



The Language of Citizenship: Indigenous Perspectives of Nationhood in Canada

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Frank Deer and Jessica Trickey

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Abstract

The indigenous peoples in Canada are a demographic that has largely had difficulties situating itself into the body politic of the Canadian nation state. (The term *indigenous* will herein refer to the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples who are the descendants of the original stewards of what is now Canada. These three groups that constitute the triumvirate of constitutionally recognized “Aboriginal” peoples (*Constitution Act, 1982*, being schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982* (U.K.), 1982, c. 11) each represent a vast number of nations, cultures, language groups, and treaty contexts.) If one accepts that the goal of contemporary Canadian citizenship is the sharing of values in a collective, democratic community (Deer F, *J Educ Thought* 42(1):69–82, 2008), then the role of indigenous peoples in a Canadian citizenry may merit exploration. Indigenous peoples, who frequently show that they have demonstrably different conceptualizations of their own group identity and nationhood that are different from those of non-indigenous peoples, may be caught in a struggle of competing

F. Deer (✉) · J. Trickey (✉)

University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada

e-mail: Frank.Deer@umanitoba.ca; frank.deer@umanitoba.ca; Jessica.Trickey@umanitoba.ca

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values – these struggles may have serious implications for social harmony and contemporary reconciliation. This chapter explores the ways in which indigenous peoples in Canada may be understood by others in terms of their national contexts, the manners in which they view their own roles as members of a Canadian citizenry, and the implications for educational initiatives.

Keywords

Indigenous · Citizenship · Nationhood · Education · Social movements

Introduction

Canada is a nation state that occupies the traditional territories of numerous indigenous nations – nations that represent a broad diversity of cultural and language backgrounds (Kulchyski 2007). These indigenous nations have served as stewards of the territories of North America far longer than the European colonizers that would eventually establish the Dominion of Canada (Dickason and Newbigging 2010). The colonial activities of settlers in these territories have experienced acute hardships that include government-led initiatives designed to “get rid of the Indian problem” (Miller 2004). Government initiatives such as the establishment of enforced habitation in “reserves,” enfranchisement (i.e., forced acceptance of citizenship at the expense of rights and entitlements as indigenous people), and the now well-known and regretful Residential School System have contributed to ongoing poverty, lack of opportunity, and trauma (Milloy 1999). (Indian residential schools were government initiated and sponsored schools that were almost exclusively administered by religious authorities across Canada. Many of the students who attended these schools were forcibly removed from their families and communities to attend these schools in which much abuse, neglect, and trauma occurred. Generations of indigenous children attended these schools – these experiences are identified as one contributing cause of the poor state of well-being for many indigenous peoples in Canada.) Many of these colonial and postcolonial activities on the part of the federal government and their partners (e.g., churches of various denominations) may be understood as genocidal in nature (MacDonald 2019). (Although not a topic of focus in this chapter, the concept of genocide has begun to be applied to numerous indigenous contexts. The findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is one example of how the concept of genocide has (and continues to be) been considered when describing the intent of government authorities with regard to the residential school system.) Ongoing oppression has obscured indigenous perspectives and worldviews from discussion. Even with current efforts to recognize indigenous history, indigenous worldviews are still excluded from having a central focus. Though schools are incorporating more lessons about indigenous history and traditions, students may find difficulty in understanding the discrepancy between having rights and privileges as a function of Canadian citizenship and as a function of indigenous sovereignty. The paragraphs to follow detail indigenous perspectives of

nationhood and citizenship and how indigenous perspectives are now at the forefront in a new era of reconciliation.

Indigenous Nationhood in Canada

Colonization imposed a new set of regulations on existing indigenous communities to constitute one unified nation (e.g., Canada). Indigenous peoples had already established their own concepts of nation and nationhood, but these were displaced by White settlers.

Before colonialism, indigenous nations defined themselves with regard to kinship and connections. Cornell (2015) identifies five important aspects of indigenous nationhood: (1) connections to the land, (2) kinship and community, (3) narratives and history associated with the land and culture, (4) self-governance, and (5) collective well-being. For example, Anishinaabe peoples conceptualized nationhood as being built on stories and traditions and shaped by relationships and communities (Stark 2012). Further, Anishinaabe peoples were not one people or one nation, but consisted of multiple distinct nations. These different nations functioned in tandem with one another by forming allyships and sharing land.

Colonialism disrupted and reconfigured indigenous ideas of nationhood. Colonizers ignored all aspects of indigenous nationhood by exploiting land, dividing communities, reconstructing narratives, denying self-governance, and emphasizing individual well-being over the collective (Cornell 2015). Anishinaabe nations were conglomerated into one nation (Stark 2012). This not only altered indigenous nations but changed the overall definition of nationhood. In colonialist representations, nations are characterized by industrialization and working-class labor (Anderson 2015). This definition specifically excludes indigenous organizations, who are instead considered “pre-nations” (Anderson 2015). Because of this, some scholars argue that European definitions of nations cannot, therefore, apply to indigenous nations. As an example, while Western nations are hierarchical and secular, indigenous nations are more egalitarian and spiritual (Anderson 2015). It is differences such as these that represent challenges to the establishment and maintenance of a single Canadian citizenry that is inclusive of indigenous peoples.

Kalant (2004) argued that nations are built on myths and are, therefore, fictional. In relation to considering indigenous perspectives of nationhood in Canada, media and interpersonal relationships ignite these fictions to create an instilled idea of a unified nation, divided by geographic location, with certain principles and ideals. Canada, for instance, holds the ideal of multiculturalism and is separated from other nations by the US border and vast oceans. The Oka Crisis of 1990 doubted this concept of Canadian nationality (Kalant 2004). The Mohawk peoples and Québécois peoples came to be considered as separate identities and not under one nation. However, by forcing Mohawk peoples to affiliate with Canada’s ideologies through, among other things, mandatory and nefarious education, Canada became a nation built on assimilation and the othering of indigenous peoples (Kalant 2004). Nations are shaped by their relations with one another (Stark 2012). Just as indigenous

nations were shaped through negotiations and conflict with settler Canadians, Canada as a nation was shaped as well.

As a response to the transformation of indigenous nations, many indigenous communities sought self-determination and self-governance. Many indigenous communities have reorganized and reinterpreted their structures such as aligning with other indigenous groups to create a subnation or having a firm focus on restoring a collective identity (Cornell 2015). For example, in the Northwest Territories, four First Nations came together to form the Tlicho Government; this reassessed the boundaries and identities that the Canadian government had imposed (Cornell 2015). Further, many indigenous nations are now beginning to take control over the well-being of their peoples, their exports, and their laws. As an example, the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Nation passed a law on the management of their salmon fishery, a key export for their economy (Cornell 2015). The law was a response to a decline in salmon impacting Mi'gmaq well-being (The National Centre for First Nations Governance 2015). To control fish production, Quebec raided Mi'gmaq fisheries with arrests, confiscations, and even beatings. This prompted the Listuguj people to come together and fight for their rights. They passed the law with the provincial government in 1993, giving them full control of their fisheries. This example illustrates how unacceptable and destructive government practices can facilitate activism and response from indigenous nations.

Citizenship

With indigenous communities restoring its self-determination and self-governance, some Canadian government officials are concerned that Canada is losing its national unity (Blackburn 2009). What would it mean for Canada if indigenous peoples were considered citizens primarily of their nations rather than Canada? Blackburn (2009) examined this question in the context of a recent Treaty signed between the British Colombian government and the Nisga'a peoples. The Treaty allows the Nisga'a Nation, who resides in the Nass River Valley, to self-govern and define their own version of citizenship. A citizen of the Nisga'a Nation is one who is of Nisga'a ancestry (either themselves or through their mother) and who is tied to the land. Nisga'a peoples' use of "citizen" in the Treaty was strategic; it allowed them to reconfigure Canada's definition of a sovereign nation and create a new political space within Canada that is not just another piece of Canada's mosaic. While many indigenous peoples in Canada already identify as having a dual citizenship with Canada and their home Nation, Nisga'a peoples are officially a separate political entity within Canada.

The Nisga'a Nation's redefining of citizen is significant because Canada's definition of a citizen, one who has certain rights, privileges, and responsibilities to the state, has historically excluded indigenous peoples (Battiste and Semegani 2002). There is no agreed-upon conceptualization of citizenship by scholars; however, it is recognized as a legal category, distinguishing those who are citizens from those who are not (Cho 2011). The status grants certain privileges such as security and

belonging. It also gives clarification to people of their place in relation to others through inclusions and exclusions, creating an “us versus them” mentality. For example, in Canada, citizenship was originally represented by the White man and excluded women, indigenous peoples, and minorities (Fleischmann and Styvendale 2011). While the definition of citizenship has expanded, its foundation of exclusion makes it an improper definition to expand to indigenous nations. For First Nations communities, citizenship may be seen as a colonialist myth that is used as another method of assimilating newcomers. Before colonialism, First Nations communities were largely communal and collectivist (Battiste and Semegani 2002). They operated on principles of reciprocity and consent, tied not to the state but to relationships with others. Group values superseded individual hedonisms. By contrast, colonialism brought ideologies of individuality and oppression, as well as a philosophy of blind obedience to a state in order to have rights (Battiste and Semegani 2002). Indigenous peoples were put in a precarious position to be Canadian citizens, granted the right to vote and contribute to policy, or be relocated to reserves and lose any power in Canadian governance. The Haudenosaunee peoples in Ontario and their ongoing disputes with the government to reclaim their land are an example of the inconsistency between Canada’s conceptions of citizenship and First Nations’ conceptions of belonging to a nation. The Haudenosaunee peoples (Six Nations) are in disagreement with the government to cease government and company-led construction on their land so they can reclaim their land (Coleman 2011). While White protestors demanded that all people in Canada be under one law as citizens, Haudenosaunee peoples prefer for each group to share the land while not imposing on one another’s rights and livelihoods. This idea can be represented by the Two Row Wampum (Coleman 2011), important to Haudenosaunee peoples – a symbol that indigenous peoples and Europeans can both live on the land and practice their own customs without impinging on the customs of each other. The Two Row Wampum is a belt containing white shells divided by two parallel rows of purple shells. This symbol of mutual respect has challenged the notion of Canadian citizenship by giving Haudenosaunee peoples their own laws and rights, separate from those of Canada. For instance, some Haudenosaunee peoples will opt for a Haudenosaunee passport instead of a Canadian passport. Neal McLeod, a Cree scholar, stated that “a discourse of universal citizenship has the capacity to rationalize the process of colonization” (Coleman 2011, p. 191). Any argument for a unified, Canadian citizenship obscures the history of citizenship as one who is included in Canada’s body politic and, therefore, not indigenous.

Though indigenous peoples may not fit into the Canadian definition of citizenship, they define their own nationhood and, within this, their own citizenship. Battiste and Semangani (2002) describe Western citizenship as resulting from nationalism, an emotional connection and belonging to the state. With this form of citizenship, however, comes certain ideologies and power imbalances. In order for indigenous perspective to become more visible, current notions of citizenship and nationhood must be revised to be more inclusive.

Nationhood and citizenship are complex terms that do not apply readily to indigenous peoples. Western concepts of nations are not synonymous with

indigenous nations. Policy-makers and governments have an obligation to consider this in order to ensure indigenous nations are able to self-govern and exist both separately from and together with the Canadian state.

An Era of (Re)Conciliation

There has been some significant sociopolitical distance between conceptions of indigenous nationhood and how indigenous peoples may situate themselves within the body politic of Canada (Green 2009). This distance is not trivial or ineffectual as evidenced in the current and recent dialogue among and between indigenous and nonindigenous peoples (Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard 2018) as well as in the notable conflicts that have occurred in recent times such as the 1990 Oka crisis and the current Wet'suwet'en predicament. (The Oka Crisis of 1990 involved the defense of a portion of Kanienke'haka territory in southern Quebec by members of an indigenous community involving the blockades of local roads. With the support of another indigenous community nearby and the blockade of a bridge, government authorities responded with force resulting two deaths. The Wet'suwet'en predicament involved Wet'suwet'en (a nation that rests in the Province of British Columbia) hereditary chiefs who opposed the construction of a pipeline across their territories – the threat of incursions into the traditional territories led to solidarity protests across Canada.) As is resident within many colonial states, many of the relationships between indigenous and nonindigenous peoples in Canada are either strained, fractured, or nonexistent. The need in Canada may be to (re)establish our relationships in a healthy, fecund, and mutually beneficial manner (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015a).

Reconciliation has been cited by commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as the act of establishing new relationships between indigenous and nonindigenous while retaining an understanding of a shared and perhaps unsavory history (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015a). Reconciliation may be regarded as a rather Canadian concern as it is a response to the Indian residential school experience in Canada. Although reconciliation may focus upon how primary and secondary education was handled by Canadian government and church authorities for much of the last two centuries, the need to engage in activities of reconciliation following the work and final report of the TRC has extended beyond educational considerations and has extended into many forums of endeavor in Canada (Frideres 2011). In terms of citizenship, topics such as law, political participation, language and culture, and labor market participation are captured in the TRC Calls-to-Action and have expanded the discussion of how relationships between indigenous and nonindigenous peoples may be improved.

Although presented and discussed in length in the final report of the TRC, the concept of and response to reconciliation is still a developing issue in Canada. Most of the Calls-to-Action that emerged from the TRC were focused upon the potential responses of federal and provincial/territorial governments (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015b). Other institutions such as churches/clergy,

higher education, and offices of civil service were cited, but the emphasis upon the two principal levels of government as being principally responsible for developing reconciliatory activities represents what the TRC judged to be most significant. These two levels of government are viewed as key:

- Federal areas of responsibility may be understood in the context of, among other things, past roles in the establishment and administration of residential schools as well as previous and current roles with regard to treaty and constitutional responsibilities.
- Provincial areas of responsibility may be understood in the context of, among other things, the responsibility for delivering and administering key social welfare services such as those of health and public education.

In the brief period of time since the release of the TRC final report, these two levels of government have been engaged in discussions on reconciliation (in varying degrees of sufficiency and success) in numerous events, initiatives, and other activities that are, ostensibly, in the public interest (Chandler-Olcott and Hinchman 2018).

In spite of the fact that most of the TRC Calls-to-Action cite initiatives of a reconciliatory nature directed toward government – for which some efforts been made to respond – many other public institutions and community groups have expressed interest in (and even commitment toward) the reconciliation. In some cases, such institutions and groups have begun to accept the Calls-to-Action that are directed to government. Public sector organizations such as universities and community groups such as churches have been discussing and even initiating conversations and activities that support the achievement of the general goals of reconciliation – activities intended to facilitate improved relations with indigenous peoples while coming to terms with difficult histories. The general conception of and approach toward reconciliation in Canada has extended beyond the interface indigenous peoples have had with government and has become inclusive of many for whom the Calls-to-Action were not nominally directed (Korteweg and Russell 2012).

Although reconciliation appears to be a topic of concern in many public quarters, the general discussion of reconciliation has, perhaps understandably, extended to those involved in different forms of formal education (Newbery 2012). Indigenous histories, experiences, and perspectives have become increasingly essential when engaging in the creation of educational programming in schools. Many who are affiliated with primary and secondary education have committed themselves to explore indigenous content, histories, and social issues. In many educational settings, the programming that is employed to provide opportunities for learning for children and youth has become inclusive of important dimensions of the Canadian indigenous experience that are relevant to First Nations, Metis and Inuit languages, literacies, mathematics, and other areas where focus is on the numerous and specific manifestations of indigenous knowledge, heritage, consciousness, and tradition. School administrators and teacher leaders who have a role in developing and

encouraging teachers to account for the emergent value associated with this relatively new area of indigenous education are becoming more responsive. This responsiveness is associated with the notion that indigenous content should be shared and celebrated and inform the development of a balanced perspective on the Canadian indigenous experience that is appreciative (Deer 2014).

The reconciliation movement in public education, as well as the more dated movement toward integration of indigenous perspectives, has not developed without critical reception (Montero and Denomme-Welch 2018). Numerous writers and public figures have contributed to negative and dismissive dialogue on this topic. In a country in which such pushback exists, many jurisdictional authorities have pressed forward with this new chapter in Canadian history. Thus, many education leaders in Canada have assumed responsibility to facilitate the development of appropriate learning opportunities that will support a sustainable and educationally useful journey toward reconciliation. Many school district boards and others who occupy similar positions of authority have ventured into this area in a manner that is inclusive of divergent indigenous perspectives. This progressive approach has allowed many indigenous elders and community members to provide leadership and knowledge that is essential to this process.

A Case of Relationships Conditioned by Rights

The issue of citizenship and how indigenous peoples in Canada may understand and employ the concept has been (and continues to be) conditioned by the indigenous rights movements of recent decades. The indigenous rights movement in Canada has been buoyed by a number of events that have brought to school consciousness issues of poverty and social marginalization experienced by many indigenous peoples. Of the more fundamental mechanisms that have and continue to codify the rights of indigenous peoples in Canada are the various Treaties with First Nations peoples, the Royal Proclamation of 1763, and Section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982; what has problematized the contemporary indigenous rights movement is how discussion on legislation and entitlements has situated many people's perspective on indigenous people. Any consideration of how citizenship is understood and employed by indigenous peoples in Canada would benefit from an overview of the contemporary indigenous rights movement in Canada and how that may inform a discussion on inherent rights and the broader international discourse on universal rights.

One of many events through which one might understand the contemporary indigenous rights movement in Canada is the relatively episodic yet publicly visible *Idle No More* (INM) movement. In the autumn of 2012, this movement began by four women in the Canadian Province of Saskatchewan – Jessica Gordon, Sheelah McLean, Sylvia McAdam, and Nina Wilson (The Kimo-nda-niimi Collective 2014) in response to the then Conservative Government's second omnibus budget bill, also known as Bill C-45, in October 2012. These women initiated the first event of the Idle No More movement, which was held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in early November as a protest of this bill (Sinclair 2014). Within the following months,

demonstrations were staged across Canada in an effort to protest the bill and to raise awareness of the government's treatment of indigenous issues. At the heart of the movement was the notion held by many that Bill C-45 will have undesired consequences for indigenous peoples with regard to their constitutional and Treaty rights.

Because of the pan-Canadian nature of the movement that was represented by numerous regional perspectives, it may be difficult to provide a singular narrative that reflects the INM movement. Similar to the *Occupy* movement in America at the time, different groups from different regions have different foci that reflect the diversity of colonial experiences. However, a number of individuals/groups have ventured to comment on the purpose for the movement (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2013):

- According to one prominent movement leader, the movement's purpose is to "stop the Harper government from passing more laws and legislation that will further erode treaty and indigenous rights and the rights of all Canadians."
- One statement reads, "*Idle No More* has a responsibility to resist current government policies in a Peaceful and Respectful way."
- According to one social media source, the purpose of the movement is "to support and encourage grassroots to create their own forums to learn more about Indigenous rights and our responsibilities to our Nationhood via teach-ins, rallies and social media."

There was no single prevailing purpose for all who affiliated with the INM movement. However, there was a principal concern that was frequently cited by the informal leaders of the movement and that was legislative changes that would potentially affect indigenous peoples in Canada.

Bill C-45: Concerns

The principal concerns for indigenous people across Canada during the time of INM were in regard to:

- Changes to the Indian Act (e.g., First Nations decision-making processes governed by changes that can effectively silence community members; AANDC can ignore resolutions developed by First Nations governments).
- Lakes and rivers (industry representatives involved in mining or other natural resource extraction no longer have to demonstrate that their activity will not damage/destroy/contaminate lakes or rivers).
- Environmental assessment issues; the previous assessment process which was designed to ensure rigorous assessment of environmental impacts by industry and other activities is replaced by a much faster process that is far less rigorous.

Perhaps, in terms of citizenship, an equally important concern for indigenous peoples is that Bill C-45, which acquired Royal assent in December 2012,

represents a larger movement by Government to forgo Constitutional and Treaty responsibilities in an effort to further marginalize Canada's indigenous population. Many of the indigenous people affiliated with the INM movement can recall their personal experiences within their respective communities during the infamous "White Paper" episode when the Trudeau government attempted to change Canada's relationship with First Nations peoples through outsourcing to provinces and to initiate federal institutional changes that would effectively end the formal governmental relationship between the Government of Canada and First Nations (Dickason and Newbigging 2010). The White Paper era is one instance of the Canadian Government's activities that may be interpreted as attempts to avoid acting on responsibilities toward indigenous peoples in Canada – Bill C-45 as a possible means of correcting the government's relationship with indigenous peoples that privileges the government's position is not a unique occurrence (Palmater 2012).

The INM movement has reminded the Canadian public and international onlookers that issues of poverty, unrecognized rights, unaddressed governmental obligations, and recognition among the broad public is still a pressing issue for indigenous people in Canada. Although much attention in the media has been made to the connections between Bill C-45 and INM, one might rightfully suggest that this Bill is one initiative in a long line of government attempts to avoid deliverance on their responsibilities within the contexts of indigenous rights (Diabo 2012). One of the foundational principles that are advanced in support of the indigenous rights movement has been the existence of un-extinguished rights and accords that are intended to codify the relationship between indigenous peoples and the governing authorities that have facilitated the settlement of what is now Canada by non-indigenous peoples.

Inherent Rights: From Time Immemorial

Entitlements and rights may be an essential part of citizenship and citizenship education – especially in Western contexts. In Canada, indigenous rights are sometimes broadly asserted, sometimes by indigenous peoples, as apropos of certain inherent rights (Kulchyski 2013). These "inherent" rights, those rights that are entitled to an individual by virtue of their existence as human beings alone (Orend 2002), are frequently argued to be existent due to the condition of indigeneity of indigenous peoples (Grammond 2009).

The notion that indigenous peoples were here first has led to increased discussions regarding indigenous sovereignty (Lindau and Cook 2000). The argument that asserts indigenous peoples as the original inhabitants of Turtle Island may make for interesting debate, but the more salient point regarding colonization and the original inhabitants is contained by simply asking *who was here first*. This question can then lead to perhaps the more crucial issue of who had/has sovereignty in the lands in question. Traditional European and contemporary Western perspectives on

settlement have pointed to this question in a way that may give undue privilege to the colonial power's perspective. Just as Christopher Columbus was said to have ceremoniously erected a flag claiming lands in the Caribbean as Spain, so did French explorers erect crosses and the British raised flags. The idea that these lands were *terra nullius*, lands that were uninhabited and where sovereignty had not been established by anyone, was essential to European settlement and the establishment of colonial rule. Although much of the mid-twentieth century history asserts that a number of European explorers "discovered" parts of what is now North America, Peter Kulchyski reminds us that:

[O]bviously, columbus and jaques cartier and samuel de champlain and samuel herne and alexander mackenzie and all the rest we hear so much about never actually 'discovered' anything at all. [A]ll the land they saw, the rivers and lakes and mountains they gave new names to were already well known, used, occupied, and named by native peoples. [T]o say they 'discovered' all this land is to act as if native people didn't exist and hadn't, for thousands of years, themselves explored and discovered what today we call the [A]mericas. (2007, p. 8)

The notion that the first peoples of North America had some measure of sovereignty associated with their respective lands became more prevalent in the late nineteenth century when Crown officials began entering into negotiations with First Nations in Western Canada for what would be referred to as the Numbered Treaties. These negotiations were necessary for the Dominion of Canada as the importance for acquiring land in Western Canada in order to establish sovereignty informed much governmental action during this era. Authorities wished to acquire these lands through negotiation.

Prior to, during, and following the establishment of Crown sovereignty in the west through the processes of treaty negotiation, the Government of Canada engaged in another process – the assimilation of the first peoples into peoples that can be regarded as more civilized when measured against the ethnocentric standard of their colonizers. The Indian residential school system, informed by the sentiments that led to the development of such legislative developments as the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 and the Indian Act of 1876, was intended to facilitate assimilation by taking "the Indian out of the child." This assimilation was deemed necessary for the realization of Canada's goal of moving "Aboriginal communities from their 'savage' state to that of 'civilization' and thus to make in Canada but one community – a non-Aboriginal one" (Milloy 1999, p. 2). The impact of separating First Nations children from their families and the subsequent affect that such separation has had on numerous aspects of their identity caused ongoing harm to First Nations peoples and their cultures.

There are two manifestations of indigenous rights in Canada that are relevant to this discussion – constitutional rights in the Canadian context and inherent rights in the domestic and international contexts. Constitutional rights for indigenous peoples in Canada are perhaps best understood within the context of Section 35 of the *Constitutional Act, 1982*.

Discussion: Opportunities for Learning

Currently, discourse that explores the awareness and importance of national and international rights is a bona fide dimension of social studies education in Canada (White Face and Wobaga 2013). Usually discussed within the context of charter rights, universal human rights, and the larger discussion of citizenship (Hebert and Wilkinson 2002), Canadian secondary students acquire an understanding of entitlements and freedoms that emphasize social responsibilities toward others and to themselves as well as their relationship with the state (Deer 2010). In recent years, the discussions of rights and citizenship in secondary schools in Canada have begun to include the perspectives associated with the Canadian indigenous experience (Battiste and Semegani 2002). These perspectives are frequently explored through a supplementary discussion on the broader responsibilities and rights associated with citizenship (Warry 2007).

However, many resources that are used in primary and secondary schools in Canada do explore the allegedly inherent nature of indigenous rights. One of the fundamental notions associated with the inherent nature of indigenous rights is that they are entitlements of people based on the fact that they are individuals only without any other source (Dick 2011). The inference of this notion in regard to indigenous peoples – that there exists a set of entitlements that are (a) held by the individual by virtue of their existence and (b) are, in the *Cardinal-esque* tradition, unique in so far as they are additional entitlements to those normally associated with Canadian citizenship (Cardinal 1977) – can govern the developing student perspective on indigenous peoples issues.

The tension between these two discourses, one which explores the broad range of entitlements, freedoms, and responsibilities for all Canadians and the other more focused discussion exploring those that are specifically associated with the indigenous peoples of this land, may have an undesired effect on how students and adults perceive how indigenous people are situated in Canada. Concepts of citizenship and nationhood further complicate indigenous peoples' place in Canada as these are applied through a Western lens and typically exclude indigenous perspectives and influences in Canadian society. Further, with indigenous rights movements such as *Idle No More* cited above as well as some of the historic events associated with land stewardship and rights issues such as the 1990 Oka Crisis, the Grand River land dispute of 2006, and the Gustafsen Lake standoff of 1995, there is potential that those who study or otherwise consume through media sources narratives concerning the Canadian indigenous experience that are replete with these stories may develop a proxy for understanding the Canadian indigenous experience – that of jurisdiction.

It may be understandable that the Canadian indigenous experience is frequently regarded principally as a jurisdictional discourse by both indigenous and nonindigenous peoples; generations of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples subject to residential schools, the denial of rights normally enjoyed by others, and legislative developments intended to marginalize indigenous peoples may easily

govern the quality of discussions that explore our first peoples. The sorts of emotionally and/or politically charged rhetoric and posturing that is frequently associated with such discussions that occur in the public realm have the potential to create this proxy, that of jurisdiction, for understanding the Canadian indigenous experience. In some rather crucial ways, exploring indigenous peoples and experiences as a jurisdictional issue has obscured some of the ethno-cultural dimensions of indigenous identity in the broad public consciousness. It has been suggested that exploring the Canadian indigenous experience through jurisdictional, legislative, or political lenses may do little to achieve reconciliation in a postcolonial Canada.

Many in the field of indigenous education have chosen to focus on more than just jurisdictional issues for exploring indigenous peoples and issues. In many provincial and community contexts, the content and pedagogies used to provide learning opportunities for primary and secondary students have begun to employ aspects of the Canadian indigenous experience that has direct relevance to language, literacy, mathematics, and other curricular areas where emphasis is placed on a variety of the unique manifestations of indigenous knowledge, heritage, consciousness, and tradition. Treaty relationships, legislative issues, and constitutional rights are and should be a part of these educational discourses, but it is essential that they are not explored in such a way that lends to the development of a perspective that is governed by jurisdictional matters. School and district leaders are responsible for governing and empowering educators to account for the emergent educational imperatives associated with contemporary indigenous education. Thus, they should be responsive to the notion that indigenous content may be shared and celebrated and inform the development of a balanced perspective on the Canadian indigenous experience that is appreciative.

Conclusion/Summary

Indigenous peoples have had a longer history on Canadian land than has the existence of the current nation of Canada. Settlers created a concept of Canadian citizenship that does not take into account indigenous perspectives and knowledges. Because of this, indigenous peoples have found it difficult to situate themselves within the political climate of Canada. Through social movements and assertion of rights, indigenous nations have sought self-determination and the right to construct their own narrative of citizenship and nationhood that is distinguished from that of Canada. Educational practitioners and policymakers must consider indigenous perspectives when considering human rights and indigenous experience. While educational institutions are beginning to incorporate indigenous content and attempt effective transmission of indigenous perspectives, they must ensure that they do so with a larger and more inclusive narrative of citizenship that considers indigenous worldviews, thus creating a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of Canada as it relates to experience.

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