

RESEARCH NOTE / NOTE DE RECHERCHE

# Salient Indigenous Acts of Resistance in Canada, 2010–2020: Current Trends

Minh Do 

Department of Political Science, University of Guelph, 50 Stone Road East, Guelph, ON N1G 2W1, Canada  
Email: [mndo03@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mndo03@uoguelph.ca)

## Abstract

Indigenous peoples continue to challenge Canadian colonial policies through nonroutine acts of resistance. Sustained scholarly attention on the frequency and characteristics of Indigenous resistance has dropped precipitously, with the time span of this scholarship typically ending by the early 2000s. Research on more recent acts of resistance is directed to small-*n* case studies. This research note examines Indigenous resistance in Canada between 2010 and 2020 as reported by news articles from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) to identify key characteristics of salient Indigenous resistance: What issue areas were the subject of resistance movements? Which Indigenous communities or groups contributed to acts of resistance? What strategies were employed? The research note's findings suggest that salient acts of resistance rarely result in immediate policy change from the state; instead, resistance has transformative potential to develop Indigenous governance that departs from settler-colonial state processes.

## Résumé

Les peuples autochtones continuent de défier les politiques coloniales canadiennes par des actes de résistance inhabituels. L'attention soutenue des chercheurs sur la fréquence et les caractéristiques de la résistance autochtone a chuté précipitamment, la durée de ces recherches se terminant généralement au début des années 2000. La recherche sur les actes de résistance plus récents est orientée vers des études de cas de portée moindre. Cet article examine la résistance autochtone au Canada entre 2010 et 2020, telle qu'elle est rapportée par la Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC news), afin d'identifier les principales caractéristiques, et notamment : quels domaines ont fait l'objet de mouvements de résistance ? Quels groupes ou communautés autochtones ont contribué aux actes de résistance ? Quelles stratégies a-t-on employées ? Cet article parvient également à la conclusion que les actes de résistance marquants aboutissent rarement à un changement de politique immédiat de la part de l'État; au contraire, la résistance a un potentiel transformateur pour développer une gouvernance autochtone qui s'écarte des processus de l'État colonisateur.

**Keywords:** Indigenous; resistance; collective action; Canada

**Mots clés:** autochtone; résistance; action collective; Canada

## Introduction

In the past decade, several salient Indigenous acts of resistance made headlines in mainstream Canadian news, including Idle No More and, more recently, the Wet'suwet'en land defenders challenging the Coastal GasLink pipeline. Although Indigenous acts of resistance are commonplace in Canada, sustained scholarly attention on Indigenous resistance has declined precipitously since 2010. Moreover, the time span of this scholarship typically ends by the early 2000s (Wilkes, 2004a, 2004b; Ramos, 2006, 2008). This empirical gap is surprising because Indigenous resistance has been identified as increasing in frequency since the 1990s (Wilkes, 2004b). The literature also finds that resistance is driven primarily by First Nations (Ramos, 2008) employing "blockades" or similar actions that limit settler access to territory (Wilkes, 2004b), with the aim of attaining self-governing powers and strengthening Indigenous identity (Repin, 2012). This study seeks to identify whether these characteristics continue to define acts of Indigenous resistance from 2010 to 2020. Are there certain Indigenous groups that engage in these acts more frequently? Are there patterns in the issues that trigger resistance movements? Do these salient acts achieve the political or policy goals of Indigenous participants?

This research note analyzes the character and efficacy of salient Indigenous resistance across Canada, as reported by news media from 2010 to 2020, through a content analysis of online news articles from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Acts of resistance are distinguished according to the participating Indigenous nation(s) or organization(s), the tactic(s) used by the Indigenous participants, and the central issue that triggered resistance. The research note finds that of the salient resistance events covered by the media, acts of resistance have increased over time. According to the CBC's reporting, they are primarily organized and executed by Indigenous nations and are mainly concerned with major development projects. Solidarity movements that involve several Indigenous nations also appear to be prominent. Moreover, injustices that affect gender justice and Indigenous youth produce salient resistance movements, in addition to those defending territory. Acts of resistance are found to rarely reverse state action but can positively support the resurgence of Indigenous governance grounded in Indigenous traditions. This transformative potential may explain why the state is reported to use injunctions and arrests when resistance is underway.

## Indigenous Resistance: An Enduring Feature of Canadian Politics

Indigenous resistance describes actions that assert Indigenous ways of life, governance and self-determination while challenging settler-colonial hegemonic logics and institutions (Bargh, 2007; see also Stark et al., 2023). Resistance entails a broad range of actions, from overt confrontations such as restricting settler access to territory to daily acts of "making do" that implicitly reshape power relationships (Bargh, 2007: 17). Engaging in resistance advances the ongoing process of

decolonization to halt the settler-colonial project of “complete[y] eradicat[ing] . . . the original inhabitants of contested land” (Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013: 80). Resistance is an inevitable consequence of Indigenous sovereignty being nested within and apart from the settler-colonial state (Simpson, 2014). In the Canadian context, Indigenous peoples continue to resist settler-colonialism in order to assert Indigenous sovereignty, initiate diplomatic relations and uphold Indigenous law-making over unlawful colonial acts (for example, Borrows, 2005; Simpson, 2021; Eisenberg, 2022; Estes, 2019; Coburn, 2015; Coulthard, 2014). This study examines nonroutine and highly visible acts of resistance that directly challenge the state after a specific act of colonial injustice (Wilkes, 2006). These types of resistance acts can be distinguished from “everyday” acts of resurgence that also create Indigenous ways of living apart from strategic engagement with the state (Corntassel, 2012).

Existing scholarship that assesses the frequency of Indigenous resistance over time comes to similar conclusions about trends from the 1960s into the early 2000s: Indigenous resistance steadily increases after the 1960s, which mirrors the increased political mobilization of Indigenous groups, with a major spike in events in the 1990s (Wilkes, 2004a, 2004b; Ramos 2006, 2008). It is suggested that acts of resistance remain frequent into the 2010s, particularly in the context of the Idle No More movement beginning in late 2012 (Morden, 2015). Nevertheless, there have been no systematic studies of Indigenous resistance since the early 2000s to confirm whether the frequency of resistance has remained high.

These studies that analyze the frequency of Indigenous resistance over time also consider the primary organizers of these events. Ramos (2006) finds that Indigenous political organization in Canada is not driven by a main organizational force. Therefore, both First Nations communities and broader Indigenous organizations partake in organizing resistance (Ramos, 2008), many of which are at the local level (Wilkes, 2004b). The organizers of Indigenous resistance may be changing, as Idle No More demonstrated the capacity of grassroots groups with decentralized organizational structures to lead nationwide resistance (Hodgins, 2020; Wood, 2015; The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, 2014).

These same studies focus on explaining the causal factors that make collective action possible in both large-*N* studies (Ramos, 2006, 2008; Wilkes 2004a) and in case study approaches (Alcantara, 2010; Morden, 2013; Morden, 2015; Repin, 2012; Barker, 2015), although this literature does not analyze more recent instances of Indigenous resistance. Due to their focus on establishing causality between various conditions to explain the likelihood of Indigenous resistance, these studies are less concerned with the grievance or injustice that triggers a specific act of resistance, although attention is given to the tactics employed across events (Wilkes, 2004b).

The scholarship on Indigenous resistance does not systematically discuss the efficacy of these acts to achieve desired outcomes for Indigenous participants. Measuring success may be challenging due to the varied perspectives and goals of Indigenous participants (Belanger and Lackenbauer, 2015). And yet some acts of resistance provoke the state to reverse the specific course of action that triggered the resistance event (Russell, 2010), while in other instances, political change is not attained (Morden, 2013). Indigenous acts of resistance may constitute critical events that help frame and direct future macro political changes (Ramos, 2008;

Ladner, 2010; Coulthard, 2014). Given that Idle No More occurred in the early 2010s, it is valuable to examine whether more visible resistance actions have taken place and whether they produce political change. Relatedly, how the state engages with Indigenous participants may reveal whether this engagement attempts to diminish the efficacy of resistance acts, such as through the mobilization of security forces (Dafnos, 2013; Crosby and Monaghan, 2018).

There are few studies on Indigenous resistance that show the frequency and character of these acts of political agency after 2010. A longitudinal analysis can help identify potential cases for future case study analyses, which could explore both how Indigenous acts of resistance emerge and their consequences.

## Methodology

This research note employs protest event analysis (PEA) to analyze written news coverage of Indigenous resistance from the CBC's online news division (CBC.ca) from 2010 to 2020. CBC is chosen over news outlets like the *Globe and Mail* because it produces more consistent reporting on Indigenous-specific issues across the country, although it is unlikely to cover local events. Focusing on one source also makes a longitudinal, historical analysis more feasible. However, this choice potentially invites other biases, such as CBC's generally left-leaning reporting (Ipsos Reid, 2010) and its state-funded status. This study examines the CBC news articles to identify the descriptive characteristics of each act of resistance; descriptive bias in the media is generally low, even if omissions about event particulars occur (Earl et al., 2004: 73). There was also a significant diversity of reporters across the news stories, which limits bias found in individual reporters.

A key shortcoming of using the media's coverage to identify acts of resistance is that the media exhibits bias over which events are covered (Earl et al., 2004; Weidmann, 2016). This disadvantage may be significant because this study uses only one news outlet, possibly introducing systemic omissions in reporting (Swank, 2000; Koopmans and Rucht, 2002). News outlets may exclude events based on their size, the issues at stake, the significance of actors and the importance of the locations at which events occur (see Ortiz et al., 2006: 398–99; della Porta and Diani, 2006). Additionally, the media's incentive structures—such as profit, attention cycles toward events, and available physical infrastructure—influence their reporting (Ortiz et al., 2006: 400–401). There is considerable disagreement among those scholars who assert that these biases are consistent over time and thus not unduly problematic (for example, Oliver and Maney, 2000; McCarthy et al., 2008) and those who contend that the biases render media data limited in its ability to represent resistance activities (for example, Myers and Caniglia, 2004; Cook and Weidmann, 2019).

To mitigate these biases, this study is directed at understanding the characteristics and efficacy of Indigenous resistance that were covered by the media, so the media's coverage is not used as a proxy for real-world events. Mainstream media frames Indigenous peoples' claims in ways that delegitimize their concerns and protect the colonial state's authority (see, for example, Hume and Walby, 2021; Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, 2012; Baker and Verrelli, 2017; Wilkes et al., 2010; Wilkes, 2016). Rather than adopt the media's biased interpretation of Indigenous

peoples' claims, the media's reporting is used as a proxy for an action's level of saliency. Another method to improve the reliability of media data is to include additional data to triangulate the media's coverage (Hutter, 2014). In future studies, adding Indigenous-centred news sources like the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, police archives (Fillieule, 1996) and social media (Zhang and Pan, 2019) can supplement mainstream news reporting of Indigenous resistance.<sup>1</sup>

Indigenous resistance was identified through keyword searches on the CBC Archives; if there were broken links, news stories were searched using Google News. Databases such as Canadian Newsstream and Factiva produced fewer articles from CBC but were used to confirm that all relevant articles were collected.<sup>2</sup> Articles were coded to identify the primary organizer(s) of Indigenous resistance activities, the tactics employed by the participants, the main issue or grievance that triggered the act of resistance, whether resistance involved violent acts or reactions, and the state's response to the resistance. Keyword searches of the terms *Indigenous*, *Aboriginal*, *Native*, *Indian*, *Inuit*, *First Nation* and *Métis* were used to identify instances of Indigenous resistance. Keywords to capture different forms of resistance included *protest*, *march*, *rally*, *demonstration*, *acts of solidarity*, *blockades* and *fish-ins/log-ins* (Minkoff, 1997; Ponting and Gibbins, 1981). As in Ramos' (2008) study, resistance was coded if nonroutine actions were taken outside of state-based political and legal processes with a clear target, participants, place, action and goal (802). If more than two of these criteria were not met, then the event was excluded (802). Although a broad range of activities is included to capture the various ways Indigenous actors may demonstrate resistance, only "physical" forms are included, to the exclusion of actions that take on discursive forms (Koopmans and Statham, 1999).

An act of resistance is coded as one event if the action is largely continuous, with no more than 24 hours between activities; it is located within the same locale; and it includes the same participants with the same goals (Hutter, 2014: 348). Some events constituted acts of solidarity in support of another event taking place elsewhere. It is noted in the dataset if events are connected to a broader movement. Solidarity events are classified as representing the same issue as the primary act of resistance, but these events are coded as separate instances of resistance because they were organized by different Indigenous groups and nations. Instances of resistance and various characteristics about the events were coded by an individual coder on NVivo.

A total of 780 news articles were coded and 137 different issues were identified, excluding acts of solidarity in support of an existing act of resistance. Information was only coded if it was explicitly stated in the news articles.<sup>3</sup> The news articles did not always provide basic information about an event, such as the primary issues or actors involved, so the results of the coding likely represent a conservative estimate of events' characteristics.

## Results

Across the 137 issues identified, most events were only covered by one news story. Resistance that had at least 10 articles about the event included 1492 Land Back Lane (2020); the death and subsequent trial relating to Colten Boushie (2018);

**Table 1.** Indigenous Resistance That Received the Most Coverage in CBC News

Name of resistance	Year	Number of articles
1492 Land Back Lane	2020	33
Death and trial about Coulten Boushie	2018	12
Death and trial about Tina Fontaine	2018	10
Elsipogtog First Nation anti-fracking resistance	2013	11
Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline project	2011–2014	10
Idle No More	2012–2013	57
Indigenous Lives Matter	2019–2020	17
Indigenous youth suicide crisis	2016–2020	11
Justice for Our Stolen Children	2018	25
Mi'kmaq fisheries	2020	21
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) crisis	2014–2017	45
Muskrat Falls	2015–2018	23
Trans Mountain pipeline project	2014–2019	68
Wet'suwet'en resistance against the Coastal GasLink LNG pipeline	2019–2020	226

the death and subsequent trial relating to Tina Fontaine (2018); the Elsipogtog First Nation's resistance to fracking (2013); the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline project (2011–2014); Idle No More (2012–2013); Indigenous Lives Matter, particularly after the shooting of George Floyd in America (2019–2020); the Indigenous suicide crisis among youth (2016–2020); Justice for Our Stolen Children (2018), which involved camps to bring attention to Indigenous children lost to protective services and the justice system; resistance in order to protect Mi'kmaq fisheries in Nova Scotia (2020); the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) crisis (2014–2017); the risk of contamination from flooding a reservoir at Muskrat Falls (2015–2018); the Trans Mountain pipeline project (2014–2019); and the Wet'suwet'en land defenders against the Coastal GasLink LNG pipeline (2019–2020). These issues appear to be the most salient in the 2010–2020 period and are summarized in [Table 1](#).

Salient acts of resistance across 2010–2020 appear to be increasing over time, with a total of 442 events identified, including acts of solidarity. [Figure 1](#) below shows the number of events in each year throughout the 10-year period. Of the salient issues identified above, most unfolded after 2015, with several events associated for each issue. It is likely that this count is a conservative estimate of the number of resistance activities across the 137 issues; for instance, it is possible that acts of resistance early in this period were not found in the scan of CBC news articles because earlier events may not be comprehensively archived. When accounting for the key issues of each action, only the most immediate injustice that triggered the resistance activity was chosen, rather than underlying problems, although many injustices related to the perpetuation of settler-colonialism are linked. Some instances of resistance were counted as including more than one key issue since a resistance activity can advocate or bring attention to several different issues.

An analysis of the news articles indicates that Indigenous participants mainly organized to contest development projects. Fifty acts of resistance out of 137 were related to major projects; 6 of these 50 acts of resistance contested commercial or residential building projects, 35 challenged natural resource projects, and 9 were concerned with existing projects damaging the environment or culturally

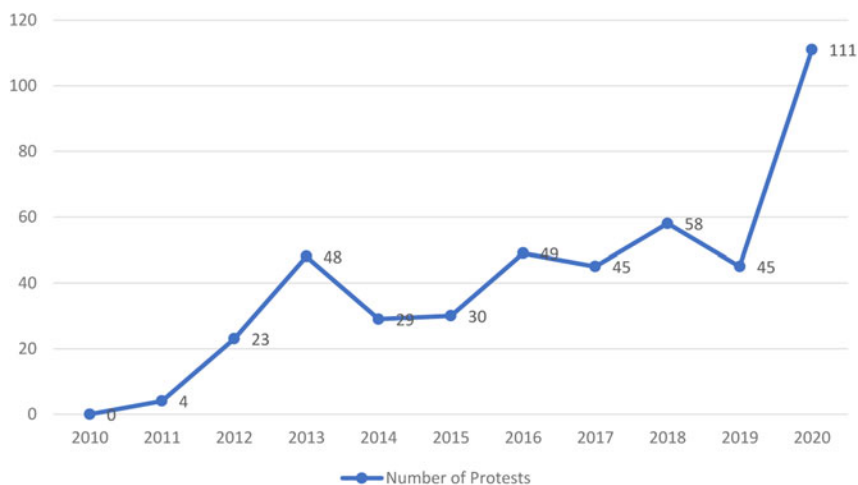


Figure 1. Annual number of acts of resistance, 2010–2020

significant sites. Five of the most salient acts across the 10-year period involve concerns about major projects, such as the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Coastal GasLink pipeline.

The next issue that garnered significant attention from Indigenous groups involved criminal justice outcomes. Within this category, most events were marches or rallies in response to murdered or missing Indigenous women and girls (8),<sup>4</sup> such as Cassidy Bernard, Loretta Saunders and Serena McKay.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, resistance was also organized to demand a national inquiry on MMIWG and to critique the development and subsequent government reaction to the inquiry's findings (7). Indigenous groups challenging police conduct that resulted in the death of an Indigenous person, such as the deaths of Greg Ritchie, Jordan Lafond and Rodney Levi, constituted 8 events. Although there were fewer events reacting to criminal trial outcomes (5), two of those events, the separate trials addressing the death of Coulten Boushie and Tina Fontaine, were highly salient (see Figure 1). A total of 28 demonstrations challenged the colonial nature of Canada's criminal justice system.

Fifteen resistance activities were concerned with poor living conditions or other related socioeconomic issues. For example, First Nations in Attawapiskat demanded access to clean drinking water and an end to boil water advisories. Lack of housing also resulted in the formation of camps in urban centres such as Winnipeg and Vancouver. Eleven acts of resistance were about Aboriginal rights, title or disputed land claims. These acts typically focused on an Indigenous group's exercise of rights, such as the Mi'kmaq asserting their fishing rights in 2020. Ten resistance movements contested specific state legislation, statutes or regulations. The Idle No More movement is the most salient example in this category, whereby Indigenous nations from across the country staged round dances and travelled to Parliament Hill to halt the Harper government's omnibus bill.

The remaining issues had less than 10 acts of resistance: racist interactions or experiences (8), such as the separate incidents in Canadian Tire and Bank of

Montreal where employees called the police in the presence of Indigenous customers in 2017 and 2020, respectively; symbolic politics related to place names or statues (7), such as #CancelCanadaDay in 2017 and 2020; child welfare policies (6), such as the Healing Camp for Justice and Justice for Our Stolen Children, both in 2018; and internal issues within Indigenous governments, such as band council decisions (4).

The articles reveal that acts of resistance were primarily organized and executed by specific Indigenous nations or communities. Only instances in which the articles explicitly accredited an event with an Indigenous nation were counted, while interviews with individual actors from various Indigenous nations were not. The specific actors in resistance events were often underreported, as they were only mentioned 292 times throughout the 780 news articles. There were 213 mentions throughout the articles that show Indigenous nations and communities were the primary actors in resistance events. The media often attributes resistance activities to a nation, but it may be the case that certain groups and activists within a community are responsible for organizing resistance, rather than the political leadership. Not many of the nations identified were repeat players, as most were recorded as organizing acts of resistance one time. The nations that were referenced more than 10 times as organizing multiple acts include the Tyendinaga Mohawks (38 references), Six Nations of the Grand River (25), Kahnawake Mohawks (13) and the Haudenosaunee (11).

The second most significant group of actors to organize and execute acts of resistance, according to media reports, were Indigenous activist groups, with 58 references. These groups are Indigenous-led organizations that advocate for specific issues, and their membership is not exclusive to Indigenous nations or communities. Other organizations or groups that were either not clearly Indigenous or were non-Indigenous accounted for 24 references. Non-Indigenous groups, such as municipal communities or environmental groups, accounted for 8 references. There were only 5 recorded instances of formal Indigenous political organizations being the central leaders or organizers of resistance activities. Indigenous political organizations include associations and organizations that represent several Indigenous nations in regional, provincial and national political arenas. There was evidence that these groups participated in other ways, such as presenting talks at rallies or lobbying government for policy change when resistance was underway.

The news articles describe four main tactics used during acts of resistance. Marches or rallies were referenced the most, at 444 times across the articles. The media also frequently described the use of blockades, which was referenced 313 times. Indigenous land defenders sometimes asserted that they were using checkpoints, not blockades, because they allowed entry through their territory if consent from the relevant Indigenous nation was acquired. Similar colonial-language-like occupations were referenced 84 times and camps 69 times. There is evidence that other tactics were employed, but the news articles suggest they were used infrequently (less than 15 times); these include motorcade-traffic convoys (11), which block major roads, and sit-ins (6). In identifying tactics, these types of actions were coded according to the media's reporting, and it is possible that the meaning of these terms is inconsistent across the articles.

The news articles suggest that these strategies largely excluded violent acts. Out of the 780 news articles, there are only 26 references to participants damaging



property. There are also only 6 references to participants throwing rocks at law enforcement. There were some references of violence against Indigenous groups. Threats against resisters' property were referenced 14 times, with 10 of these referring to non-Indigenous peoples destroying Mi'kmaq fisheries and equipment in 2020. There are also 8 references of violence against Indigenous peoples by non-Indigenous civilians who were often from far-right groups staging counterprotests.

Although acts of resistance were largely nonviolent, the state's responses suggest a preference for using instruments that attempt to re-establish the settler-colonial status quo. There are 169 references to police arrests and 162 references of court injunctions. Several news articles may be referencing the same series of arrests or injunctions against Indigenous groups, but it is revealing that news coverage about state responses overwhelmingly focus on arrests and injunctions. Political negotiations by state officials were only referenced 5 times in articles covering Idle No More and the Wet'suwet'en land defenders, which were both nationwide acts of resistance. It is possible that other political negotiations occurred but were not publicized.

## Discussion

The findings from the CBC news articles reveal characteristics of recent, salient Indigenous resistance in Canada that are worth investigating further. The frequency of salient acts of resistance appears to be increasing over time, with the most recent year under study exhibiting the most events. This increasing number may suggest that Indigenous actors are using resistance to pursue political and social change, regardless of the state's purported embrace of reconciliation politics.

According to the news articles, Indigenous nations were the primary organizers of resistance, followed by Indigenous activist groups. Resistance remains a crucial way to assert Indigenous sovereignty, especially because the processes to define and delineate Aboriginal rights and title under the Constitution Act, 1982 are slow and constrained by colonial interpretive logics. This finding also corroborates Ramos' (2008) and Russell's (2010) analyses indicating that a lack of land claims resolutions is a main driver of Indigenous resistance.

Because exercising Indigenous control over territory varies across each Indigenous nation due to their specific relationship to the land, it is expected that most mobilization to protect territory involve the nations affected by a particular project. However, 9 out of 50 acts of resistance against development projects included solidarity movements by nations not directly impacted by a project. Of those 9 acts, 6 are also the most salient acts of resistance within the period under study. Future research could investigate when solidarity movements are triggered and whether solidarity is supported by networks of co-resistance.

The second most common issue that triggers resistance is criminal justice outcomes, such as the MMIWG crises and the results of criminal trials. This finding stands apart from past studies analyzing Indigenous resistance over time. Although Indigenous peoples' colonial experiences with the criminal justice system are well documented (Stark, 2016; Monchalin, 2016; Chartrand, 2019; Starblanket and Hunt, 2020), Indigenous resistance in these contexts is often siloed from the literature on Indigenous land defenders. Examining resistance movements that challenge colonial criminal justice outcomes may reveal how Indigenous peoples

challenge the settler carceral state and broader systems of colonial control (Mussell, 2023). Resistance against the criminal justice system included 5 issues that garnered solidarity events across the country and constituted 3 of the 14 most salient issues between 2010 and 2020.

The findings from this study reveal how acts of resistance typically do not immediately change settler governments' course of action, which is consistent with observations made by Morden (2013). Of the most salient resistance movements challenging development projects, only one contributed to the cancellation of a project: the Elsipogtog land defenders in New Brunswick successfully compelled SWN Resources to withdraw from the province. Those challenging the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric plant in Newfoundland directed attention toward the risks of mercury poisoning from this existing project. A commission asserted that the company should be held accountable for environmental contamination and concealing key project information (LeBlanc, 2020), and yet the dam will continue to operate, with the province receiving funding from the federal government to compensate its large cost overrun (CBC News, 2021). The other salient acts of resistance in the period were not successful in cancelling major projects. Construction on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and the housing project in Caledonia are underway. The Wet'suwet'en resistance, which had by far the most media coverage, did not result in the cancellation of the pipeline. Political negotiations between the federal, provincial and Wet'suwet'en government resulted in the recognition of Wet'suwet'en title, but the project is proceeding as planned. Despite the occurrence of highly salient mobilization, the state has not consistently yielded to Indigenous groups' resistance.

And yet, a narrow definition of success as gaining short-term policy or legal change neglects other important political change. Morden (2013: 507) suggests that Indigenous resistance is successful at shifting discursive change and generating awareness. If agenda setting is more broadly defined as constituting the common-sense understandings of political issues and policy choices, then resistance could shape political agendas and discourse in the long term (Woodly, 2015; Carpenter, 2023). For example, the Wet'suwet'en resistance discouraged the advent of other pipeline projects in their territory (Temper, 2019). Future research on collective mobilization could investigate the conditions under which resistance can prompt policy change, either through discursive shifts or by altering the range of available policy choices (for example, Morden, 2013).

Crucially, resistance produces political change among Indigenous groups. Engaging in resistance can improve the esteem of future generations of Indigenous peoples and show a meaningful alternative to unresponsive state institutions (Belanger and Lackenbauer, 2015). Rather than adopt the colonial state's political processes that seek to advance settler futurity disguised in a politics of recognition (Coulthard, 2014), Indigenous peoples engaging in resistance fulfill their responsibilities to protect interconnected relationships (Nelson, 2020), which in turn advances Indigenous futurity grounded in Indigenous governance. Idle No More's nationwide impact arguably ignited a new resolve among Indigenous nations to adopt resistance as a pathway to resurgence, or a reinvigoration of Indigenous laws and traditions (Coburn, 2015). The rise in solidarity movements may also suggest Indigenous nations are embracing an era of resurgence.

In tandem with the finding that resistance builds Indigenous alternatives to settler-colonial political processes, the news articles reveal that the state often responds to resistance with injunctions and arrests. There has been scholarly attention on courts' willingness to issue injunctions to protect corporate interests (Yellowhead Institute, 2019: 30). Such actions attempt to criminalize Indigenous resistance (Pasternak, 2017). Considering the high saliency of injunctions and police arrests by the media, additional research can connect how these practices, alongside media attention, shape the state's engagement with Indigenous resistance (see Crosby and Monaghan, 2018).

## Conclusion

This study produced an original dataset of salient Indigenous resistance by scanning online CBC news articles from 2010 to 2020. These findings present some new observations that depart from previous literature examining Indigenous resistance over time. Although the media shows that resistance continues to be organized by Indigenous nations, solidarity movements that include various Indigenous nations are gaining mainstream attention. Since the 2010s, the rejection of major pipeline projects and Idle No More produced acts of resistance in solidarity with other Indigenous nations. Additional research can investigate how networks of co-resistance have developed around this timeframe and whether they will be activated in future events. The media scan also revealed that salient acts of resistance were mainly, but not exclusively, about defending territory. Colonial injustices that endanger gender equality and Indigenous youth produce salient resistance movements as well. Contested territory remains a key site of conflict, but this study reveals how resistance also aims to protect the body politic of Indigenous nations, meriting further attention. Finally, this study presents the complexities of evaluating the effects of resistance. Examining the transformative potential of resistance to support Indigenous resurgence and governance may be more crucial than measuring policy change by settler governments.

**Acknowledgments.** The author would like to thank professors Daniel Carpenter, Kate Puddister, Carol Dauda and Sophie Borwein for their generous and insightful feedback and support on an earlier draft of this research note. The author would also like to express gratitude to her research assistants, Victoria Caravaggio and Brenden Dell, both from the University of Guelph at the time of writing, for their diligent and meticulous work on this project.

**Competing interests.** The author declares none.

## Notes

1 Media coverage continues to be a relevant data source in PEA, especially as computational methods allow researchers to code large volumes of newspaper data alongside other sources (see, for example, Lorenzini et al., 2022; Borbáth and Hutter, 2021; Kriesi et al., 2020). Media sources and social media data together can distinguish between offline and online activities (Hutter, 2019).

2 The use of CBC Archives and Google News means that results are less consistent than stable indexing databases such as Factiva.

3 Some news articles included statements about how other events were planned or that a particular event represented an annual gathering that had occurred in previous years. These instances were not counted in order to ensure that only events explicitly covered by CBC through the article scan were included.

- 4 The MMIWG crisis stems from political, social, economic and legal institutions and policies that harm Indigenous women and girls. Resistance in these instances calls for an end to both colonialism and sexism. The MMIWG crisis is categorized alongside criminal justice outcomes because nonroutine resistance activities are often triggered when criminal justice actors, such as the police, have failed to act.
- 5 One of these events sought to bring attention to a missing Mohawk man named Kenny Leaf.

## References

- Alcantara, Christopher. 2010. "Indigenous Contentious Collective Action in Canada: The Labrador Innu and Their Occupation of the Goose Bay Military Air Base." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 30 (1): 21–43.
- Baker, Richard G. and Nadia Verrelli. 2017. "'Smudging, Drumming and the Like Do Not a Nation Make': Temporal Liminality and Delegitimation of Indigenous Protest in Canada." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 51 (1): 37–63.
- Bargh, Maria. 2007. Introduction to *Resistance: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism*, ed. Maria Bargh. Wellington, NZ: Huia Publishers.
- Barker, Adam. 2015. "'A Direct Act of Resurgence, a Direct Act of Sovereignty': Reflections on Idle No More, Indigenous Activism, and Canadian Settler Colonialism." *Globalizations* 12 (1): 43–65.
- Belanger, Yale D. and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, eds. 2015. *Blockades or Breakthrough? Aboriginal Peoples Confront the Canadian State*. Montreal and Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Borbáth, Endre and Swen Hutter. 2021. "Protesting Parties in Europe: A Comparative Analysis." *Party Politics* 27 (5): 896–908.
- Borrows, John. 2005. *Crown and Aboriginal Occupations of Land: A History & Comparison*. Toronto: Ipperwash Inquiry.
- Carpenter, David. 2023. "Agenda Democracy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 26: 193–212.
- CBC News. 2021. "\$5.2B Deal Reached between Feds, N.L. Government to Stave Off Skyrocketing Power Bills." July 28. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/rate-mitigation-muskrat-falls-trudeau-furey-announcement-1.6120454>.
- Chartrand, Vicki. 2019. "Unsettled Times: Indigenous Incarceration and the Links between Colonialism and the Penitentiary in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 61 (3): 67–89.
- Coburn, Elaine, ed. 2015. *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom: Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence*. Halifax: Fernwood.
- Cook, Scott and Nils Weidmann. 2019. "Lost in Aggregation: Improving Event Analysis with Report-Level Data." *American Journal of Political Science* 63 (1): 250–264.
- Corntassel, Jeff. 2012. "Re-envisioning Resurgence: Indigenous Pathways to Decolonization and Sustainable Self-Determination." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1): 86–101.
- Corrigall-Brown, Catherine and Rima Wilkes. 2012. "Picturing Protest: The Visual Framing of Collective Action by First Nations Canada." *American Behavioral Science* 56 (2): 223–243.
- Coulthard, Glen Sean. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Crosby, Andrew and Jeffrey Monaghan. 2018. *Policing Indigenous Movements: Dissent and the Security State*. Winnipeg: Fernwood.
- Dafnos, Tia. 2013. "Pacification and Indigenous Struggles in Canada." *Socialist Studies* 9 (2): 57–77.
- della Porta, Donatella and Mario Diani. 2006. *Social Movements: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Earl, Jennifer, Andrew Martin, John D. McCarthy and Sarah Soule. 2004. "The Use of Newspaper Data in the Study of Collective Action." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 65–80.
- Eisenberg, Avigail. 2022. "Decolonizing Authority: The Conflict on Wet'suwet'en Territory." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 55 (1): 40–58.
- Estes, Nick. 2019. *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*. London: Verso.
- Fillieule, Olivier. 1996. "Police Records and the National Press in France: Issues in the Methodology of Data-Collection from Newspapers." RSC Working Papers, 1996/25, Florence, European University Institute (EUI). <https://hdl.handle.net/1814/1440>.
- Hodgins, Dorothy. 2020. "Examining the Effects of Violence and Nonviolence in Indigenous Direct Action: The Red Power Movement and Idle No More." *On Politics*. 14 (1): 11–31.

- Hume, Rebecca and Kevin Walby. 2021. "Framing, Suppression, and Colonial Policing Redux in Canada: News Representations of the 2019 Wet'suwet'en Blockade." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 55 (3): 507–40.
- Hutter, Swen. 2014. "Protest Event Analysis and Its Offspring." In *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*, ed. Donatella della Porta. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hutter, Swen. 2019. "Exploring the Full Conceptual Potential of Protest Event Analysis." *Sociological Methodology* 49 (1): 58–63.
- Ipsos Reid. 2010. "The News Fairness and Balance Report: What Canadian News Consumers Think about Fairness and Balance in News." [https://www.cbc.ca/news2/pdf/public-opinionreporteng-oct1\\_10.pdf](https://www.cbc.ca/news2/pdf/public-opinionreporteng-oct1_10.pdf).
- Koopmans, Rudd and Dieter Rucht. 2002. "Protest Event Analysis." In *Methods of Social Movement Research*, ed. Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenbord. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Koopmans, Rudd and Paul Statham. 1999. "Political Claims Analysis: Integrating Protest Event and Political Discourse Approaches." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 4 (1): 203–21.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Jasmine Lorenzini, Bruno Wüest and Silja Häusermann, eds. 2020. *Contention in Times of Crisis: Recession and Political Protest in Thirty European Countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ladner, Kiera. 2010. "From Little Things..." In *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years since the Blockades*, ed. Leanne Simpson and Kiera Ladner (pp. 299–314). Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press.
- LeBlanc, Richard. D. 2020. *Muskrat Falls: A Misguided Project*. Newfoundland and Labrador: Commission of Inquiry respecting the Muskrat Falls Project.
- Lorenzini, Jasmine, Hanspeter Kriesi, Peter Makarov and Bruno Wüest. 2022. "Protest Event Analysis: Developing a Semiautomated NLP Approach." *American Behavioral Scientist* 66 (5): 555–77.
- McCarthy, John, Larissa Titarenko, Clark McPhail, Patrick Rafail and Boguslaw Augustyn. 2008. "Assessing Stability in the Patterns of Selection Bias in Newspaper Coverage of Protest during the Transition from Communism in Belarus." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 13 (2): 127–46.
- Minkoff, Debra. 1997. "The Sequencing of Social Movements." *American Sociological Review* 62 (5): 779–99.
- Monchalin, Lisa. 2016. *The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Justice in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Morden, Michael. 2013. "Telling Stories about Conflict: Symbolic Politics and the Ipperwash Land Transfer Agreement." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 46 (3): 505–24.
- Morden, Michael. 2015. "Right and Resistance: Norms, Interests and Indigenous Direct Action in Canada." *Ethnopolitics* 14 (3): 256–76.
- Mussell, Linda. 2023. "Decolonizing Research on the Carceral in Canadian Political Science." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423923000288>
- Myers, Daniel J. and Beth Schaefer Caniglia. 2004. "All the Rioting That's Fit to Print: Selection Effects in National Newspaper Coverage of Civil Disorders, 1968–1969." *American Sociological Review* 69 (4): 519–43.
- Nelson, Melissa. 2020. "Wrestling with Fire: Indigenous Women's Resistance and Resurgence." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 43 (3): 69–84.
- Oliver, Pamela E. and Gregory M. Maney. 2000. "Political Processes and Local Newspaper Coverage of Protest Events: From Selection Bias to Triadic Interactions." *American Journal of Sociology* 106 (2): 463–505.
- Ortiz, David, Daniel Myers, N. Eugene Walls and Marie-Elena Diaz. 2006. "Where Do We Stand with Newspaper Data?" *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 10 (3): 397–419.
- Pasternak, Shiri. 2017. *Grounded Authority: The Algonquins of Barriere Lake against the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ponting, J. Rick and Roger Gibbins. 1981. "The Reactions of English Canadians and French Quebecois to Native Indian Protest." *Canadian Review of Sociology* 18 (2): 222–38.
- Ramos, Howard. 2006. "What Causes Canadian Aboriginal Protest? Examining Resources, Opportunities and Identity, 1951–2000." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 31 (2): 211–34.
- Ramos, Howard. 2008. "Opportunity for Whom? Political Opportunity and Critical Events in Canadian Mobilization, 1951–2000." *Social Forces* 87 (2): 795–823.
- Repin, Nadya. 2012. "Somewhere beyond the Barricade: Explaining Indigenous Protest in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 32 (1): 143–71.
- Russell, Peter. 2010. "Oka to Ipperwash: The Necessity of Flashpoint Events." In *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years since the Blockades*, ed. Kiera Ladner and Leanne Simpson. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press.

- Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. 2021. *A Short History of the Blockade: Giant Beavers, Diplomacy, and Regeneration of Nishnaabewin*. Alberta: University of Alberta Press.
- Starblanket, Gina and Dallas Hunt. 2020. *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial*. Winnipeg: ARP Books.
- Stark, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik. 2016. "Criminal Empire: The Making of the Savage in a Lawless Land." *Theory & Event* 19 (4): muse.jhu.edu/article/633282.
- Stark, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik, Aimée Craft and Hókūlani K. Aikau, eds. 2023. *Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Swank, Eric. 2000. "In Newspapers We Trust? Assessing the Credibility of News Sources that Cover Protest Campaigns." In *Research in Social Movements: Conflicts and Change*, ed. P. G. Coy. Vol. 22. Stamford, CT: JAI Press.
- Temper, Leah. 2019. "Blocking Pipelines, Unsettling Environmental Justice: From Rights of Nature to Responsibility to Territory." *Local Environment* 24 (2): 94–112.
- The Kino-nda-niimi Collective. 2014. *The Winter We Danced*. Winnipeg: ARP Books.
- Tuck, Eve and Ruben A. Gaztambide-Fernández. 2013. "Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity." *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 29 (1): 72–89.
- Weidmann, Nils B. 2016. "A Closer Look at Reporting Bias in Conflict Event Data." *American Journal of Political Science* 60 (1): 206–18.
- Wilkes, Rima. 2004a. "First Nation Politics: Deprivation, Resources, and Participation in Collective Action." *Sociological Inquiry* 74 (4): 570–89.
- Wilkes, Rima. 2004b. "A Systematic Approach to Studying Indigenous Politics: Band-Level Mobilization in Canada, 1981–2000." *Social Science Journal* 41 (3): 447–57.
- Wilkes, Rima. 2006. "The Protest Actions of Indigenous Peoples: A Canadian-U.S. Comparison of Social Movement Emergence." *The American Behavioral Scientist* 50 (4): 510–25.
- Wilkes, Rima. 2016. "Political Conflict Photographs and Their Keyword Texts." *Journalism Studies* 17 (6): 703–29.
- Wilkes, Rima, Catherine Corrigan-Brown and Daniel J. Myers. 2010. "Packaging Protest: Media Coverage of Indigenous People's Collective Action." *Canadian Review of Sociology* 47 (4): 327–57.
- Wood, Lesley. 2015. "Idle No More, Facebook and Diffusion." *Social Movement Studies* 14 (5): 615–21.
- Woodly, Deva. 2015. *The Politics of Common Sense: How Social Movements Use Public Discourse to Change Politics and Win Acceptance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yellowhead Institute. 2019. "Land Back: A Yellowhead Red Paper." <https://redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org/>.
- Zhang, Han and Jennifer Pan. 2019. "CASM: A Deep-Learning Approach for Identifying Collection Action Events with Text and Image Data from Social Media." *Sociological Methodology* 49 (1): 1–57.

---

**Cite this article:** Do, Minh. 2023. "Salient Indigenous Acts of Resistance in Canada, 2010–2020: Current Trends." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 56 (4): 936–949. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423923000513>