding (2005) adds that while some stereotypes linger, such as Indigenous people as Warriors, others are emerging that delegitimize pleas for sovereignty or resource management through accusations of criminality. These stereotypes are not entirely unconnected from their predecessors as they draw from settler colonial portrayals. The 'Criminal Savage' is one such lingering trope, which both delegitimizes the efforts of protestors and signals to the settler population that Indigenous protestors need to be feared.

When the mainstream media portrays Indigenous people as criminals within a law and order discourse it is a thinly veiled attempt to discredit their rights and land claims, and often draws from colonial concepts of savagery (see Fleras, 2011; Wilkes & Richard, 2007; Wilkes et al., 2010). The mainstream coverage of Elsipogtog is no exception. As Harding (2006) argues, “Associating Aboriginal people with violence and criminality is an argumentative ploy that has been used historically to discredit Aboriginal people and causes in news discourse” (p. 221). Based on my analysis, it is clear that this representational tactic has yet to lose any popularity as journalists placed a significant amount of attention on the arrests of the protestors. LaRocque (2010) provides further explanation for the limited representations of Indigenous peoples. Referring to the inescapability of the perpetuation of these tropes she states, “[t]here was nothing that ‘Indians’ could do that would meet with approval because the judgments, contradictory as they were, were cemented with colonial dogma” (p. 53). Whereas the Chief receives significant coverage in the mainstream media as the strong, reasonable (albeit still savage), leader of the protest, the protestors occupy considerable space as the criminals wreaking havoc on the area. Thus, just as savagery is the dichotomous counterpoint to civility, I argue that the ‘Criminal-Savage’ can appear as oppositional in relation to the Noble Savage in the mainstream media coverage of the protests. Importantly, however, both the Criminal *and* Noble Savage are framed as other in comparison to the “civilized” settler, and neither can escape the confines of these categorizations.

In my reading, the headlines offer examples of the mainstream media’s contribution to perpetuating stereotypes of Indigenous criminality that ultimately have the effect of discrediting their demands and normalizing the colonial status quo. To do so, the

majority of the headlines reinforce a law and order discourse by promoting a dichotomy that pits the RCMP against the protestors. Numerically speaking, of the over 100 headlines I include in my analysis, 25 headlines (23.3%) relate to the criminal activity of the protestors. These criminal headlines stand out among the remaining headlines, which focus on the actions of the Chief or the consultation process, or comment on the general conditions and status of the protests. Most of the criminal headlines include the description of offences committed by protestors. Here, I include a sampling of several headlines, which are representative of the emphasis placed on protestors' criminal activity: "Protesters sentenced to 15 months over Elsipogtog shale gas protest" (2014); "Aboriginal anti-shale gas advocate jailed" (2013); "Man to be sentenced for pelting RCMP officers" (2014); "Man pleads guilty to charges laid after anti-fracking protests in New Brunswick" (2013).

In the first headline the offence is not explicitly stated; however, the subtle lexical move to pluralize protestors is an important one. This move encourages the construction of *all* protestors as criminal; the plural form could mean any number from two to twenty. Furthermore, by calling the offenders 'protestors' in the first word of the headline as opposed to people or community members, the journalist directs the reader to understand *all* members of the community as criminal. Given the location of the protests and the highly publicized nature of the event, these protestors are also read as Indigenous. The concentration on the criminality of the protestors by the journalists in the mainstream media is more noticeable in the second headline. As the headline is shorter (with only six words), the tone is quickly set to interpret the criminal as Aboriginal, and by extension to understand the Aboriginal as criminal. Instead of stating just 'anti-shale gas advocate' the

result is an accentuation of the Aboriginal status of the advocate, which influences how the reader understands the article. The inclusion of this identifier speaks to the underlying (and perhaps unacknowledged) settler perspective that the mainstream media often reinforces, which is one that typifies Indigenous protestors as unlawful. In the third headline the charges seem ambiguous, as the objects being “pelted” are not included in the description, allowing space for the reader to jump to any number of violent conclusions. Upon reading the article the reader would find out that the man was throwing rocks at the RCMP, certainly a lesser offence than pelting a large unknown object. The fourth headline suggests an admission of guilt by a protestor, which can signal to the reader that the protestors recognize the error in their ways and accept criminal responsibility for their actions.

These headlines direct the reader’s focus towards the ostensibly illegal activity of the protest and the criminal activity of the protestors, thereby imbuing the protest with illicit allure. As Fleras states:

News media contextualize protests as acts of criminality and threats to Canada’s social order while simultaneously promoting a lawful and ordered Canadian establishment. They also tend to isolate Aboriginal discontent by framing protests as relatively independent of one another, ignoring a diversity of multifaceted Aboriginal voices in the process. (2011, p. 16)

Through this coverage of the “unlawful actions” of protestors without counter-coverage of those who were not involved in any criminal activity, the actions of *all* protestors become synonymous with criminality.

Beyond these instructive headlines, the content of the coverage effectively signals the boundaries of society by constantly highlighting the protestors’ illegal activities. That is, within the mainstream coverage, the framing of the ‘Criminal Savage’ is an effective

and subtle method of colonial othering. In one such mainstream article, the journalist highlighted the violent acts of protestors with some cinematic flare, with his statement “[t]he night sky was lit up with flames on Route 11 in Richibucto yesterday as shale gas protestors took control of the road once again” (Babstock, 2013, p. A1). This statement is one of the more egregious examples of sensationalizing in the mainstream media. In another article, which outlines one protestor’s court proceeding, similar tendencies of editorial dramatization and colonial othering occurred. The article included statements from the Crown attorney, who described the events “as a war zone” (Babstock, 2014, p. A3). It is important to note what aspect of the protests is given prominence in both of these articles—the violent, demanding, and wild protestors. In the first instance, the journalist constructs a scene of dangerous abandon as the flames were presented as a formidable threat to those using the highway. The second excerpt can be seen as a more bold accusation of savagery in its suggestion that protesting is akin to war. In exaggerating the danger of the protestors without providing the same attention to the actions of the RCMP, these journalistic accounts, both written by the same journalist, in effect vilify the protestors. Both articles use language that can separate Indigenous protestors from the larger settler society by inscribing their efforts as a dangerous threat to civil order.

Another major mainstream contribution to the on-going misrepresentation of the protestors as Criminal Savages is the portrayal of the RCMP as the agents of justice. In order to delineate how the colonial structures are working in this relationship it is imperative to outline how the mainstream media made a spectacle of RCMP/Indigenous tensions. Like the Chief and Premier, the RCMP officers also enjoy significant



categorical entitlement as brokers of power. An article entitled “Man sentenced for throwing rocks at RCMP during protest” (2015, p. A3) succinctly illustrates how the mainstream media frames the unlawful actions of the protestors as oppositional to the actions of the RCMP. The article appeared in the New Brunswick newspaper *The Moncton Times and Transcript* and outlines the sentencing of an Indigenous community member. Undoubtedly, threatening and assaulting anyone is illegal, however, the actions of the RCMP remain unquestioned as possibly violent or threatening. Instead, the article states, “RCMP officers enforced a court injunction and removed protesters. There were 40 people arrested that day and many charges laid as a result of the clash between police and protesters” (2015, p. A3). Though it is not described in the article, the RCMP removed protestors with force, riot gear, and pepper spray (Howe, 2014). It was the resistance to these methods that resulted in various physical altercations between the RCMP and the protestors. The actions of the protestors and RCMP in turn led to the arrest of many protestors. It is these arrests that garnered the attention of the mainstream media, not the actions of the RCMP that provoked the protestors in the first place.

Despite the aggressive actions of the RCMP in enforcing the court injunction, their methods are respected as lawful in the mainstream media, whereas the resistance of protestors against these actions is not. In an article from the *Cape Breton Post* before the escalation of the protests, the Assistant RCMP Commissioner commented “we will take a measured approach with public safety and people’s rights in mind” (“RCMP disappointed that talks have not resolved,” 2013, p. A5). Here, though the ‘measured approach’ is not disclosed the reader could assume it would not involve pepper spray or lines of officers with shields against the crowd. However, when the RCMP took these actions at the

protest the Commissioner was able to justify their actions as lawful and necessary. In an article for *The Telegram* he stated, “Our officers demonstrated incredible professionalism as they worked to resolve the situation under tremendously difficult and dangerous circumstances... We are so fortunate that this unfolded like it did” (cited in Patten, p. C8). The claim that everyone involved is ‘fortunate’ can be misleading to the readership as many protestors were jailed or hurt during the events. In effect the Commissioner’s statement negates the toll of the RCMP’s actions on the protestors by deeming the outcome a success. The Commissioner’s statement also reflects the construction of the RCMP as the protectors of law and order. With such a position of authority, the RCMP is imbued with power by the government (and non-Indigenous citizens). The valorization of the RCMP can undermine the intentions of the Indigenous protestors by placing their actions in direct defiance of the RCMP, and by extension, the law. Furthermore, unlike the protestors, the RCMP does not need to defend its motives, nor does the mainstream media question the RCMP’s authority. As Indigenous protesters may not have access to power, they do not have the same level of categorical entitlement, which influences the presentation in the media of their protest as a transgression and the RCMP’s reaction as triumph.

In the mainstream media, editorials and letters to the editor offer a glaring example of the manifestations of colonial discourses against Indigenous peoples—especially that of the Criminal Savage. The letters to the editor and editorial sections are generally more cynical and overtly discriminatory about the protests, because this space can allow for such content. In these spaces, the more elemental colonial stereotypes regarding Indigenous populations are revealed, as the opinions featured directly target all

Elsipogtog residents and not only the protestors. Though these letters offer a look at damaging stereotypes against Indigenous peoples in general, for the purpose of my analysis I only consider the prejudice against the Criminal Savage. I focus on excerpts from three letters out of over 30 letters to the editor, most of which appear in the *Telegraph Journal*. These letters shared themes of distrust and anger against the Indigenous protestors.

The letters to the editor echo the discourses presented in the mainstream media regarding the fear of job loss. Yet, the economic prosperity discourses in these letters seem to be presented as resentment against the protestor's actions. In the mainstream media, the discourse often had the effect of presenting the Premier as a concerned leader, whereas in these excerpts the authors seem to draw on the mainstream discourses to blame the protestors. For example, in one letter to the editor by Clint Kennedy, he gives the impression of anger due to the cost of the protests for 'tax payers' (most likely, white tax payers). In his letter he not only questioned the validity of the protests, commenting, "[t]hese shale gas protests are ridiculous" (Kennedy, 2013, p. A6), but also the monetary consequences of protesters' actions—"[w]here do these protestors think the money comes from for welfare and social programs?" (Kennedy, 2013, p. A6). Drawing on the discourses of economic prosperity that appear in the mainstream media, the writer insinuates that the protests threaten social programs vis-a-vis the lost shale gas development.

Accompanying the anxieties about the fiscal cost of the protests were anxieties about the reported violence of the protestors. One such recurring example of this anxiety appears as accusations of terrorism, which I argue is the most alarming given the Federal

Government's recent Bill C-51<sup>6</sup> decision. Building on the previous discourses of Indigenous criminality, the terrorism discourse treats the protestors as a threat to *all* Canadians. In a letter by Tom Lorette, the threat of the protestors—the 'Criminal Savages'—is clearly presented. He begins his letter by discrediting the anti-shale gas protestors' claim that the RCMP used excessive force. Instead, he blames the protestors for the violence, stating, "Your people, meanwhile, resisted the police by throwing fire bombs [sic], rocks, and punches" (Lorette, 2013, p. A6). This portion of the letter suggests that by resisting removal, the Elsipogtog protestors are the violent ones, not the RCMP. Though not accurate, the irony of this thinking is unfortunately all too real. When Indigenous people resist their removal from their own land, whether by the RCMP, legislation, or settlers, they are the criminals—not those who remove them. Later, the writer makes the jump to contextualizing the acts of the protestors as domestic terrorism. The writer reminds readers, "We cannot ignore acts of terrorism and allow them to grow while people like you fuel the fire." He thus insinuates (or reasons) that the continuing efforts by Indigenous people against shale gas will "fuel the fire" of terrorism in New Brunswick. This over-dramatization of "you people" (Indigenous people) as domestic terrorists can have the direct consequence of marking Indigenous people as the dangerous other. Through the proposition that the actions of protestors are akin to terrorism, this writer reveals the underlying anxiety surrounding acts of protest in general, and the actions of Indigenous protestors in particular. The threat of terrorism discourse also appears in a letter from Dale Ferriere who argues, "The dogma plus actions [sic] demonstrated by several of these environmental radicals is no less zealous than radical

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<sup>6</sup> Bill C51 is the former Conservative Government's intensified anti-terrorism law (see Watters, 2015)

Islam or other sources of international terrorism” (2013, A6). Though the letter may seem too egregious to be taken as emblematic of mainstream media, the racism and settler anxiety Ferriere presents cannot be dismissed. Specifically, these themes are important to note as they are reflected indirectly throughout the mainstream media coverage. It is in the ‘less edited’ spaces, such as letters to the editor, that colonial discourses and stereotyping are more obvious. Here, the uninhibited settler can openly air their grievances against Indigenous peoples that other settlers may choose to hide.

The law and order discourse used by mainstream media taps into a number of interrelated, harmful dichotomies that appear in relation to many high profile protests involving Indigenous nations: the protestors versus the RCMP; the unlawful versus the lawful; and the Savage versus the Colonizer (Harding, 2005; Anderson & Robertson, 2011). Exploring the dichotomy between the Criminal Savage and the RCMP represented in the mainstream media is one particular textual space where the more subtle nuances of colonial power can be found. Persistently throughout mainstream media coverage of Indigenous peoples, the reader’s attention is directed (displaced) onto the radical actions of the protest, not the reasons for the protest. The focus of mainstream journalists on the radical aspects of protest can perpetuate the discourse of Indigenous protest as a “clash between the opposing forces of mayhem and stability” (Fleras, 2011, p. 218). In Elsipogtog the Indigenous protestors who did not comply with the standards of the Noble Savage were either erased from coverage or reduced to the equally limiting narrative of the Criminal Savage. With the exception of some editorials and letters to the editor, in the mainstream coverage there seems to be an attempt to disguise racist and colonial thinking. However, I want to reiterate that that does not mean the coverage is not racist and

colonial, but rather that writers tap into other, more subtle discourses that work to maintain the illusion of impartiality. The over-representation of the criminality of the protestors combined with the idealization of the Chief as the protest's Noble Savage is evidence that the mainstream media remains unable to move beyond the settler colonial mentality.

### **The “Woman Problem”**

The media reflects the stereotypes already present in the colonial nation state. Historically, the mainstream media has disregarded the plight of Indigenous peoples in Canada: unfortunately, this is still the case. Representations of Indigenous people continue to dehumanize them, disregard their rights, and reproduce the harmful colonial tropes that mark them as other. As I discuss in this chapter, the efforts of Indigenous protestors in Elsipogtog are often construed as inherently criminal, dangerous, and reckless, while the RCMP are the peace-keepers (of settler order). Chief Sock emerges as a portrait of the Noble Savage, the calm presence amongst his unruly people. Amongst all these misrepresentations, misunderstandings, and harmful discourses, an emptiness remains in the space where the women *should* be. The women of Elsipogtog are a vital part of the protests but they disappear from mainstream media coverage. In the next chapter I highlight the neglected narratives of the protests through the perspectives of Indigenous women. These narratives come from resistance and (re) imagine belonging both within and against the colonial conceptions of the nation state.

## **Chapter Five: Where the Women Went**

“As a Warrior a lot of people try to think of it as violent and that is a problem that we even had on the ground...it has nothing to do with violence it just means I believe in it so much I would die for it and when you believe in something so much you would die for it, it scares the pants off the person you are stepping up against”

-Suzanne Patles (cited in NoOneIsIllegalVan, 2014)

The disappearance of Indigenous women from mainstream media is the most staggering finding of my research. It was never my intention to expand my data analysis beyond the mainstream media, yet as I began pouring through the 100 plus articles, I noticed the striking absence of Indigenous women, which necessitated further scrutiny. It seemed no matter how close I looked in the mainstream media to find Indigenous women's narratives of protest these stories were virtually non-existent. As a feminist researcher, I realized that the perspectives of the Indigenous women that I sought to highlight were nowhere to be found. Had I gotten it wrong? Were Indigenous women not involved in the Elsipogtog protests? Or were there factors diminishing the representation of women's involvement in the protest? As I discuss in the first chapter of my analysis, the mainstream media is a reflection of the patriarchal colonial structures of Canada, which seeks to eliminate Indigenous peoples—perhaps the epitome of this is how these systems intersect against women. Borrowing from Patrick Wolfe's (2011) 'logic of elimination,' I argue that in accordance with the intentions of patriarchal settler colonialism, Indigenous women's realities are made invisible in the mainstream coverage. As Wolfe (2011) explains, in the settler colonial system “elimination was inherently chronological—whether dead, removed or assimilated, Indians would pass into memory” (p. 23). These attempts at erasure permeate throughout settler Canadian culture, including in the mainstream media. I needed to expand my database to confirm if this neglect in the

mainstream was a reflection of a lack of women's participation in the protests. Therefore, I chose to investigate coverage beyond the mainstream in order to locate/emphasize the otherwise largely absent perspectives of Indigenous women protestors. These stories are not only vital for understanding larger protest narratives but also essential in commemorating the ongoing work of Indigenous women's resistance. Based on Indigenous women's own (otherwise neglected) accounts as presented in the non-mainstream media, I argue that they were indeed major protagonists of the protests. In spite of this, because their voices are outside the confines of dominant media their perspectives can be deemed insignificant (in terms of the general non-Indigenous public) to the point of near-erasure. Yet, in even the most deafening silences, there are stories to be heard. Due to their efforts in organizing the protest, maintaining the encampment near the protest site, and spreading knowledge about shale gas, they could not be completely ignored. In the more inclusive media spaces, including online Indigenous blogs and Indigenous media outlets, Indigenous women are presented as the main voices of protest. In these spaces Indigenous women defy the imposed limitations of settler mentalities through the articulation of their own unique, ever-changing, and complex stories of protest.

### **What is the non-mainstream and why does it matter?**

It is difficult to define what counts as non-mainstream in the Internet age because even the most obscure online publications can get thousands of readers. I classify non-mainstream sources as web-based spaces that often self-identify as independent and that feature minimal advertisements. Beyond these general categorizations, contributors of non-mainstream sources tend to write from/for the margins of society with a focus on the



perspectives that are often alternative to those in the mainstream. For example, in Elsipogtog, the provincial newspapers focused on the violent aspects of the protest, which had the effect of reproducing stereotypes. Non-mainstream sources avoided this perfunctory journalism by providing context, an often-disregarded part of the coverage in mainstream news articles involving Indigenous peoples. Specifically for my research I use the following non-mainstream sources: *Halifax Media Co-Op*, *Indian Country Online*, *Warrior Press*, a video from *You Tube* of Suzanne Patles (2014), and the Al Jazeera short film *Fault Lines: A Fire Over Water* (2013). In order to develop my analysis I focus on passages that feature Indigenous women's perspectives with full interviews and substantial quotes. The presence of Indigenous voices in the non-mainstream can provide a space to confront the dominant settler narrative that reproduces harmful tropes (i.e., the Criminal Savage). In Elsipogtog, the mainstream media focused on burning police cars instead of investigating the motivation behind burning a police car. *Halifax Media Co-Op* journalist, Dru Oja Jay (2013), criticizes the mainstream practices stating, "[m]ost stories are decorated with photos of burning police cars. All this points to one thing: the way that Canada's corporate media discusses Indigenous protests is fundamentally broken" (para. 1). In the act of bringing attention to this problematic coverage and positioning Indigenous stories in the forefront, the non-mainstream offer a (re)framing of Indigenous protest narratives.

The non-mainstream media reminds readers that protests never happen in a vacuum. Due to the recognition of underlying conditions and accounts from those involved in the protest, the non-mainstream provides an alternative frame for understanding the protest that includes more complete and complex information. Given

the enduring power of negative stereotyping against Indigenous people, including Indigenous perspectives is a necessary mechanism in challenging prejudice in the mainstream media (Fleras, 2011; Anderson & Robertson, 2011). As Leanne Simpson (2013) explains in her personal blog,

Canadians will hear recycled propaganda as the mainstream media blindly goes about repeating the press releases sent to them by the RCMP designed to portray Mi'kmaq protestors as violent and unruly, in order to justify their own colonial violence.

Drawing from my own analysis, it is clear that Simpson succinctly articulates the reality of the mainstream. The mainstream media offered images and descriptions from a discursive position already grounded in the systems of colonial power in the province. Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis chapter, I depend on the non-mainstream to provide perspectives that can challenge the discursive reproduction of colonial tropes and stereotypes against Indigenous women.

### **Locating Indigenous Women in the Mainstream**

Before delving into the non-mainstream coverage of Indigenous women, it is imperative to further explore their minimal representation in the mainstream media. As I alluded earlier, despite the Elsipogtog First Nation women's efforts against shale gas during marches, protests, and at the encampment, they generally disappear from mainstream coverage of the event. To be more numerically accurate, in the 107 mainstream articles used in my media discourse analysis, women are included either as journalists, protestors, lawyers, or judges a total of 56 times—whereas, men are included in these same articles over 300 times with most attention given to Chief Sock and Premier Alward. Additionally, those covering the protests as journalists are predominantly male

with only eight articles written by women. In the instances when women are included, 24 (out of 56 mentions, or 42.8% of the time) are identified as female protestors and only 16 of these protestors are mentioned by name. The other eight are merely unnamed women protestors. Furthermore, and in relation to the Criminal Savage, 10 out of the 24 times when women are named they are mentioned in connection with their arrests. In the other 57.2% of the coverage, the women included were lawyers, judges, or journalists, all of whom are named. In the images featuring women that accompany mainstream articles, names and interviews are noticeably absent. Supporting this observation is the lack of quotes by the female protestors: there are only 10 quotes accompanying the 56 times women are cited in the articles. The majority of these 10 quotes come from Susan Levi-Peters—the former Chief. To compare, Aaron Sock, the current Chief of Elsipogtog, is mentioned 153 times and with at least one quote per article. From these basic numbers, a theme emerges: women are not the focal point of mainstream articles, but rather occupy the space in the largely unseen and silent periphery. Their representation in mainstream media is incongruous in comparison to their level of participation in the protests. This is evidenced in both the Al Jazeera documentary and the other non-mainstream news outlets which significantly feature Elsipogtog women and their experiences. Based on this disconnect between mainstream and non-mainstream representation one can immediately draw a parallel between the marginalization of women's voices, actions, and perspectives in these articles and their broader societal marginalization. Mainstream media is often a barometer for society's attitudinal biases, and what these articles as a whole say is that Indigenous women ought not to have a say.

In the few mainstream articles that feature women involved in the protest, they are often depicted as unnamed protestors, or found within an image that does not have an accompanying interview. Therefore, the women involved do not have the opportunity to share their perspectives, motivations, or stories, nor do they have any control over the ways in which their representation is cast. Even women leaders in the community or women that are active in the anti-shale gas movement do not garner nearly the same attention as their male counterparts. Levi-Peters is quoted the most, as she is both a well-known shale gas activist and a former Elsipogtog Chief, but even her commentary appears in a few articles only. In these instances, Levi-Peter's comments are featured near the end of the article, and she is never the main/sole source of information. Instead, though she should be considered an excellent spokesperson for her community, the mainstream presents her observations as supplementary to those made by male figures. Here, the categorical authority enjoyed by the Chief and the Premier does not transfer to Levi-Peters. The mainstream's unwillingness to recognize the status and authority she should hold as a result of her reputation (as a shale-gas activist) or status (as a former chief) is a startling example of the perceived limitations of women's experience. One can identify at least four other articles in which Levi-Peters is directly quoted, but where her voice is contextualized as a mere supplemental or supportive one, rather than one that shapes opinion on an issue. In one of these articles, her quote appears near the end of the article after the Chief was quoted four times, the Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo twice, and even former Prime Minister Paul Martin twice ("N.B. First Nation says it will take land claims to court," 2013). One might interpret Levi-Peters' inclusion among such highly regarded men as an indication she too has influence and power. It

could be a signal to the reader that she has entitlement because she is featured among such high profile politicians. However, her inclusion among men in these instances is not a nod to her status. Rather, her placement in these articles, as the last commentator after a long list of men, who are arguably less involved or peripheral to the protest, signals how the reader is to determine Levi-Peter's role in the whole affair—that is, less than the men that came before her. It is this limited representation and repeated minimizing of her role that begs the question: Why are Indigenous women largely absent from the mainstream media coverage of the protests?

### **The Squaw and the Indian Princess: Indigenous Women in the Mainstream**

Popular and pervasive constructions of Indigenous women as either the 'Squaw' or the Indian Princess, which I discuss in my theory chapter, might provide insight into this question, (Carter, 1997; Valaskakais, 1999; Martin-Hill, 2003). Anderson and Robertson (2011) argue in their poignant work, *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers*, "Newspapers in Canada have long imagined Aboriginal women within the stereotypical binary of the Indian Princess/Indian 'Squaw' and these essentialized images remain ordinary and ongoing in popular culture" (p. 193). Unlike many missing and murdered Indigenous women who are assumed to have been sex workers and are then positioned on the 'Squaw' side of this binary, protestors are not so readily inserted (see Gilchrist, 2010). The women in Elsipogtog were occupying streets as protestors, thus prohibiting the facile label of 'Squaw'; nor could they fit the profile of wayward teens. In reality, just like the missing and murdered Indigenous women, these women are community members, mothers, grandmothers, and additionally,

environmentally aware activists. Thus, unlike the imagery of the disheveled and incarcerated Indigenous woman, which often accompanies the narrative of the drunken/disorderly ‘Squaw,’ the defiance of the protestors could not be imbued with the same moral dilapidation (Carter, 1997).

In the seldom-found mainstream images, women involved in these protests are always depicted in *groups of women*, sometimes in long skirts, usually arm in arm, and marching with fists and banners raised against shale gas:



(‘Frack-off’ rally, 2013)

These images do not lend themselves to the traditional depictions and descriptions of the Indian ‘Squaw’, whose status is likened to a social pariah. Thus, there seems to be an unintended consequence of the mainstream media presentation—presenting the women in groups enhances the perception of them as powerful. It seems that the women of Elsipogtog did not fit as easily into the popular tropes of either the Squaw or the Indian Princess. Consequently, their participation in the protests presented the mainstream media journalists with a conundrum: the women’s resistance existed outside the narrow constructions generally prescribed to Indigenous women. As these women demonstrated

their mutual support, their common voice gained traction and legitimacy. The images, like the one below (see also Appendix B), show women together in acts of resistance; therefore, there is no solitary ‘Squaw’ to easily discern against the crowd:



(Howe, 2013)

Instead, there is strength in their numbers, as the women of the community are seen assembled against shale gas *together*. In many ways, the women of Elsipogtog defied not only shale gas exploration but also the limited capabilities of the mainstream media to recognize their presence. Perhaps inadvertently, every time they marched together, drummed together, prayed together, and continued to protest together, the women involved in the protest challenged the descriptive binaries used in mainstream coverage. However, their collective voice nevertheless remained largely unheard. In the absence of language to articulate the efforts of the women of Elsipogtog, the mainstream media tended toward erasure instead of exploration.

Interestingly, one of the most famous examples of the neglected women’s narrative in the mainstream media comes from the popularization of the image of Amanda Polchies. The image first appeared on Twitter via photographer Ossie Michelin of APTN news; it was distributed in mainstream sources, including *CBC News*, *The*

*Telegraph Journal*, and *The Times and Transcript*, and became synonymous with the protests. To further speak to its popularity, even three years after the protests, the image remains as the most iconic symbol of the protest on google images. In the photo (below), Polchies is kneeling with a feather raised in the air against a line of RCMP shields, guns, and men.



(Michelin, 2013)

The image also continues to be a widely circulated depiction of the protests, so powerful that it has served as a source of inspiration for Indigenous groups like Idle No More and artists like Fanny Aisha (Appendix C). However, though the image remains an important symbol of the protests, it can be read as a further compliance of women in the mainstream coverage. Similar to the other Indigenous women in the mainstream media who were rarely cited let alone named, Amanda Polchies' name is rarely included, nor is she interviewed. In fact, a *CBC News* article, which focused on the prolific success of the image, only discussed Ossie Michelin. Polchies, the subject of the photo, was merely "a protester holding a feather" (Bowman, 2013). The focus was on the male photographer without any acknowledgment of the actions, thoughts, or feelings of the person who



inspired such a widespread reaction. The identity of the person (in this case Amanda Polchies) is obscured by the sole recognition of the male photographer.

While media images of Chief Aaron Sock highlighted his physical and social stature by erasing anyone else around him, the images in the mainstream media seemed to isolate women for other means. If pictures including women accompanied articles, they were not accompanied by interviews of the women in the pictures. Instead of celebrating the continued commitments of Indigenous women to shale gas protest and their important contribution to these protests via their commentary in the coverage, the images perpetuate the notion that women's voices are dispensable and do not contribute to an understanding of the protest. Though some of the images depict women in groups and thus as powerful in their solidarity, the anonymity can reduce their efforts. Simply put, the pictures communicate that even though women are there, their unique roles and voices are tangential to our understanding of the protests. Even the powerful and popular image of Amanda Polchies can be co-opted to serve other perspectives. Such a seminal photo of the protest should be an opportunity to explore a more holistic discourse on the protests that include the women who were at its center. However, much like the inclusion of Levi-Peters who appears to be an afterthought in coverage, the photo's subject, Amanda Polchies, and her action are disassociated from the story that is the protest. This sort of decontextualized use of Indigenous women's images furthers their expulsion from the narrative and provides a reductionist view of the scale of their involvement. Without the perspectives of the photograph's subject, the picture is incomplete.

## **Where the Women Are: The Non-Mainstream**

To locate the perspectives of the Indigenous women involved in the protests, we must turn to sources outside the mainstream media. Among these inclusive spaces, the Al Jazeera (2013) documentary *Elsipogtog: The Fire over Water* was the first source I found to extensively feature women's stories. Most revealingly, Amanda Polchies is prominent in the documentary beyond just the use of her iconic image. In fact, her reflections on the experience occupy considerable screen time. In the documentary she is not reduced to an image; instead, she is accentuated as a decisive actor within the resistance. When explaining her actions that lead to the picture, she states,

I just had this feather and I didn't know what to do and the first thought in my mind was pray. So I kneeled down on the road and I started praying. I was praying for Doris and I was praying for the other women that had gotten sprayed and I was praying for my people, hoping that this will end peacefully, nobody will get hurt, nobody would die. (Al Jazeera, 2013)

In this instance, the act of sharing her stories allows Polchies to finally exercise agency instead of having it implied, and therefore contained, within the literal confines of a photo. This provides her with the opportunity to challenge the symbolic ambiguities of her gestures and posture that the popular media can interpret and co-opt for its own purposes—that is, the kneeling had a specific purpose and the feather's direction had meaning. In this photo, she is enacting strength against state agents that are threatening her people, not submitting to their will. The Al Jazeera documentary also allows Polchies to speak about her people's motivation for protest, a conversation that does not appear in the mainstream, and one whose absence allowed the media to extrapolate its own meaning and conclusions that may serve settler interests instead of

Indigenous interests. Polchies (2013) explains in the documentary that “it scared me but I didn’t want to run away cause I didn’t want them here...I don’t want SWN [Southwestern Energy] here and I felt that making a stand was the only thing that was left because nobody was listening” (cited in Al Jazeera, 2013). She describes her physical resistance as a response to an un-responsive government. In this context, Polchies could be understood as an embodiment of Indigenous women’s resistance against the unwillingness of the nation state to seriously take into account the will of a significant fraction of its people. In a country to be guided by *peace, order, and good governance*, this moment stands in stark contrast, as it depicts a moment where the government works in conflict with its people instead of representing its interests.

Not only are women such as Polchies resisting the RCMP, but their non-violent tactics also accentuate the extent to which physical violence was unnecessary. Polchies articulates the intensity of these moments:

They’re yelling ‘move back, move back’. So we didn’t move we stayed there, we linked arms and we stayed there and we were pushing against them and then all of a sudden pepper spray comes out of nowhere and I looked back and I seen Doris she had gotten sprayed in the face and all she had was her rosary.

The actions of the protestors are directed towards the RCMP in that moment, but are also perhaps symbolic representations of the broader resistance movements throughout Canada. In the face of the physicality and machinery of the RCMP (shields, guns, and pepper spray) the women stood still, wagering their presence was a force in itself against the RCMP.



(“Mi'kmaq women stared down RCMP”, 2013)

It is hard to imagine the resilience of such an act, especially as a white settler who has never had to stand face-to-face in front of a RCMP barricade. However, the symbolism is clear: the power of the nation state does not reduce the strength of Indigenous women. As a journalist for *Indian Country Today Media Network*, Vincent Schilling (2013) states,

The image [of Polchies] is emblazoned in people's minds as a symbol not just of the Mi'kmaq protest against potential fracking near Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick, Canada, but also of what has been happening to Natives since Europeans first stepped onto Turtle Island's shores. (para. 2)

In this statement the non-mainstream journalist is historicizing, and thus adding dimension to the ways in which the image gained its notoriety. The image is recognized as a symbol of the larger resistance of Indigenous peoples against historical and ongoing state-sponsored occupation. Although women like Polchies are using non-threatening behaviour, they are uniquely questioning the settler-colonial structure by expanding methods of participation and protest. These women, too, are expanding narratives of protest beyond the limitations of the mainstream media. In the following sections I highlight the presence of three such narratives as conveyed by the Indigenous women featured in the non-mainstream.

## **Protest for the Future**

In my introductory and theory chapters, I argue that Indigenous women in Canada occupy a space that is simultaneously *within* and *outside* the settler nation state. However, the nation state cannot dictate everything and it cannot eradicate the will of people to resist their oppressors, nor should this in any way be the national mandate. Indigenous women are resisting the nation state by offering distinct, anti-colonial, anti-hegemonic narratives about their struggle through their protests. This is not a new venture for Indigenous women. Since contact, Indigenous women have been resisting the imposition of colonialism and its associates, patriarchy and racism (Anderson & Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence, 2003; Simpson, 2013). Therefore, although I am not the first to explore Indigenous women's resistance, I highlight those protest narratives that arise from this specific resistance to shale gas exploration. One of the most prominent discourses presented in the non-mainstream coverage by Indigenous women focuses on ensuring the land and water are available for future generations.

In this discourse the land and water are presented as the focus of women's actions as these resources ensure a distinctly Indigenous future (Coupage, 2013; McGregor, 2005; Polchies, 2013; Simpson, 2014). The women of the protests often condemn the actions of the government, which they argue fails to consider the dangers of shale gas development—namely, the potentially irreversible damage on future generations' land and water. This concern is made clear as protestors cite the necessity of protecting water for their children and/or grandchildren. For instance, in the Al Jazeera (2013) documentary, Polchies describes the importance of water for multiple generations,

When I was a kid I got to go play in the woods I got to swim in fresh water. I'm breathing fresh air. Now that I have my own kid, I have my son I want him to experience the same thing I experienced. I want my grandkids to experience that too. I don't want to have them have to worry about going swimming in "oh this water is contaminated" because they're drilling 50 feet away.

In this statement, Polchies' apprehension is twofold: she wants to protect the water for her children and grandchildren, and in this she seeks to protect the experiences that are unique to the water. Polchies' identifies the future (a future that Indigenous people are so often denied), as dependent upon the health of the natural environment. Her argument is not necessarily premised on the understanding that water is an important resource (economically or for survival), but that water is a source of knowledge and community building, a location of experience. The water becomes an important marker of experiential development, and thus cannot be replaced or neglected. Anderson and Robertson (2011) argue that Indigenous people "remain haunted by images of death and dying and disease, and their supposed cultural decline" (p. 268). Polchies' statements counter these undercurrents of disappearance and cultural decline, with a determination for cultural survival and futurity via water. It is not a case of whether there will be a future for Indigenous peoples. Rather, what is under question is the type of future they will inhabit.

As a consequence of settler policies, which forced generations of Indigenous peoples from their lands,<sup>7</sup> the little land that remains in their care carries additional value. For residents, this reality—that their cultural identity is tied to the natural environment, that this environment is under threat from the outside forces refusing to recognize its

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<sup>7</sup> The Federal Government has formally apologized and offered compensation for the Dene forcibly moved to Churchill, Manitoba in the 1950's (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/sayisi-dene-react-long-awaited-1.3725372>)

importance, that their ability to develop relationships to the natural environment is increasingly tenuous—results in a passionate commitment whose importance cannot be measured or countered through the economic interests of governments. Therefore, the impasse between the New Brunswick Government and Indigenous women grows more pronounced as each party defines their future according to radically different parameters.

The Government sees its future as dependent upon economic growth achieved through shale gas, whereas Indigenous women's conception of the future is dependent on the health and vitality of the natural environment in which they grow and live. Deborah McGregor, an Anishinaabek scholar with many works on women and water, argues that water is a foundation for Indigenous futures. She states “waters are witness to our history and remember times long before contact...Our love for the waters will help the water recover from historical trauma, and in turn, the water will hopefully love and assist us in recovering from all our own trauma” (McGregor, 2013, p. 76). In participating in protests, Indigenous women make clear the dichotomy between their view that commitment to the land is unassailable and the government's position that economic stability will engender a better future (D'Arcangelis, 2015; McGregor, 2009; McGuire, 2009). Indigenous women articulate a vision of the future motivated by long-term existential health, rather than the economic motivations that are simply the result of imposed capitalist structures. In some ways it is a symbiotic future, where women depend upon the water and the water depends upon women.

## Women and Water

Along with a carefully considered care and importance placed on how the future will unfold, Indigenous women often underscore their unique connection with water *as women*. In many cultures, including Mi'kmaq nations, women are the protectors of water and express a deep connection with water (see Bruce & Harries, 2010; McGuire, 2009). Deborah McGregor (2009) contextualizes women's relationship with water as sacred in her work with the Anishnaabekwe. She states

Women thus have a special relationship with water, since, like Mother Earth, they have life-giving power. Women have a special place in the order of existence. They provide us, as unborn children, with our very first environment— in water. When we are born water precedes us. With this special place in the order of things come responsibilities. No one is exempt from caring and paying respect to the water, but for women there is a special responsibility. (2009, p.138)

Haley Bernard, a Mi'kmaq Chief from Nova Scotia, adds to this understanding of the responsibility and connection Indigenous women have with water. In her discussion of the Elsipogtog protests, Bernard explains in an *Indian Country Online* article, "Women are protectors of the water, we have water in our body, we carry a child, and they're covered in water, so we're meant to do that. We're supposed to do that" (cited in Troian, 2013). Doris Coupage, a protestor, elder, and grandmother in the Elsipogtog community, echoes this responsibility to the water. When describing her altercation with the RCMP, she states that she continued her stand because "the women are the protectors of water, aren't they" (cited in Al Jazeera, 2013). Interestingly, as water protection is repeatedly articulated as the responsibility of Indigenous women, it further clarifies the motivations behind their intense involvement in the protests (and thus further problematizes their underrepresentation in the media). Coupage further elucidates this relationship: "We have



a river. It's a beautiful river, we love it and we respect it" (cited in Al Jazeera, 2013). In this statement, Coupage challenges the (settler) notion of water as a resource for consumption; instead, she maintains that water is an integral part of life that deserves respect and consideration outside of all other societal pressures. Water becomes an entity, another member of the community. Suzanne Patles explains, "We have to realize that we are not greater than [the water]. It is greater than us" (NoOneIsIllegalVan, 2014). When a group understands their identity as intimately tied with an entity, protesting may not be an option but a moral imperative. In this same video, Patles (2014) also connects the sacredness of water to collective futurity and offers a further illustration of this responsible-belonging, stating:

Water is sacred. It is the core of our Indian-ness. It is who we are. It is what connects us to our spirituality. It's what connects us to everything that's alive. It's what connects us to each other. It's what connects us to the thousands of years before us and the thousands of years that will come after us.

As water continues to be a valuable yet vulnerable resource, its protection could become a major function of a women-led reawakening. Patles articulates water as both a reflection of the past as it 'connects to everything' and foundation for the future of 'the thousands of years that will come after us.' In these instances, the women trace both the sacredness of water and their intimate connection to it. It is not insignificant that the connection to the water that the women from Elsipogtog describe is completely absent from the mainstream media's accounts of the protests. That this arguably fundamental motivation for the protests is not mentioned supports arguments made by scholars tracing the limited portrayals of Indigenous protest in the mainstream media (Harding, 2005; Wilkes et al.,

2010). It also sheds light on the possible inability of the mainstream media to represent Indigenous women outside the ‘Squaw’ or Indian Princess tropes.

**(Re) claiming tradition: Protection is protest**

Indigenous feminist scholars write about (re)imagining tradition, which places Indigenous women at the center of defining their identity against settler colonial misrepresentations (Anderson, 2000; Anderson & Lawrence, 2005; Green, 2007; Sunseri, 2009). These scholars are part of a discourse that centers on Indigenous women’s explanations of responsibility, belonging, and resistance that are alternatives to ones offered by settler logic. During acts of protest, these alternative descriptions appear as a response to the nation-state’s attempt to quash Indigenous rights. One such recurring theme is that of the ‘protector’ that is presented within a narrative of responsibility that the Indigenous women express in regards to water. However, there is more to this self-identification as this narrative connects to both the water and the future. It was Doris Coupage who first brought my attention to this narrative; she stated, “I want to call it ‘protect,’ rather than ‘protest’ we are here to protect our water, our land” (cited in Troian, 2013). In this statement Coupage is problematizing her subject position as a ‘protestor’, instead preferring to be called a ‘protector.’ Thus, Coupage is not there to counter the government; she is there for the water.

Another shale gas activist and once-incarcerated protestor, Annie Clair, furthers the protector narrative. In an open letter to the *Halifax Media Co-Op*, Clair calls for her son’s release from prison. In the letter she states,

As PROTECTORS [emphasis in original] we stay strong and do our best to protect our children, families, and elders from these huge companies & industries that are destroying our lands and water & gardens where we grow our food for our

families. We can't drink oil or gas and grow money. The huge companies or the government don't care but the People do. (2013, para.11)

This statement articulates a concern for, and consideration of, futurity and the natural environment's importance within it. With the lexical choice of repeating “we”—“we stay strong,” “we grow our food,” she cements her own responsibility to protect, together with others, not only her own family, but also her community. Again, as a woman of the community, she is articulating what needs to be protected. It is a responsibility that extends beyond corporations and the government, as it depends on protecting the land and water from these powerful forces. Clair delegitimizes the efforts of these companies to invest in land and water development by reminding the reader about the insecurity of profit—it never lasts and is a fictitious creation of mankind. In later interchanges with the press regarding her possible arrest, Clair states, “I didn't do this to be famous. I am doing this to protect the water, the air, the land” (cited in Devet, 2015, para.16).

Understandably, though it was not Clair's intention to receive attention for her efforts, her voice appears in the non-mainstream coverage of the protests, echoing the need to *protest in order to protect*. Given their respective proclivities and motivations, Clair, as well as other Indigenous women and communities, may be justifiably wary of any partnership with government or large companies; instead, the land and water are the only immutable constants that ensure them a future that is vital and that reflects their cultural identity. Both Coupage and Clair reiterate a simple, yet stark reality: you cannot eat or drink money, nor can you survive without water and land. Thus, the protection of the water and land must take precedence over everything.

## Warrior Women

These discourses of protection, both for the water and future generations, (re)imagine protestor narratives and problematize the absence of Indigenous women's views in the mainstream media. The combination of all of these stories creates an alternate discourse of belonging that I argue can be labeled as the Indigenous woman *as Warrior*. The Warrior-woman draws from the concepts of *protest as protection* and yet the narrative can be more elusive to discern in the non-mainstream media. Robyn Bourgeois (2014) introduces this concept and its beginnings in her dissertation. She states the “movement of ‘Warrior women’ developed in response to the extreme rates of physical and other forms of violence perpetrated against indigenous women and girls in contemporary (1980s-present) Canadian society” (Bourgeois, 2014, p. 4). Though her discussion focuses on the Warrior women working to end violence against Indigenous women, I apply this idea to the women protestors in Elsipogtog. I gesture towards this as another example of a narrative from Indigenous women not presented in the mainstream. Suzanne Patles is one of the most notable examples of the Warrior woman narrative. As a member of the Mi'kmaq Warrior Society she is often a spokesperson for the Warrior Society, appearing in speaking events. She defends her Warrior status and contests the misinterpretations made by the mainstream regarding the criminality of protestors at these events. During one such event on her speaking tour, which was filmed for a YouTube video, she attempts to demystify mainstream conceptions of contemporary Warriors as violent or disobedient. Instead, Patles (NoOneIsIllegalVan, 2014a) (re)defines her Warrior identity and disrupts the stereotypes explaining:

As a Warrior a lot of people try to think of it as violent and that's a problem that we even had on the ground...it has nothing to do with violence it just means I believe in it so much I would die for it and when you believe in something so much you would die for it, it scares the pants off the person you are stepping up against.

In this statement she presents being a Warrior as linked to sacrifice, to putting your body on the land against any force that attempts to control you. From this, one could argue that the real violence is the response by the Government vis-à-vis the RCMP to move Indigenous bodies from the land and cease their resistance. When Indigenous women, like Patles, conceptualize their efforts as a sacrifice for the land and water that is worthy of death, they confront mainstream media attempts to belittle the protests. It was not just about the dangers of shale gas but ensuring their rights to the land, rights that are continually denied. The weight of such statements cannot be understated: it is defending land and those that inhabit it that defines any Warrior.

The women Warrior's stance is not always a physical one. Leanne Simpson (2013) adds to this (re)presentation of the Warrior, explaining "[w]e can seek out the image of strong, calm Mi'kmaq women and children armed with drums and feathers and ask ourselves what would motivate mothers, grandmothers, aunties, sisters and daughters to stand up and say enough is enough" (para 6). The phrase juxtaposes the archetypal imagery of Warrior with the actions of women; these women are thus constructed as willing to 'die for' something while 'armed with drums.' Within both of these accounts there seems to be a commitment to the future with the recognition that strength comes in many different forms, only one of which is physical. In this sense Warrior women may not always self-define as such, but are nonetheless present in current articulations of resistance, which value the role of women in motivating change.

Dian Million (2014) explains that sharing experiences creates “a felt knowledge that accumulates and becomes a force that empowers stories that are otherwise separate to become a focus, a potential for movement” (p. 32). The non-mainstream media is a site for resistance and Indigenous women are utilizing this space to articulate what their resistance could look like. For women in particular, it is the sharing of stories that can (re)frame resistance, revitalization, and reclamation (Lawrence & Anderson, 2005; Simpson, 2011). These Warrior women from Elsipogtog use their pens, voices, and bodies to challenge not only shale gas but also in effect their absence from the mainstream media (Polchies, 2013; Patles cited in NoOneIsIllegalVan, 2014; Simpson, 2013). In the acts of being present in the non-mainstream sources these women are (perhaps at times inadvertently) disrupting the mainstream media’s erasure by taking up space.

Admittedly, an important aspect of the Warrior woman narrative is its inherent physicality—the women of Elsipogtog literally *embodied* the struggle. Though many of the women might not self-identify as Warriors, their actions inform the Warrior women narrative. They stood together during drumming circles, kneeled in front of the RCMP, or joined arm-in-arm to create their own corporeal barricade. To me, these actions are examples of women being Warriors. Miles Howe (2014), a journalist who was heavily involved in the protests, describes the impact of these actions as “a clash that will resound in the lives of those who put their bodies on the land, in the path of thumpers, in the way of state violence” (para. 42). To explain the motivation of such physical expressions of resistance Leanne Simpson (2013) remarks in her blog, “Slowly but surely we get backed into a corner where the only thing left to do is to put our bodies on the land” (para. 6).

Inevitably, as each attempt to find a solution within a colonial system that is stacked against you fails, you must look for solution outside these repressive avenues. Patles (2014) explains that when you have nothing left but your body, “you use that strength because what more can they do to you? What more can be done to our people and what more can be done to us as humans than has already can be done?” From this sacrifice, there can also be power.

### **Warriors, Women, and the New Narratives of Protest**

In Elsipogtog, as the women knelt down, lifted feathers, and marched together with beating drums, they articulated their strength and resilience against the colonial system that attempts to take away their rights, voices, and eventually, their humanity. For the women I mention throughout this work, protest is not exclusively about standing up to the government. Instead, these women articulate the need to protect the water and land to ensure it will still be around long after they are gone—*protecting versus protesting*. Most of the women interviewed for the Al Jazeera documentary and in the non-mainstream sources, cite the responsibility they have *as women* to protect the water (Coupage cited in Al Jazeera, 2013; Troian, 2013). The connection these women describe goes beyond mere concern for water due to the dangers of human interaction: they respect water as a being. When water is understood as an entity, a living thing that requires respect, then the women entrusted with its protection may be willing to sacrifice themselves for its future. Understanding that the women enmeshed in the protests were not only willing to face possible imprisonment (as many did) but also physical danger is critical in beginning to understand these women’s protest narratives.

The Indigenous women interviewed in the Al Jazeera (2013) documentary and in other non-mainstream sources are discrediting, disenchanting, and deconstructing settler logic. Through social media, independent media, and other non-mainstream sources, women are able to participate in large-scale storytelling and resistance (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). By sharing their stories of protest and challenging imposed representations, Indigenous women can continue to fracture the restrictions of settler citizenship in Canada and reimagine belonging in the nation state. Dian Million (2014) describes this as “Indigenism [which] is to define ourselves rather than be defined. That is an active doing, the imagining and revisioning of an Indigenism that is never, never static” (p. 38). Despite the constant attempts of the settler state to make Indigenous women singular relics of the past through historical narratives that erase their contributions, Indigenous women refuse to submit. The efforts of the women protesting in Elsipogtog can be understood as a testament to this unyielding spirit in the face of settler tactics of systemic conquest. Of course, just as there is no static ‘Indigenous woman,’ the women who continue to be a large part of the ongoing struggle against shale gas in Elsipogtog are changing as protestors/protectors. Thus, the narratives are expanding and growing with each woman’s interpretation of the struggle.

In this chapter, I have only begun to interpret the Indigenous women’s stories from the Elsipogtog shale gas protests and understand there are many more left untold. Yet, the ones I have included are important in opening further space to discover narratives that disrupt the colonial tropes of the ‘Squaw’ and Indian Princess. Eve Tuck (2009) describes the importance of moving away from damaging narratives stating, “it is crucial to recognize that our communities hold the power to begin shifting the discourse away



from the damage and toward desire and complexity” (p. 422). I argue that in Elsipogtog, the women protesting were doing just that—shifting towards their desire for an Indigenous future. By acknowledging the legacy of exploitation, land loss, and cultural loss, but also the role of women in healing the community they were expressing their own narratives, on their own terms. However, it is not these damages that define them: it is their resilience, continuing resistance, and rejection of the gendered implications of settler colonialism, only one of which is their erasure from mainstream spaces.

## **Conclusion**

The events surrounding the shale gas protests in Elsipogtog provide a lens to explore both the subtle and overt ways that the processes of settler control manifest against Indigenous peoples in general and women in particular. It is precisely the exclusion of women from the mainstream media coverage, despite their roles as protagonists in the Elsipogtog protest that speaks to the ongoing process of gendered settler colonialism. As my work shows, the media is one place where we can find the often-concealed prejudices against Indigenous women, as well as the more obvious stereotyping that faces Indigenous peoples in Canada. Protest also produces a rare opportunity to understand how marginalized groups, especially women, are resisting these representations/stereotypes. Just as the mainstream media continues to craft carefully worded descriptions which often repeat overarching discourses already present in the settler state, Indigenous peoples and women in particular, continue to fracture these discourses.

As discussed in my first analysis chapter, in the mainstream media coverage of the protests, the misrepresentations, tropes, and stereotypes used are evidence of continuing colonial logics. The mainstream media celebrated the Noble Savage, as personified by the Chief, while simultaneously vilifying the Criminal Savage—reminding both the readers and those in the headlines what sort of savagery is accepted in the nation state. Indigenous actions against such insidious settler logics are then used against Indigenous peoples, as their refusal to submit to the colonial order is promoted as another mark of their difference. For example, if they are angry about their overt discrimination in the nation state as expressed in protests about land and water, then the dominant population easily

frames their reaction as unreasonable or extreme. Often, as was the case in Elsipogtog and other protests like those in Standing Rock<sup>8</sup> and Muskrat Falls<sup>9</sup>, the mainstream media chooses to highlight the more dramatic aspects of resistance instead of the reasons people resist. The more that the actions of Indigenous people directly challenge the legitimacy of a particular group, government, company, or nation, the more likely it is that the protestors will receive reproach. As such, contemporary protests provide a space to further explore how the dominant group in the nation state deploys mis/representations against Indigenous people in order to delegitimize their existence.

The Elsipogtog protests offer a glimpse into the emerging narratives of Indigenous women that appear where the mainstream/settler gaze does not often think to look. Given that the mainstream media often reinforces dominant discourses about Indigenous peoples, the absence of Indigenous women can be read as another symptom of settler logics. More simply put, perhaps the mainstream media is unable to describe Indigenous women beyond limited colonial tropes. Thus, when Indigenous women's actions during protest disrupt or challenge these tropes, the language in dominant discourses may not exist to describe their involvement. Despite the inabilities of the mainstream media, Indigenous women can and do foster identities that confront colonial misrepresentations. In the spaces where stories are shared these women can redefine what it means to be a protestor and why it matters. This is because, for Indigenous protestors their actions resist the very foundation of ongoing colonial control—land usurpation.

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<sup>8</sup> In Standing Rock North Dakota a large scale Indigenous resistance against the Dakota Access Pipeline due to concerns over water contamination garnered international attention, solidarity actions (#NoDAPL), and militarized police interference.

<sup>9</sup> The protests in Labrador against the damming of Muskrat Falls die to concerns over water contamination attracted national media attention, solidarity efforts (#MakeMuskratRight), and resulted in a halting of the project until more research can be done.

With my work I have added to the scholarship by Indigenous feminists that theorizes both the specific colonial heteropatriarchal constructions of gender and the undercurrent of resistance by Indigenous women to settler colonialism and the nation state (Smith, 2015; 2008; Simpson, 2008; Blackburn, 2009). Feminist scholars, Belanger, Fiske, and Gregory (2010) argue Indigenous women are simultaneously present and excluded in Canada. However, I argue that exclusion from the nation state and disappearance from Indigenous struggles are not the same outcomes. Indigenous women were excluded from the mainstream media as a symptom of the colonial patriarchal relics of sexism, racism, and colonialism but at no point did that prescribe their disappearance from the protests. The lack of media coverage of their role in the protests like the one in Elsipogtog is a reflection of the exclusion experienced by Indigenous women in the settler colonial state. It is within these same protests that the Indigenous women involved articulate space, organize, resist, and re (imagine) belonging, in defiance of the attempts to neglect their presence.

My analysis demonstrates that Indigenous peoples are unable to completely escape the colonial ties that bind them to colonial stereotypes in the mainstream media. Despite hundreds of years of resistance, political organizing, and attempts at rejecting settler colonial systems, their efforts are often reduced and largely misunderstood by the much of the white settler audience as further proof of their inherent savagery. A study of media—mainstream and non-mainstream—such as this one, is a partial contestation to these settler misconceptions. More research needs to be done with the women I mention and those I do not. Even the most genuine attempts to highlight the voices of Elsipogtog women from the protest are still just an interpretation of their words, and in this case, an

interpretation by a white settler. Interviews with the women involved about the events, their participation, and how the protests affected their lives would add to work surrounding Indigenous women and resistance. As time passes and efforts against shale gas exploration continue, the reflections of the women involved would serve to further illuminate their perspectives and thereby further challenge colonial misconceptions.

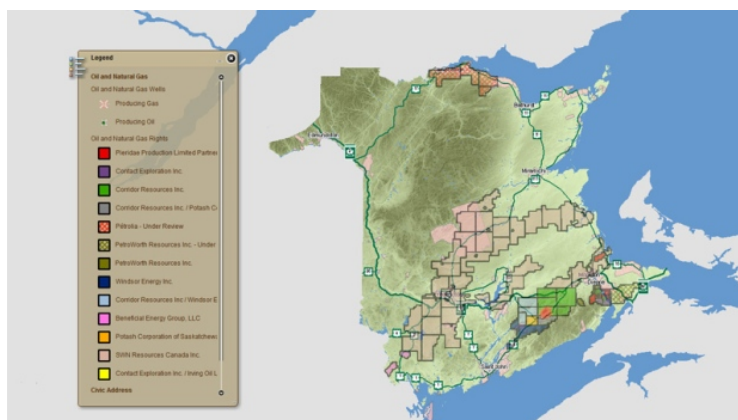
Indigenous feminist scholar Audra Simpson (2008) provides an eloquent and haunting understanding of Indigenous women's citizenship as one of grief, which I mention earlier in this work in relation to their multiple alienations. It was Simpson's term, "citizenship of grief" (2008, p.124) that brought me to this research and resonated throughout the journey of my analysis. This haunting term effectively conceptualizes the loss Indigenous women have experienced through colonial policies such as the Indian Act. However, in the acknowledgement of loss, whether it is loss of land, loss of community or loss of kinship, there is also an opportunity to reject future citizenships of loss. As a result of the multidimensional and complex losses Indigenous women face, they are formulating new practices and identities of resistance to the forms of belonging offered by the nation state, such as the Warrior woman. From my research, I argue that though Indigenous women continue to be silenced by the mechanisms of colonialism, which position them as undesired citizens in the Canadian settler state, they continue to fight against this erasure. The project of nation building is a racialized colonial endeavor, and citizens who are relegated to the periphery often challenge these policies through the rejection of discriminatory dogmas; this is synonymous with the rejection of the very nation state in which discriminatory beliefs thrive (Lawrence, 2003; Tuck & Yang, 2012;

Smith, 2008). And, make no mistake; Indigenous women *are* thriving against the nation state.

“And I sent out a message and I said everybody has always said to uh to let them know when shit gets real and I said how much more real can this get”

Suzanne Patles- Mi' kmaq Warrior

## APPENDIX A



New Brunswick Map prior to the protests that indicates the areas of shale gas testing given to each of the major oil and gas companies. Southwestern Energy (SWN) had control of the Elsipogtog testing area.

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## APPENDIX B



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## APPENDIX C



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