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Abstract: *Idle No More is a movement of dissent insofar as it refused the reality and truth about Indigenous peoples that are imposed by the state and the majority of the settler population. In focusing on anticolonial dissent, Idle No More continues previous Indigenous movements, brings together existing movements and campaigns, and maintains open the questions of the goals to be pursued and of the means of pursuing them. The appeals to rights in Idle No More thus represent not only a judicial question but also the re-opening of political questions and the fundamental questioning of the existence of the Canadian state.*

Introduction

In December of 2012 and January of 2013, under the collective name "Idle No More," protests and marches were organized in Ottawa and throughout the country, and round dances took place in public locations such as Midtown Plaza, a shopping mall in downtown Saskatoon, and West Edmonton Mall. Although the attention given to the movement by the mainstream media quickly wavered, five years after these initial events, the phrase "Idle No More" and the hashtag #IdleNoMore continue to bear political meaning, and the resources of the movement continue to be used to mobilize Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike to demonstrate their opposition to the systemic injustice experienced by Indigenous people.[1]

In the first few months of its activity, which will be the focus of this study, Idle No More established itself as a movement not only through public manifestations such as those described above, which reached a wide public and brought attention to their positions, but also through teach-ins, which were its first public events in places such as North Battleford, SK, and Maskwacis (then Hobbema), AB; through its use of social media, which mobilized large numbers of Indigenous persons and communities as well as allies; and through the publication of personal statements, manifestoes, and theoretical texts by those who identified as being Idle No More. Since several studies of the movement's public presence through demonstrations and social media have been published—and since the teach-ins remain available online—I offer a philosophical reading of the major texts published early

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1 At the time of this paper's revision, Idle No More encourages all people to take action in relation to the verdict of the jury that found Gerald Stanley not guilty of manslaughter or murder in the death of Colten Boushie, despite Stanley's avowal that he was holding the gun that killed Boushie. This trial took place in North Battleford, where Idle No More first took shape. See http://www.idlenomore.ca/justice_for_colten_boushie and Issa (2018).

on by participants in Idle No More and collected under the title *The Winter We Danced*. These texts are crucial for understanding the movement: many of the texts and manifestoes published early on would have been known by the authors of the later texts, and the ideas they put forward ran through the movement in other posts, tweets, speeches, and discussions. These texts made explicit the values that continue to be at the core of Idle No More and that allowed people of different cultural and political backgrounds to act in concert and create a movement.

In giving an outline of the political philosophy that runs throughout these texts and that allowed for the convergence of perspectives drawing on different cultural, national, and ideological sources, I also aim to draw out one meaning of the movement—a meaning Euro-Canadian society and governments must understand if they are to truly engage in relations of mutual respect.[2] I will argue that Idle No More was (and continues to be) a movement of dissent insofar as it refused a reality and a truth about Indigenous peoples that is imposed by the state and the majority of the population, as it rejected the settler colonial state itself and the ways of life its laws support (Wolfe 2006; Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Wotherspoon and Hansen 2013) and as it sought to open the possibility for the members and public of the movement to change this reality and live a truth that emerges from their own experiences and perspectives.

First, I will describe Idle No More as a movement and discuss its goals and modes of action, so as to account for its political theory and practice, both of which question the foundations of the Canadian state. Second, I will present Idle No More as leading a form of anti-colonial dissent affirming values and social and political structures that are proper to Indigenous peoples and that seek to restore their ways of life and relationship to the land. And third, I will give an account of the recourse to rights in relation to cultural justice, the duty to consult, and nation-to-nation relationships, which gave it the form of a movement of dissent, as opening the possibility for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike to learn about and live the truth affirmed by Idle No More. Indeed, the central theoretical issue I address here is the need to distinguish dissent from protest, governance, or self-governance, for instance, so as to account for the emancipatory effects it had on those who participated in it, rather than focusing on its effect on the state and its legislation.

The Shape of the Movement

Connective Action and the Primacy of Face-to-face Relations

Departing from protest or revolutionary movements, Idle No More can be described as belonging to a newer form of social movement based on connective action. Rather than being organizationally brokered (as in the case of collective action based on the important resources of organizations such as unions and NGOs, which allow them to involve their followers) or organizationally enabled (as in the case of connective action wherein several

2 I write from the perspective of a Euro-Canadian (a Canadian who is primarily of European descent and raised in cultural traditions stemming from Europe) and a settler.

organizations rally around a theme or problem, allowing their members to be agents in defining the terms of their own participation), Idle No More was crowd-enabled, with digital media platforms adding to face-to-face encounters between individuals without the mediation of organizations, using digital media "platforms as organizational hubs" (Bennett and Segerberg 2013, 13). Such social movements of contentious politics are personalized and "scale up more quickly; produce large and sometimes record-breaking mobilizations; display unusual flexibility in tracking moving political targets and bridging different issues…and build up adaptive protest repertoires…and embrace an ethos of inclusiveness" (Bennett and Segerberg 2013, 25). Activists can be used as sources by traditional media (as became the case of Pamela Palmater and Hayden King, for instance, who were quickly used as spokespersons for Idle No More because of their location in Toronto, rather than in rural Saskatchewan and Alberta) and large publics can join the movement without even hearing about it through traditional media simply because of the presence of other involved individuals in their digital social networks. Communication, and not hierarchy, allows for organization because "communication mechanisms establish relationships, activate attentive participants, channel various resources, and establish narratives and discourses" (Bennett and Segerberg 2013, 42).

However, Idle No More's resemblance with contemporaneous social movements relying on connective action in terms of its timing and reliance on social media must not obscure its origins and development. Indeed, the significance of the movement has been diminished greatly by its appropriation by its settler allies and by the Western left. Traced back to the Arab Spring and often confused with the Occupy movement, which it is assumed to have adapted to Indigenous cultures, Idle No More has been understood, evaluated, and celebrated (or pronounced dead) on the basis of this misidentification (for examples of this identification, see Wood 2015a, Coates 2015, and Wotherspoon and Hansen 2013). By this logic, Indigenous youth and women were said to have suddenly become politically active because others—Arab youth or, more generally, settlers of the 99%—had risen up, showing them what could be done and that political action was worth pursuing. This logic of appropriation suggests that Indigenous youth and women rose against a state that works toward the interests of a small, extremely privileged group and oppresses the majority but a state that is, nonetheless, their own as part of the majority population.

Early on in the movement, however, Coulthard (2012) presented a different origin for the movement: that of other Indigenous movements of struggle. As others did, Coulthard outlined the importance of past actions, such as that of Elijah Harper, the Kanesatake standoff, and the blockades of the 1980s. Ladner (2008) suggests that what sets such Indigenous movements apart from other social movements is that their politics are driven by nationhood and decolonization, and not by the state or by participation or lobbying. Melissa Mollen Dupuis links her own engagement in Idle No More as a continuation of her earlier activism, which was focused on the Conservative government, while pointing out that Idle No More only continues struggles already in place and ought to be understood as a moment of higher momentum in these struggles. (Gentelet 2014, 8, 15) There is also a continuity with earlier Red Power movements, in that Idle No More sought to open the

possibilities of self-determination that were closed by new legislation, even as it expanded beyond the borders of the nation-state to become what Gilio-Whitaker (2015) calls the "first transnational Indigenous social movement." However, there remain differences with past Indigenous movements, as Wanda Nanibush explains: "The actions under the Idle No More banner have largely been peaceful and ceremonial in nature, thus markedly different from any other massive international Indigenous-led movement in history. It is a movement led largely by grassroots Indigenous women" (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 342). It also took place at a distance from the leadership that had been at the heart of earlier Indigenous movements, a distance that is traditionally central to the politics of the Nehiyawak in the roles it gives to women and men.

The manner in which this distance was developed differed throughout the movement. Kappo intended Idle No More to interact with community leaders, who deal with difficult daily situations, on questions of aboriginal and treaty rights. The goal of the movement was to bring those problems to their attention and help them do their work. She implies here two sets of political tasks: while leaders deal with daily questions, regional and national organizations deal with rights; it was the latter who failed and so created the gap that Idle No More came to fill (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 69). Mary Ellen Turpel Lafond refers to a different gap, between the traditional governance that continues to operate in First Nations and the elected governance that does not always overlap with it and that depends on relationships with the Canadian government and its continued enactment of the Indian Act:

> The events surrounding the emergence of Idle No More have resulted in one fundamental change: it irrevocably damaged the legitimacy of Indian Act chiefs to speak on behalf of First Nations. And the new leadership, forged in large part by young women with their own grievances from living under the existing power order, represents a different kind of leadership with the creative potential to change the course of history. (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 336)

Another frequent aspect of study of the movement is a focus on digital media platforms. Such a focus obfuscates the logic of the movement since most of its discussions occurred during face-to-face teach-ins and gatherings in various communities, which reached participants through both social media and word of mouth. Tanya Kappo mentions that Idle No More began in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and then transformed through social media into an urban phenomenon and was able to continue through the winter (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 69). The means of organization ought not to be confused with the actions of the movement: it brought people face-to-face constantly and allowed for speeches to be made at a broad level (including members of many nations and setter allies) just as much as it relied on discussions at a local level. The latter phenomenon, however, is much more difficult to study than the former phenomena: social media leave traces that can be studied, and broad public meetings lent themselves to the presence of journalists and academics. To focus on the former, however, is to focus on politics in general and on Indigenous politics specifically as state-centred and settler-oriented and on Indigenous governance as limited to elected band councils and the Assembly of First

Nations (AFN). Rather, Idle No More presented politics as centred on the community, band, or nation to which the involved persons belong—the context in which traditional practices take place, learned from the Elders and knowledge keepers of the community on its traditional territory or in relation to it.

As a result of the first approach, the use of social media in Idle No More has been well-documented and analyzed to the point where Barker, in explaining how the use of social media allowed the movement to represent itself and overcome fragmentation, can assert that any analysis must begin with the hashtag #IdleNoMore (Barker 2015, 50). The use of the hashtag has thus been understood as taking part in a negotiation and debate over the creation of a common identity, although without paying attention to the broader context where actual Indigenous collective identities are being reclaimed (Callison and Hermida 2015). The study of the platform offered by Facebook allows us to understand a movement that brought offline ties online and interwove them to overcome the isolation of dense clusters—the distance between bands and between Indigenous persons living off-reserve, which generally hinders the cohesion of grassroots Indigenous political movements—all the while giving individuals the freedom to identify with various aspects of Idle No More, adapt its message, and change its symbols (Wood 2015b). The study of the use of Twitter in the movement shows that there was a strong use of cultural markers and important functions of mobilization and opinion sharing (Raynauld, Richez and Boudreau Morris 2018), but this can really teach us only about those who used a specific hashtag and misses the networks that exist throughout "Indigenous Twitter" as well as the dynamics of the conversations and retweets that allow information to be both passed on and adapted. While such studies help us understand the practical dynamics of organization, they tend to miss the stable core of ideas that gave the movement coherence and made it more than a loose association of otherwise disconnected individuals.

A focus on the actions—on the words and deeds—of the movement, rather than on its means of organization opens the question (lying beyond the scope of this study) of whether, as a result of their involvement in Idle No More, youth took on traditional practices and created relationships with Elders. It also opens the question of the reasons for being of Idle No More (since it is not resistance to an unjust state to which dissidents belong), of its goals as a movement (since it is not simply aimed at the state or at settlers), and of its modes of action (since land was not generally occupied or re-occupied, unlike the movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Portugal, Spain, Europe, the United States, and Canada, which all took up temporary residence in highly visible spaces not meant for habitation and which created temporary communities).

A Brief history of Idle No More

Idle No More began as a movement of opposition against Bill C-45 introduced on September 4, 2012.[3] The opposition quickly moved to include a full package of eight bills, dubbed by Janice Makokis the "Harper Indian Act" (2013) and by Russ Diabo as the "Indian Ter-

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3 Several other short accounts of Idle No More's history are available in many of the articles cited here, serving each author's own purpose, and will complement the limited outlook I present here.

mination Act" (2012). The movement focused around both opposition to these bills and education of other members of Indigenous communities (in person and on social media) about the effects such legislation would have on Indigenous practices and lives.

Quickly expanding beyond this movement of protest, Idle No More has succeeded even though all these bills were passed and even though the government of the time did not respond to the demands and claims of the movement. The nature of the movement, as a movement of dissent tied to but distinct from a much broader movement of cultural resurgence, inscribes its actions in a longer history that allowed it to emerge as a movement of protest and opens a longer timeframe for goals that depend on the activities of the movement itself, rather than as practical outcomes. The engagement of Indigenous youth in Canadian state politics as well as in Indigenous cultural, economic, spiritual, philosophical, and political traditions and the clear, strong message sent to settlers through round dances as well as through rallies—all culminating in the assertion (and often in the discovery) of a truth about Indigenous peoples that is not the truth presented by the state—are the measures of the success of Idle No More.

This message was critical of the official structures in place in not only the Canadian state but also in Indigenous organizations that interact with it, namely the AFN and what has been described as "Indian Act governance"—the elected officials who do not coincide with traditional governance and who are said to at times worry about their capacity to receive funding from the Canadian government to the detriment of their role in their nation. However, in all its criticism of such structures for their lack of accountability and inclusivity, Idle No More was itself criticized for its lack of radicalism and for the issues on which it focuses, for instance by those who then created the Indigenous Nationhood Movement (2015).

Finally, because it was aimed toward both Indigenous peoples and settlers, Idle No More is constituted as much by the manner in which it sees itself as it is by the manner in which it is perceived. These perspectives can be observed at play in the mainstream media and in the social networks that coincide with Idle No More. We can observe more specifically the disjunction between the two by comparing the timeline provided by those who maintain the Idle No More website (2013), based on the events they see as milestones, with the timeline provided by the CBC (CBC News 2013), which is based on the articles published on the broadcaster's news website and reflects what journalists, both in the newsroom and outside, see as significant for the broader public. Idle No More appears from the inside as a succession of campaigns and of connected (but distinct) events led by other Indigenous groups (for instance, in Elsipogtog, with the Idle No More website declaring *solidarity* with their struggle, which is, through this very term, presented as separate but related), and from the outside as a series of public actions aimed at the government and the settler public, culminating in large demonstrations and events receiving wide media coverage and declining as public and media attention waned.

The Goals of Idle No More

The suggestion that Idle No More presents a truth about Indigenous peoples against that imposed by the Canadian state and settler society does not imply that the movement pre-

sented *one* truth. Throughout the movement, the primacy of relationships—to land and nation, but also to settlers and their state through treaties and coexistence—is affirmed through a wide range of values and points of reference. Indeed, those who participated in the movement put forward diverse and sometimes competing sets of goals. In *The Winter We Danced* alone, we find five distinct statements:

1. The introduction to the book, meant to speak for all its collaborators if not for Idle No More, speaks of Repealing Bills C-38 and C-45; stabilizing through collaboration the emergency situations facing First Nations communities; and committing to an inclusive and broad-ranging nation-to-nation relationship (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 22).

2. Idle No More itself or, more precisely, the animators of the Idle No More website, through its manifesto, offer four goals distinct from those defined by the editors of the book: recognition of treaties; access to land and water and revenues from resources; communal property of reserve land; and sustainable development (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 71).

3. Hayden King also presents consultations on the Indian Act, which resembles the idea of inclusive nation-to-nation relationships, environmental protections, in a broad sense, and maintaining and upholding treaties but adds the acknowledgement of the rights of Indigenous people without treaties and a national inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal women (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 80).

4. Wab Kinew, among the public figures writing about Idle No More one of the least contentious and most focused on engaging a non-Indigenous public, talks of "recognition of treaty rights, revitalization of indigenous cultures, and an end to legislation imposed without meaningful consultation," adding that these goals will be achieved through the participation of "Canadians of all backgrounds." Kinew also states that Idle No More is about engaging youth, finding meaning, rights, the environment, and democracy. Here, revitalization of culture, broad participation, and democracy arise as elements specific to his position (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 96).

5. Although Coates (2015) bemoans the attention received by Theresa Spence, then chief of Attawapiskat, who had already begun a hunger strike, which was then connected to Idle No More as the movement gained visibility, we must acknowledge that she received widespread support and was seen as part of the movement by its own members. She and her supporters also demanded frameworks for the implementation of existing treaties; environmental oversight; review and consultation of Bills C-38 and C-45; obtaining free, prior, and informed consent; and a national inquiry on violence against Indigenous women. She also

demanded in addition to goals shared with other members of Idle No More a meeting with the Crown, governments, and all First Nations about the Treaty Relationship; plans with timelines; a reform of the comprehensive claims policy; revenue sharing; a sustainable fiscal relationship; equity in funding for education; new institutions to oversee and ensure implementation of a new relationship; and the implementation of the UNDRIP (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 323).

What is common, then, is a focus on treaties and rights, on the environment, on the kind of resource development that is to be pursued and consultations, and on nation-to-nation relationships. As King argues, this diversity in goals beyond these few common points is not a sign of division but is, rather, part of history and of normal political life: "the differences of opinions among people, these cleavages, have always existed and some are natural" (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 151).

The Actions of Idle No More

The anthologization of writings in *The Winter We Danced* brings attention to claims and demands, as well as explanations of the actions of Idle No More. Such explanations of the reasons for being of the movement and of the logic behind their actions and demands go hand in hand with dissent. Indeed, if dissent is about rejecting and presenting truths, then actions must be explained in light of these truths, as bringing them into practice and embodying them. Those who are addressed by this presentation must be convinced by a demonstration through affective and rational means to reject and adopt truths.

However, modes of action other than explanation have included and tended to coalesce through campaigns. Attention was focused first on the series of bills highlighted above; it then shifted to the meeting requested by Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence with the Prime Minister and the Governor General and to the modalities of representation in nation-to-nation discussions; and then continued through diverse campaigns that originated with the Idle No More website organizers: Solidarity Spring; the Sovereignty Summer; and #Oct7Proclaim. Idle No More thus sought to interact with the government and took part in educational activities.

Other campaigns came to be attached to Idle No More: Honour the Treaties, calling for knowledge of and implementation of the promises included in formal treaties; Honour the Apology, calling for a change of attitude in the federal government so as to follow through on the promise included in the apology on residential schools; the movements to bring attention to and spur action on the disappearance and murder of Aboriginal women, which predated and were much broader than Idle No More; and the solidarity campaign with the Mi'kmaq of Elsipogtog, who resisted fracking on their traditional territory. Such campaigns originated outside of the coordinating members of Idle No More, in most cases before Idle No More began as a movement, but became more publicly visible as a result of their intertwining with the goals proper to Idle No More. These campaigns took place mostly through social media, bringing further attention to the more traditional social movements behind them, such as the class action suit leading to the residential school settlement;

the coming together of families of disappeared and murdered women and girls into an organization able to lobby the government; the barricades and road blocks at Elsipogtog to prevent the passage of extractive equipment on the territory.

What is more, Idle No More came to include the very vast set of reactions to the First Nations Education Act, which might have been a precipitating factor to the end of Shawn A-in-chut Atleo's tenure as National Chief of the AFN, but also the "Got Land?" campaign, which began with one businessperson selling custom t-shirts in support of a high school student who was forbidden from wearing a sweater that read "Got Land? Thank an Indian!" to school. Here we have two examples, at the two extremes of mobilization, of how new issues such as a government bill supposed to respond to demands long made by the AFN and a disciplinary measure taken in one school against one student can take on a much larger meaning when they are placed within a larger context rather than taken in isolation. Idle No More thus helped link the many issues faced by Indigenous persons in such a way as to amplify their reach and meaning.

Anticolonial Dissent

What makes Idle No More a movement of dissent is the manner in which these issues and claims are put forward and the justification for the proposed responses, rather than the individual issues. In his study of the Charter 77 dissident movement in Czechoslovakia, Bolton (2012) warns us of three tendencies that emerge from witnessing or learning about the actions of dissidents. We ought not to confuse dissent with simple disagreement but instead seek its meaning in the experiences of dissidents and those who share their context. We ought to refrain from turning dissidents into heroes or devils, so that we can see the daily and unspectacular character of their actions of dissent and notice them in spite of their lack of grandeur. We ought not to give their actions a positive or negative connotation to avoid seeing dissent as intrinsically good or bad or as an end in itself. If we follow these suggestions, the bar by which actions can be considered dissent is set high enough to take into account the risks to which dissidents open themselves, but not so high that actions would have to reach the mythical heights of a select few and rare instances of dissent (where the sacrifice of life might be involved). We also ought to ensure that we do not dismiss acts of dissent on the basis of our own values. We will consequently be able to see how thousands of persons presenting their actions in the context of Idle No More through generally unspectacular actions over a long period of time (as with the use of the hashtag #IdleNoMore on social media) or through a handful of spectacular actions over a limited period time (as with the round dances held in public spaces that have symbolic significance for cultures of European origins, such as shopping malls and Parliament Hill) can constitute actions of dissent.

In addition to Bolton's warnings, we also ought to avoid associating dissent with instant repression, especially through state violence: power is not always maintained through repression or coercion. However, there was risk attached to the actions associated with Idle No More, and in claiming an association with Idle No More itself. Many members of Idle No more have been victims of insults and some of threats and beatings, and police repression,

including but not solely in obtrusive but not immediately physically violent ways, was present around the movement. Lesley Belleau, for instance, recalls that "As organizer of several Idle No More rallies…I received an envelope of hate mail." It contained cut-outs of her articles and of a picture of Shawn Atleo (then National Chief of the AFN) all inscribed with "lewd pictures and writings" and drawing of guns, as well as threats (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 180). As Leanne Simpson (2012) explains and Tara Williamson depicts (in "This is a Ceremony," Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014), for a person to simply take part in cultural practices on recognized traditional territories leads to policing and intimidation, in spite of existing Aboriginal rights. What is more, the policing of the movement has been documented and analyzed, for instance by Crosby and Monaghan, according to whom "the continuity of settler colonial surveillance as a strategy of governance, whereby movements that assert indigenous sovereignty are categorized as a criminal, abnormal threat to settler society" (2016, 42). However, to focus on violence, in its physical and symbolic forms, as denoting the presence of dissent would amount to turning away from dissent and to let a view of politics as state-centered eclipse the phenomenon that is to be understood.

Simpson explains that, while she and her family take part in ceremonies and cultural activities in sacred places, settlers and police officers often approach them: "These interactions have yet to be friendly. Most of the time they are aggressive and racist" (2012). They are meant to create a sense of shame, and they are based on the assumption that she should not be present at these sites. Her focus in discussing these interactions around ceremonies is not on the racism or on the verbal aggression and hints of physical threats; rather, it is to highlight the necessity for Indigenous persons who want to take part in traditional practices to take part in acts of dissent, in this case from property rights: "For me, living as a Nishnaabekwe is a deliberate act—a direct act of resurgence, a direct act of sovereignty" (2012). Simpson describes taking part in ceremonies as upholding a responsibility to herself, her family, her people, and to the land. Many ceremonies, if they are to take place, must take place in dissent from the common understanding and application of Canadian laws and amid ignorance of the forgotten treaty laws and Aboriginal rights and of the laws proper to each Indigenous people. This is not civil disobedience, which consists in breaking a law to draw attention to its unjust character or to that of another law; rather, dissent occurs when breaking the law is inevitable in order to engage in practices and actions that are of existential importance. Simpson explains how this ordinary, day-to-day dissent prepared the ground for the Idle No More movement:

> I support #idlenomore because I believe that we have to stand up anytime our nation's land base is threatened – whether it is legislation, deforestation, mining prospecting, condo development, pipelines, tar sands or golf courses. I stand up anytime our nation's land base in threatened because everything we have of meaning comes from the land – our political systems, our intellectual systems, our health care, food security, language and our spiritual sustenance and our moral fortitude. We all have a responsibility to protect the land and the water. We only have a few generations to turn this around, and we can't do it without access to land. (2012)

Accessing the land is consequently a political action, rather than a solely cultural practice, because of the laws and of the uses of the land that limit this access. To access the land demands that the land be protected from exploitation and destruction; it involves a responsibility to protect it, a responsibility that becomes political in the context of settler colonialism, as this system makes both the use of the land as well as its defense and protection illegal.

Likewise, Dory Nason explains her participation in Idle No More in terms of assuming responsibility: "the boundless love that Indigenous women have for their families, their lands, their nations, and themselves as Indigenous people…motivate Indigenous women everywhere to resist and protest, to teach and inspire, and to hold accountable both Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies to their responsibilities to protect the values and traditions that serve as the foundation for the survival of the land and Indigenous peoples" (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 186–7). Indigenous women like Nason thus turn to others to enjoin them to participate in maintaining the existence of peoples and of the land itself, regardless of whether the actions that allow for survival oppose the actions that make it difficult or impossible, or attempt to reach others to contribute to the life of Indigenous peoples and of the land. Indigenous feminism ran through Idle No More, not only because it included women who took on traditional political roles but also because some of its theorists (Leanne Simpson and Pam Palmater, for instance) had already developed an Indigenous feminist body of work (Morris 2014).

Alongside the question of survival, Siky Allooloo speaks of revitalization and restoration—bringing life and health back to families, communities, homelands, systems of governance, values—all modes of common life that remain present and a source of hope and love – and to bring back autonomy, all for enabling Indigenous nationhood. While Nason turns to Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons alike, Allooloo includes a reference to tradition and to other, newer ways of living: "my work is driven by a desire to hold up and encourage our people to find strength, pride, and empowerment in who they are and the homelands they're from so that we can raise up our nations and live well again on this earth, in both the ways that have been given to us and also in new ways that affirm balance and nurture well-being" (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 198). At the same time as settler colonialism is opposed, other values and other ways of life and systems of governance are proposed, defended, and developed. The relationship to the land lies at the heart of what is affirmed, as Wab Kinew explains: "Our resistance is not abstract, this is about our ways of life, about the integrity of being Anishinaabe. If the land's integrity is compromised, our integrity is compromised" (quoted by Eric Ritskes, Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014, 259).

The many leaders in the movement, with the help of the knowledge keepers, storytellers, Elders, and life speakers who were already supporting them before the movement took shape, asserted their cultural sovereignty, regaining control over their personal and collective existence, in spite of the presence of oppressive colonial laws and bureaucracies (Friedel 2015). Leading in this context did not mean giving a direction but rather offering opportunities for others to take on a broad ethical and political vision defined through belonging and action within the movement. Through such practices, Idle No More was an

occasion for many young Indigenous persons to establish contact for the first time with the land in a manner that also connected them to the culture of their families. Friedel explains how this pedagogy provides place and land-based learning in a context where opportunities are rare and where control of and equality in public schooling is a pressing issue. This learning is not merely noncolonial, existing alongside colonial structures; it is decolonial, insofar as it calls into question the system that depoliticizes Indigenous practices and ways of knowing and being in order to render them suitable for the school system and public conversation. It is also decolonial insofar as it allowed for university students to actively follow and participate in its actions and, by doing so, to reframe many of the items of the Saskatchewan school curriculum (Tupper 2014). In other words, Idle No More allowed for both the "celebration of Indigenous cultural continuity" and asserted "the continued difference of Indigenous peoples" and of their form of citizenship (McLeod 2015, 23). The movement both relied upon and fueled "a thirst among Indigenous youth for a place-based pedagogy premised on learning from the land, in the manner of one's Ancestors, as facilitated by Elders and community knowledge holders" (Friedel 2015, 880).

If Indigenous peoples are indeed to be defined as Indigenous through their relationship to the land as well as to their relationship to colonialism (Alfred and Corntassel 2005), then they are in a position where they must reject what the settler colonial society and state present as the ends of human life and the source of all meaning in order to defend another truth about themselves and human life—that, at the very least, *they* want and need to limit development and growth and subordinate them to their relationship to the land and that human life is better lived in such terms. Settler colonialism negates through its practices the meaning that comes from the land, by blocking practices rooted in the land and substituting them with other, mostly capitalist practices (tied to entertainment, industry, or extraction). It also symbolically negates the meaning that comes from the land by affirming that there is no need to engage in any practices other than its own settler practices, representing progress. It replaces this meaning—that human life is related to animal and vegetal life and with the life of rivers—with its own, that growth and profit are the ends of economic and personal life, to which other ends must be subordinated or around which they must be organized. Indigenous truth about human life can only clash with that of settler colonial societies.

The affirmation of these goals and of this truth is the reason for the rejection of those of settler colonialism, and, because of the legislation and threats that limit the former and protect the latter, this affirmation takes place through actions of dissent. Dissent appears as daily actions of opposition by a group of persons against those who wield power and have the means to enforce a truth about them that is unacceptable, so that they may present and live a truth about themselves. Dissent is an act of rupture with the dominant structures of discourse and institutions for political action. In this rupture from everyday politics arising from a desire to live according to this truth that is different, personal, and officially discounted or even forbidden, dissent opens the possibility for the expression and the experience of many perspectives that may contradict each other but are equally obscured by the use of governmental power. Instead of creating a competing governmental power or the

tools to seize or contest it, dissent leads to campaigns of solidarity without official structures and involves actions which are their own ends, rather than means to other political goals—actions which, for those who undertake them, ought to be allowed and non-political.

Correspondingly, while dissidents do address the state that transforms their behaviours, conducts, and practices into illegal acts and political actions, they spend most of their energy on public opinion. Among the most visible actors in Idle No More and those who wrote about it (and whose explanations were seen as representative enough to be assembled in the collection *The Winter We Danced*), we find above all persons who were already involved in addressing a public comprising members of their nation and community. Actors also include more broadly persons who identify as Indigenous and, most broadly, of persons whose behaviours and political action, or complicity with the state, made living an Indigenous life a political struggle (for settlers and potential allies, see Battell Lowman and Barker 2015; on settler responses of solidarity, see Barker 2015). Reaching a large public means that others who are oppressed will find encouragement in the actions of dissidents and that others who oppress them might realize the meaning and range of their everyday behaviour and attitudes, as well as the sources of their ignorance of the consequences of their actions and attitudes, and so be willing to ask that governments change their policies and laws. Dissent offers itself as a possibility of political action because it is not only the government that must be transformed, but life itself—that is, the life that political and economic structures make possible and that influence governments.

However, to account for anticolonial dissent more completely, we must also take into consideration opposition to settler colonialism, and not simply the opposition to the power of the state. With settler colonialism, those in power form a majority foreign from the group of dissidents, imposing a truth and a culture not from within but from completely different traditions. Dissent then remains a matter of addressing the state and public opinion at the same time but also involves a duality of this public opinion. Tran Duc Thao, a Vietnamese philosopher who studied and worked in France during and after the Second World War, took on the impossible task of trying to convince France to leave Vietnam and abandon the war it waged there, so that Vietnam could leave France peacefully (although he would quickly change his mind and join the revolution). His main conceptual tool is the idea of Vietnam as a lived project and as belonging to a perspective that could not be reconciled with that of the colonial power, France, which he depicts as paternalistic, assimilative, oppressive, and exploitative.

Dissent develops a perspective set against the truth and definition imposed by the colonial power on colonized peoples; set against the internalization of this truth by colonized peoples, which limits their desire to take part in traditional practices; and aims to allow colonized peoples to undertake the work of decolonization in developing their perspective and in taking part in traditional practices in spite of the risks attached to them. This irreducible gap between perspectives dooms the effort of colonization in its attempt to eradicate a culture. Colonialism's powerlessness to convince and make the colonized feel any kind of solidarity only engenders cycles of violence and repression to make up for these cultural failures.

However, understanding this gap is necessary for any change in the relationship between colonizing and colonized peoples. Indeed, Thao argues that the sense of belonging to a community is stronger than any concept or any argument: no one can be convinced to see things differently than they do, unless they begin to see *themselves* and others differently (Thao 1946, 898). The actions of dissidents consist not only in saying that they ought to be free when it is illegal to say so or in living freely when it is illegal to do so, but also in presenting the colonizing society and state not as a civilizational force bringing the benefits of development but as a violent force. In the case of Idle No More, actions of dissent consist in presenting an image of Canada so unflattering that Canadians will want to change their actions rather than simply refuse it and present excuses for their actions. Such a change in perspective would be the starting point toward equal, nation-to-nation relationships.

Dissent through an Appeal to Rights

Ladner (2008) suggests that two approaches proper to Indigenous movements must be distinguished: the approach of the elites, which is based on establishing and claiming rights, and the approach of dissidents in disagreement with the elites of their own nation, who focus on education and social improvement to achieve what was promised through the rights recognized by the state in treaties. These two approaches can be complementary, with the first group working with the state and the second group either attempting to hold the first to its promises or refusing those very promises. Mistahimaskawa and Pitikahanpiwiyin, the Nehiyaw leaders who refused to sign Treaty 6, can consequently be seen as dissidents who first attempted to make the elite groups signing the treaties respect their responsibilities to their bands, and later abandoned such strategies of dissent to move toward rebellion. In Idle No More, we see a movement that focuses on strategies of dissent, refusing the modes of governance of both Indigenous and settler governments without engaging in rebellion or revolution against either one, reaffirming the meaning of the treaties and of the rights that had been papered over by the state.

Idle No More is anchored in a broader attempt to restore Indigenous cultures, which is being seen as a spiritual revival or cultural resurgence, in terms that resemble the idea of a parallel culture expressed by dissidents in Charter 77 (notably V. Benda; Skilling and Wilson 1991). This broader cultural movement existed before Idle No More and provided the movement with many of its central actors and writers; we can find, for instance, a political theory of resurgence in the work of Alfred, Corntassel, Simpson, and Coulthard. The activities of actors and writers within Idle No More can be called dissident because they take on the political meaning given to cultural activities in the context of colonialism and set them as the origin of the possibility of openly and publicly opposing a different truth about who Indigenous persons, peoples, and places are, a truth tied to activities made impossible or difficult by economic activity and the appropriation of land.

Idle No More thus seeks to open pathways that were closed to these activities. As a result, as Coulthard argues (2014), Indigenous members of Idle No More are not seeking recognition or validation of their culture by the state or settler majority but rather the means

to live their culture and, more importantly, the removal of barriers opposing this goal. Widia Larivière explains that interaction with settlers as potential allies creates opportunities for them to meet and get to know Indigenous peoples, to create ties, and to find ways to work together—an invitation to dialogue that began with the creation of Idle No More by three Indigenous women and one settler woman. (Gentelet 2014, 11, 14, 16) They are thus claiming cultural justice through, first, the critique of cultural injustice (as Niezen [2009] defines the concept), whereby some cultures develop while others are attacked and made to disappear, creating a situation of oppression, and, second, the development of the means of cultural justice, which involves reparation for past harm as well as inclusion by other cultures as partners in decisions affecting their culture, rather than exclusion from such decisions and from access to the resources needed for cultural activities (resources that differ from one culture to the next) and subordination through decisions made for them.

The original campaign behind Idle No More, opposition to a legislative package, as well as many of the claims made under its banner, made reference to the Canadian state's duty to consult Indigenous peoples where their Aboriginal rights, title, and treaty rights are at stake. According to the doctrine attached to this duty, which has emerged from a series of relatively recent Supreme Court decisions and is quickly evolving, the Crown must deal honourably with Indigenous peoples and honour its treaties; it must promote "a reconciliation of prior Aboriginal occupation and current Crown sovereignty" (Newman 2009, 19); and it must generate a new constitutional order for Canada. For consultations to be deemed proper, they demand that the state live up to the doctrine; that it build relationships; and that it work toward reconciliation in good faith. In other words, it requires the "free, prior, and informed consent" of Indigenous peoples and their participation in the "decision-making processes that concern them," a participation that is to take place "in conformity with their customs and traditions" (Inman et al. 2013, 268, 276, 280).

The appeal to the state's duty to consult is a refusal of legislation that does not meet these criteria and, indeed, a suggestion that the law does not meet constitutional requirements as set out by the Supreme Court. Beyond a call to the state to fulfill its duty, this appeal seeks to inform public opinion (both Indigenous and settler), first, of the existence of this duty and, second, of its wilful breach by the state. This appeal to the duty to consult takes at face value the commitment of the state to the rule of law (respect for decisions of the Supreme Court and, through it, of its own constitution) and uses it as a tool with which to defend ways of life that breaches to the duty to consult, to treaties, and to Indigenous rights—breaches of the rule of law—threaten. This appeal also attempted to extend the scope of the duty to consent beyond policy and decisions around exploration, so that it can include legislation.

What is more, appealing to the state's duty to consult acts to counter the dismissal of Indigenous peoples as lying outside Canada's political present. Both the breaches of obligations, treaties, and rights that led to the existence of Idle No More and the reactions against Idle No More placed the movement in what Baker and Verreli (2017) call a "state of liminality." Quoting Anne Norton, they explain that "liminal groups are those resistant subcultures that exist within the territorial boundaries of the nation but fail or refuse to

embody one or more of the core identity claims that define that nation" (44). Because Idle No More makes it difficult for some other members of the nation to see themselves in their movement, they are seen as rejecting Canada as a nation and are described as foreign and threatening. To delegitimize the movement—and to allow for these breaches—commentators such as Jeffrey Simpson, Andrew Coyne, and Jonathan Kay respond by reasserting Canadian national identity in a way that excludes them and celebrates what the movement opposes; by creating stereotypes of "good" (Canadian) and "bad" (un-Canadian) Indigenous persons; and by casting them back into history, because of a supposed desire to return to the way of life of their ancestors or hope for an unrealistic utopia.

Instead, the texts gathered in *The Winter We Dance* set as the horizon for Indigenous political action the realization of nation-to-nation relationships and the repeal of the Indian Act and of all legislation made for Indigenous peoples without their involvement. Much of the actions undertaken under the banner of Idle No More were presented as defending present-day rights: treaty rights, existing on the basis of treaties that were signed and extending to the Royal Proclamation, as well as Aboriginal rights, customary rights existing on the basis of the presence of Indigenous peoples prior to colonization by Europeans and of their activities on their traditional territories (Kulchyski 2013).

However, Idle No More did not appeal directly to the formal rights and principles of the political system and did not use the political or judicial institutions themselves, thus avoiding legitimizing the settler colonial state. Rather, it pointed Indigenous and non-Indigenous publics toward what commitments to rights and principles entail in relation to the perspectives and ways of life that were lived, expressed, and demonstrated through Idle No More. For example, the manner in which Idle No More took seriously the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) amounts to giving content to rights that are, first, recognized by the state and ratified through international treaties only to be negated in practice and, second, understood solely from the perspective of the state and not from the perspective of those to whom they apply.

Idle No More also sought to provide content to Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution: it defended self-determination not in terms of independent statehood but in terms of the right to exist as distinct communities with their own decision-making processes and to participate in the decision-making of the broader society (Inman et al. 2013), as well as the political, economic, social, and cultural rights that are attached to self-determination. In this manner, Idle No More defended the Aboriginal title that it presents as being attacked by state legislation but also provides content that the state refuses to Aboriginal rights. This is content its members would have expected the state to refuse but which is nonetheless desired and necessary for the life of Indigenous peoples and persons.

Idle No More presents three instances of the logic of appeals: appeals to international law, notably to the UNDRIP and the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous peoples; other appeals going over the head of the government, such as to the Governor General, who represents the Crown who signed the treaties and holds the constitutional responsibility of acting as a check on the government in cases where it does not follow procedure; and,

above all, appeals to the public to respect and protect these rights, or at least to call on their elected representatives to do so. Such appeals, together with the logic of self-organization and cultural revitalization, allow Idle No More to circumvent the state and the government and enable its success to depend on factors other than the capacity to affect the outcome of state policy and legislation.

Conclusion

Idle No More was, and continues to be, a movement of dissent, a social movement, a movement of opposition, and an Indigenous movement that is aimed at appealing to principles different from those of the state, bringing the very state and its sovereignty into question through its actions. Rather than looking to the past for justifications, it draws from the present for its arguments: the specific rights of Indigenous peoples are not tied to injustices done in the past, nor to the fact that longstanding cultures are in danger but rather from what makes freedom possible, specifically for Indigenous peoples, in the current context—hence the focus on decolonization, consultation, and participation through broader rights and on cultural activities that strengthen community bonds as well as bonds to the land.

As a movement of dissent, Idle No More requires reactions from governments and state and other institutions as well as media coverage that differ from those required by other social movements. When scholars such as Wotherspoon and Hansen situate the peak of the movement in "high level talks between a delegation of First Nations leaders and the nation's Prime Minister and senior cabinet members," discuss the movement by focusing on its opposition to legislation, and approach the question of the social and political inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian state (2013, 22–3), they view Idle No More as a movement based on protest rather than on dissent. This state-centred and settler-oriented approach is able to recognize the difference in legal and rights frameworks and the specificity of "Indigenous perspectives on knowledge and social engagement" (2013, 25). However, it frames the movement as seeking inclusion and attempting to end marginalization toward full participation, as recognizing the legitimacy of the Canadian state.[4] In being a movement of dissent, Idle No More makes even broader claims about political life and relations, which must be taken into account in any political response, lest it continue to be exclusionary by presuming and imposing the conditions of their participation in Canadian political life as Canadians. Furthermore, as a movement of dissent, Idle No More is not to be evaluated in terms of its immediate influence on public policy, but rather in terms of the capacity it builds among its members, of the publicity it gives to ideas, and of the possibilities

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 4 A use of Bourdieu's notion of "fields" more appropriate, and creative, than that of Wotherspoon and Hansen would highlight that there is not one single political field organized around the state (a framework that has been quite fruitful in the study of social movements, symbolic violence, and power) but, rather, that where a settler colonial state and Indigenous peoples are concerned, two different political fields exist, with the activities of Idle No More relating to the two fields at once. Here again, Wotherspoon and Hansen go as far as possible in recognizing the difference of Indigenous peoples without recognizing the presence of two distinct moral and political orders, and while using the expression "Canada's Indigenous peoples" (2013, 22, 33).

for action it opens in view of the realities it affirms and refuses. While, like most social movements, Idle No More coalesced as a movement around protest against specific pieces of legislation, it nonetheless existed as an affirmation of politics that is entirely other than that presented by the Canadian state. It undermined the primacy given by governments to the AFN as an interlocutor, stemming from an opposition to the definition of politics through the Indian Act and a revaluation of traditional modes of community governance. It presented a comprehensive vision of the contents of the duty to consult as tied to the Royal Proclamation and to treaties, and it highlighted the role of the Crown in nation-to-nation relationships, signifying that Indigenous peoples had not delegated or surrendered their capacity and authority to make laws for themselves to the Canadian government, but rather entered into international treaties. All of these ideas, which aimed to transform the manner in which politics took place rather than to affect specific policies, continue to be affirmed years after the height of the movement, even with a change in government and in this government's rhetoric.[5]

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