

A Hunger Game

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“[On Treaty 9]...there was no basis for argument. The simple facts had to be stated...the King is the great father of the Indians, watchful over their interests, and ever compassionate”

- *Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendant of Indian Affairs 1913-1921*

“[The Queen’s Park mace]... shows the wealth of our resources, the strength of our manufacturers, the talent of our artisans and, above all, the spirit of our people: their commitment to democracy, the value they place in our shared heritage and their unrelenting drive for progress”

- *Former Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, 2009*



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Sparkling with ceremonial beauty, a stone-cold artifact convenes public deliberation in Queen's Park, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Canada. On March 24th 2009, two years after De Beers Canada Inc. signed an Impact Benefit Agreement (IBA) with the Attawapiskat First Nation, the 'mine to mace' project brought the people of Ontario one rough and one polished diamond, set in platinum. Three diamonds were selected from the De Beers Victor diamond mine, Ontario's first, which swung into operation in July 2008, 90km west of Attawapiskat, Treaty 9 territory. Each winter, an ice road splices through the community while transporting crucial and at times hazardous materials that are too heavy to fly in from the southern community of Moosonee, ON, across the northern edge of the Attawapiskat reserve and onwards to the mine. During one particularly cold winter, with temperatures below -40 C, in February 2013, accompanied by former Chief Theresa Spence, blockade spokesperson and current Chief of Attawapiskat Bruce Shisheesh led a rallying cry to re-open the IBA in order to give a fair deal to his citizens, including employment, health and housing (APTN 2013). Citizens of Attawapiskat voiced concern that the mine's operations were not respecting traditional traplines. Such a violation of this community's crucial tie to the land propelled them to engage in nonviolent direct action to protect their rights. Today, two De Beers diamonds crown the mace while the third diamond sits in the legislative lobby, serving the public as a symbolic reminder about "the dignity and richness of Ontario's parliamentary tradition" (Legislative Assembly of Ontario 2015). At the same time, the mace tells us something about Canada's imperial past, informs our gendered, colonial present and propels us to reimagine Canada's body politic and our shared future.

De Beers' glistening diamonds shed light on the intersection between gender and settler-colonial biopower in Canada. In this paper, by drawing upon the situated struggle for environmental justice in Attawapiskat, I argue that a gendered lens enhances the prism of biopolitics and illuminates what life is like in a constant state of emergency. This prismatic approach to the study of power refracts light, highlights forms of oppression and enhances what enters into the realm of political possibility by drawing into focus practices of resistance to colonial encapsulation. Focusing on former Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence's hunger strike, which began in December 2012 and spilled into January 2013 – while garnering international media attention and catalyzing

the Idle No More movement in Canada – this paper argues for a gendered biopolitical lens that interrogates conditions of structural violence while celebrating the body as a radical site of resistance to the settler-colonial status quo.

The argument advanced here is three-fold: First, the body functions as a powerful site of biopolitical and geopolitical interruption, where non-violent resistance plays out on the modest scale of the individual as a form of subtle yet purposeful form of mobilization. While the body has been rendered “abject”, it is also a “force to be reckoned with” (Grosz 1994, 120; Janzen et al. 2013; Kristeva 1982). Second, a critical Foucauldian discourse analysis reveals how the Canadian state and general public produced technocratic responses to this interruption and eclipsed the meaning and intent motivating Spence’s hunger strike (Foucault 1981; Janzen et al. 2013). These responses, circulated widely by the media, become performed and consumed by the general public. Third and finally, public responses to this corporeal interruption of Canada’s status quo body politic were profoundly gendered and colonial. Critical political theorists must make space for situated narratives and diverse voices. A prismatic approach offers a multidimensional lens to do so.

News media, political speeches and government reports are sources of commentary that serve to reinforce asymmetrical power relations. Institutions, discourses and images produce frames of intelligibility. What a particular frame captures informs how we make sense of language, rhetoric, speech and political life itself. To examine and assess the biopolitical discourses and geopolitical materialities produced through talk, text and images, critical discourse analysis is a symbolic-material dialectic and an analytical orientation to the study of politics. In Judith Butler’s words, this investigation of hegemonic power relations incites an investigation into what challenges the excluded and abjected realm and produces “a symbolic hegemony that might force a radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as ‘life,’ lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving” (Butler 1993, 16). The concept of discourse is not about whether things exist but about where meaning comes from. At the same time, discourses are rooted in the materiality of power relations.

While the Attawapiskat First Nation is in relation to the state the community is not dominated by it. The pages that follow are an attempt to highlight the political

significance of the body as a forum for political activism from a prismatic lens while exposing the predominant media portrayals of the community – as in *crisis*, at fault and to *blame* and lacking *accountability* – while also weaving together an alternative counter story about resistance in order to reimagine settler-colonial relations. In doing so, this paper contributes to a broader dialogue about decolonization and contemporary interpretations of treaty rights and relationships in Canada and globally.

Prismatic Biopolitics

The diamonds mined from traditional Attawapiskat territory function as an opulent metaphor for the paradox of state power. In this context, the mace demonstrates how power is at once brutal and banal. Prismatic reflections on the manifestations of biopower shed light on the edges of Canadian democracy. This lens reveals how Canadian democracy – like the diamond-adorned mace – emulates a kind of brilliant example of public engagement and deliberation while simultaneously (re)producing conditions that enable ongoing corporeal, gendered and colonial violence. On the one hand, the mace is a vibrant object and vital manifestation of authority, legitimacy and deliberation. At the same time, this glistening artifact hails to violence of the past in the spirit of democracy. While convening a space for political engagement and discussion in Queen's Park, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the mace is also a mask, concealing the persistence of today's violent cartographies. Fusing an investigation of power with place, a prismatic lens draws into focus the biopolitical and geopolitical situation for Attawapiskat.

A prismatic mode of sight enhances the study of biopolitics by bringing a diverse array of perspectives and insights into view. It does so by illuminating the effects and affects of policies, authority and rule, enacted through citizens' corporeality and lived-experiences. This prismatic approach aims to enhance the study of biopower by interrogating the gendered dimensions of dominant discourses and also to create space for alternative voices that are often squeezed out of and silenced by our colonial institutions. The motivation behind writing from the prismatic lens advocated for here is to enable 'agonistic' dialogue about settler-colonial relations in pursuit of radical democracy and justice (Mouffe 2005). One way to do so is through storytelling (Chaw-win-is and

T'lakwadzi, 2009; Kovach 2015; Thomas 2005). Storytelling sheds light on stories that have been “inaccurately documented and tells them in a new way” (Thomas 2015, 184). Indigenous communities from across Canada and around the world offer compelling stories that powerfully interrupt status-quo narratives and expressions of violence, which thrust alternative ontologies and epistemologies into sight. Researchers become witnesses to these stories. With that comes a responsibility to challenge institutions to create space for these stories to be heard.

Prismatic biopolitics fuses an analysis of biopower with place or geopolitics. As an intersectional and prismatic approach, this lens interrogates the lines drawn between populations and bodies (Wiebe 2016). With an eye oriented toward justice, a prismatic, multi-layered framework of analysis both demands that we investigate what macro technologies of rule mask and simultaneously seeks to create space for citizen's lived-realities with the aim of speaking back corporeal truth to biopower in an attempt to problematize and interrupt Canada's colonial body politic. Such a prismatic lens accentuates multiple dimensions, expressions and experiences of power. Moreover, to do so, gendered approaches to biopolitical inquiry evaluate diverse media, including written text and oral speech from both official and unofficial sources to examine what is said and unsaid, what is seen and what is rendered invisible.

A prismatic lens has much to offer how critical scholars investigate the nexus of biopolitics and geopolitics. This approach begins with the landscape of the body and examines whose lives matter and how. While critical biopolitical scholars interrogate the ways in which the state aims to absorb lives into a “colonial body politic” (Wolfe 2006), rendering life passive as a form of “bare” life (Agamben 1995), this field of scholarship rarely celebrates stories of resistance and resurgence. A prismatic turn takes the abject body of a hunger striker as a kind of truth and hails this interruption as powerfully provocative and radically political. The event of a hunger strike calls for an examination of the forces underpinning the desire to enact citizenship through a form of self-sacrifice while simultaneously forcing a critical interrogation of the state's colonial foundation. This action is more than a one-off event; it is a representation of a much broader geopolitical phenomenon. It is also an invitation for Canadians in particular and settlers in general to reflexively look back on ourselves. Instead of obsessing with surveillance

and the body mass of “risky populations”, a prismatic approach to the study of biopower begins with decentred sites of authority, beyond external relations (Cowen & Smith 2009). To be clear, the body is a powerful site of interruption and resurgence. As this paper discusses, through the act of a hunger strike, Chief Spence’s body refused to die, it refused to waste away. Symbolically and physically, her body served as a pivotal conduit for social mobilization across the country during the height of the Idle No More movement, which emerged in November 2012 to protest Omnibus legislation (Bills C-38, C-45) and spawned a flurry of joyful, emotional, heartfelt assembly through spontaneous marches, flash mobs and pow wows in visible spaces from shopping malls to ports of entry (APTN 2012; Idle No More 2015). These assemblies artfully interrupt inequitable power assemblages of terror, security and biopower and shed light on what life is like in a state of emergency. Such a colourful demonstration of agency aligns with emergent scholarship in emergency studies that aims to explore different ways of governing emergency life beyond the “state of exception” as a dominant paradigm for analysis (Adey, Anderson and Graham 2015; Agamben 2005). Spence’s hunger strike tells a different story about emergency life; rather than an isolated event, it is a call to action that mirrors ongoing emergency conditions in her community and across the country.

Moreover, a prismatic biopolitics lens refracts light on how both material geopolitical forces and practices of governance discursively label citizen bodies as they become targets of biopower. This approach goes further to examine how citizens resist biopower through redefining involvement within these relations in the terms set out by situated or marginalized communities. By focusing on representations and resistances, prismatic biopolitics is a practice-oriented academic-activist approach that seeks to create space for multiple ways of knowing and alternative representations, which challenge status quo representations and systemic inequities.

Specifically, a prismatic lens offers three key contributions to the study of biopolitics. *First*, it offers a multi-dimensional vantage point to the study of biopower by tethering geopolitics to biopolitics. It draws into focus intersecting relations of power in site-specific locales. By drawing upon the lived-experiences of those from the Attawapiskat First Nation, outsiders witness how these intersections are embroiled within colonial power relations, which shape and constrain the ways in which Indigenous

citizens encounter compromising environments while living within ongoing emergency living conditions. *Second*, this lens hones in on how global and macro policies affect citizens in their everyday lives. Through diverse methodologies, ranging from the creative arts of engagement, i.e. film, photography or theatre, scholars seek to understand diverse forms of experiential knowledge. Through creative techniques, arts-based scholarship enables scholars to engage with diverse audiences to “hear silences” and “see invisibilities” in pursuit of collaboration, democratization of knowledge and social change (Clover 2014, 139, 148). These creative approaches aim to develop innovative ways to communicate knowledge. As arts educator Catherine Etmanski suggests, to learn, we use “our full bodies, all of our senses, our hearts and our imaginations” (2014, 270). *Third*, prismatic biopolitics aims to curate critical conversations about how situated bodies of knowledge can speak back as truth to interrupt status quo power imbalances. This involves going beyond an examination of disciplinary effects of biopower to think about alternatives. It is a transformative approach (Clover 2014; Etmanski 2014). In these ways, this prismatic lens has much to offer academics, activists and policy-makers who are concerned with the ways in which citizen corporealities encounter and become embroiled within toxic “affective” and imaginative environments (Closs Stephens 2011, 2015a, 2015b; Anderson 2009). This framework of analysis prompts scholars to see biopolitical problems anew and to begin to imagine them otherwise.

Chief Spence’s hunger strike informs us how physical bodies interact with political bodies and geopolitical forces in multifaceted ways. Conceptually, the ‘body’ – of populations, of individuals – has long been a subject for debate and critical interrogation within feminist theory and continues to be the focus of analysis for biopolitical scholars who examine power relations between individual and social bodies (Brown 1995; Butler 1990; Haraway 1988; Orsini 2007; Rose 2007; Wiebe 2012, 2016). Though numerous scholars have fused environmental political theory with governmentality studies, most often these debates eclipse the body (Darier 1996, 1999; Dean 2010; Foucault 1994; Gabrielson & Parady; Hobson 2013; McKee 2009). Feminist approaches to biopolitical inquiry reveal that it is in fact difficult – perhaps impossible – to distinguish between physical and political bodies. Indeed, the body is a critical site of political formation, identity and multidimensional meaning.

Situating Life in a State of Emergency

The Attawapiskat reserve is situated on the west side of James Bay, in sub-Arctic territory. Spence's community, the Attawapiskat First Nation, is party to Treaty 9 and one of seven Mushkegowuk communities near James Bay in Northern Ontario, Canada. This treaty is widely known as a "take-it-or-leave-it-offer" (Cummins 2004, 35). In the years following the treaty's signing (1909, 1928, 1930-31), the community experienced repeated episodes of starvation, linking the biopolitical management of this community's vitality to hunger and the body since early contact. This situation leads some anthropologists to refer to this as "the final major Euro-Canadian incursion in the lives of the Attawapiskat Cree" (Cummins 2004, 38-39). Over the last century, the Christian church continued to leave its mark on the community, affecting their cultural way of life and spirituality. As Cummins notes:

Usurping their land through Treaty 9 and then imposing upon them the registered trapline system, the government sought to regulate Cree subsistence practices with Euro-Canadian concepts that failed to recognize the Cree understandings of territoriality and land tenure (2004, 45).

Soon followed the Hudson's Bay Company, as the fur companies brought the community into a new system of economic relations. During this time, Attawapiskat experienced a breakdown of the traditional family system, closely linked to the land.

Such cultural, physical and psychological dislocation is a direct result of colonial state power, fused with influences by traders and missionaries. As a governmentality approach brings into view, governmental policies, practices and discourses have ripple effects (Foucault 1994). Indian Affairs administrator Duncan Campbell Scott's paternalistic prose, which opens this paper, illuminate the colonial parameters of the treaty: "there was no basis for argument. The simple facts had to be stated...the King is the great father of the Indians, watchful over their interests, and ever compassionate" (Morrison 1986, 23, cited in Cummins 2004, 36). With a growing population, Attawapiskat is home to approximately 1,800 on-reserve Band members. In addition, as a survivor of Canada's racist Residential Schools policy – which removed over 150,000 Indigenous children from their families between the late 1800s and 1996 – the viscerally

painful disciplinary effects of biopower are more than a distant corporeal memory for Theresa Spence and her community.¹

Derelict living conditions forced former Grand Chief of the Mushkegowuk Council Chief Stan Louttit and Chief Theresa Spence to declare a State of Emergency on October 28th 2011 (Chiefs of Ontario 2011). Following on the coattails of emergency support from the Canadian Red Cross, the community received 22 modular homes funded by the federal government. As an accompaniment to this gift, on November 30th, 2011, the federal government sent in Mr. Jacques Marion to audit the Band's spending (Thomson 2013; Galloway 2012). Attawapiskat officials subsequently took the government to court. Federal Court Justice Michel Phelan found this decision "did not respond in a reasonable way to the root of the problems at Attawapiskat nor to the remedies available" (Galloway 2012). This decision demonstrated how the Canadian government erred in its response to Attawapiskat during a time of crisis.

Spence protested the imposition of a third party manager during a Special Chief's Assembly in response to a Crown-First Nations Gathering in January 2012, which prompted chiefs across the country to call for "action" against existing oil pipelines in the form of blockades and other disruptions (APTN 2011). It spurred a spontaneous supportive march to Parliament Hill, which culminated in police intervention. Shortly thereafter, chiefs passed a resolution calling on Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Duncan to reverse his decision to impose third-party management on Attawapiskat and instead to work with the Chief and Council to find an appropriate solution to the ongoing housing crisis, which left families living in shacks with no running water and inadequate plumbing. The resolution also called on the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to request that the United Nations appoint a special agent to monitor Canada's response to ongoing infrastructure concerns as a means to hold Canada responsible for and accountable to its treaty and international legal obligations (APTN 2011). In Mushkegowuk Council Grand Chief Stan Louttit's words:

We are saying no to these governments who want to come to us and put us aside just like we are animals, just like we are nothing [...] Chief Spence is struggling, her people are slowly dying while this is going on (APTN, 2011).

¹ Confirmed during a personal interview with Theresa Spence in Timmins, Ontario, February 13th 2016.

The 2011 housing crisis was not the first time Attawapiskat confronted conditions of environmental injustice. The ongoing crisis – insufficient housing, lack of running water and use of pails to defecate – prompted some chiefs to demand that Attawapiskat block an airstrip used to deliver supplies to the neighbouring De Beers diamond mine 90km west of the community (APTN 2011).² With limited traction, the community continues to make numerous attempts to renegotiate the 2005 Impact Benefit Agreement.³ Over the years, a series of ongoing crises included the following associated costs (Spence Affidavit, Federal Court of Canada, Filed December 16th 2011: 98):

- 2000:** the school was condemned due to soil contamination and students moved into portable trailers.
- 2004:** Attawapiskat purchased assets from Hydro One to ensure the security of its electrical supply by constructing a transmission line. The purchase of assets was facilitated by a \$3 million minor capital allowance from then INAC, of which Attawapiskat repaid \$6000,000.
- 2005:** De Beers disposed sewage sludge into the community's lift station, which required extensive clean up.
- 2006:** ice damaged power lines and forced the evacuation of the community's hospital as there was no available back-up generator.
- 2008:** hundreds of members were evacuated from the community due to flooding of the Attawapiskat River.
- 2009:** a sewage back up into the members' homes rendered 8 homes housing 90 people uninhabitable. Due to unsanitary housing and the lack of shelter available for them within the community, the Chief and Council requested assistance to evacuate members in order to ensure their safety. Then DIAND refused to assist with the evacuation. As a result, Attawapiskat spent \$555,000 of money designated for other budget items on evacuation efforts and resulted in a large budgetary shortfall. These evacuations are a matter of life and death. Three members died during the evacuation.⁴

² In 1999, the Victor Diamond Mine sought to establish itself on Treaty 9 territory and by 2005 an *Impact Benefit Agreement* was signed with 85.5% approval (CBERN 2015). In 2003, Canada became the third largest producer of diamonds in the world. In 2009, the Victor De Beers Diamond mine's sewer backed up, impacting Attawapiskat and culminating in a series of blockades in 2009, again in 2012 and yet again in 2013 (CBC 2013b).

³ Confirmed during a personal interview with Theresa Spence in Timmins, Ontario, February 13th 2016.

⁴ On April 10th, 2016, The Attawapiskat First Nation declared another State of Emergency due to a high rate of suicide attempts in the community. More information is available here: <http://aptn.ca/news/tag/state-of-emergency/> My response to the media's mainstream coverage of this event is available through Hill Times online: <http://www.hilltimes.com/2016/04/12/strive-for-balance-when-covering-attawapiskat-story/58008>.

A series of events like these forced Chief Theresa Spence to advocate for a change to the manner in which the state treats Attawapiskat. Frustrated with the persistent health and safety challenges in her community, Chief Spence mobilized her body to advocate for change. In doing so, she sought to reframe settler-colonial relations while drawing upon principles of treaty-making. She demanded a meeting with the Crown and commenced a hunger strike on December 10th 2012. From Victoria Island, located next to Parliament Hill in Ottawa, for 44 days she fasted to demand formal political recognition of the treaty relationship between her peoples and the Crown. Finally, Prime Minister Stephen Harper responded by meeting with representatives of the Assembly of First Nations on January 11th, 2013.

On January 23rd, in the spirit of dialogue, a 13-point declaration of commitment clarified Spence's claims and honoured all those demonstrating "deep dedication and courage in support of protecting and honouring both Treaty and non-Treaty obligations as written, entered into or understood by all Peoples, with the Federal Government of Canada including each Provincial/Territorial signatory" (O'Malley 2013; See Appendix 1).⁵ The declaration called for a new way of seeing Canadian-Indigenous relations, as one premised upon treaty relations. While the Prime Minister met with Indigenous representatives on January 11th, it simultaneously responded to Spence directly with newly released findings from an audit of Attawapiskat's finances (CBC 2013a). Given subsequent events, including another State of Emergency declaration due to flooding and sewage backups in May 2013, then flooding and evacuations the following May 2014, the collective health, vitality and ecology of the community continue to be at risk.

A critical discourse analysis of media content next brings a gendered lens to the official representations of and responses to Chief Spence's hunger strike. As Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach discusses, "the language that we use shapes the way we think" (2015: 51). Many public figures questioned her authenticity as an Indigenous leader while painting a picture of her community as one constantly in crisis, blaming leadership for the crisis and discredited the legitimacy and accountability of Attawapiskat's

⁵ Endorsed by the Assembly of First Nations National Executive Committee, Native Women's Association of Canada, Liberal Party of Canada Parliamentary Caucus, New Democratic Party National Caucus and Green Party of Canada National Leader Elizabeth May, the declaration acknowledged the self-sacrifice and spiritual courage of Chief Spence and solidarity fasters required to fundamentally change relations between Indigenous peoples and Canada.

governance. In doing so, numerous official responses to Chief Spence's hunger strike eclipsed her key concern: the recognition of treaty rights, responsibilities and relationships.

Body Politic Interrupted: Mapping the Discursive Terrain

Informed by a critical discourse analysis methodology, this section examines and evaluates the predominant framings of Chief Spence's political action. By reviewing over 1,000 news articles from mainstream media sources, including national newspapers such as the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* in addition to national *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* (CBC) text and visual sources, transcripts of federal and provincial political speech captured in the media as well as government documents, using excerpts, this section maps out the dominant narratives coded along three themes: *crisis*, *blame* and *accountability*. These discursive frames emerged following a content analysis of relevant texts in Canadian popular media and discourse in response to Chief Spence's strike.

Discourse – manifest through talk and text – operates simultaneously as an instrument and an effect of power. These effects affect bodies: the bodies of individuals, communities and ultimately tell us something about the governing body politic. Taken together, discursive and material conditions engendered the biopolitical context in which Chief Theresa Spence began her hunger strike on December 11th 2012. While certain material conditions – rooted in the site-specificity of place – propelled Chief Spence forward, her individual agency was and continues to be structured by temporal and spatial constraints. Material structures pertaining to over a century of strained relations between Attawapiskat and the Crown – emulated by colonial state power – cemented struggles for knowledge and power in her community.

A discursive lens exposes the ways in which official language frames, censors and limits the political agency of Spence and her community in an ongoing struggle for recognition, justice and ultimately reconciliation. The insights discussed here are an attempt to speak alongside and not for Chief Spence as a means to draw attention to the multifaceted ways in which her body matters as more than simply an object of media spectacle and public speculation. Rather, we can understand the mobilization of her body

through the self-sacrifice of a hunger strike as a powerful and regenerative force, aiming towards a renewed conversation about how to create healthy, flourishing and vibrant lives for Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world.

Many different terms emerged by the media in response to Chief Spence's decision to refrain from eating solid foods while consuming fish broth and medicinal tea for six-weeks as she pursued a desire to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister, Governor-General and Indigenous leaders. Of the 1,000 newspaper articles examined, language ranged from "hunger protest" to "liquid diet" to "fasting" and the more political language of a "hunger strike". Depoliticizing her actions, national news coverage referred to her protest by referencing her "diet of fish broth and herbal tea" (Globe and Mail, January 9 2013, A4). A *Globe and Mail* editorial with the headline "Talk don't starve" schooled Chief Spence for her actions (Globe and Mail, December 29 2012, F8). The article argued that she should not risk her health with the hunger strike, noting that: "coercion is not a reasonable or responsible tool to be used in making a request to meet with the Prime Minister and a representative of the Crown" (Globe and Mail, December 29 2012, F8). At the same time, the article highlighted the dire straights facing the community, which prompted her to action. It went on to note the good will efforts of the Canadian government to enact new legislation in the spirit of transparency, while hailing Prime Minister Harper as a "friend of aboriginal peoples" (Globe and Mail, December 29 2012, F8). The article suggested that Chief Spence should be satisfied with meeting the Minister responsible for Indian Affairs, John Duncan. The Editor ultimately missed Theresa Spence's call for a renewed relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Crown, striking at the core of Canadian sovereignty. As noted by former Liberal party leader Bob Rae, the hunger strike revealed a struggle over the "true identity of our country" (Ottawa Citizen, January 25 2013, A4). Ultimately, through her corporeal act, Chief Spence enacted and sought a new way of seeing sovereignty and a new way for settlers to be in relationship with Indigenous peoples who seek self-determination.

At the same time, the manner in which much of the country responded to Chief Spence's decision to embark on a hunger strike was profoundly gendered, targeting her bodily integrity. Several disparaging comments about Chief Spence emerged from the Conservative government. Senator Patrick Brazeau and MP Royal Galipeau (Ottawa-

Orleans) took it upon themselves to speculate about the legitimacy of her efforts. During a Conservative fundraiser, Brazeau condemned the credibility of her weight loss, noting that when he previously had the flu he lost 5 pounds; he subsequently referred to the action as a so-called hunger strike (APTN, February 1 2013). MP Royal Galipeau also questioned the authenticity of her strike, noting that her manicure looked too polished – better than his wife could afford – and thus an unrealistic representation of the reality facing someone living in an impoverished community (Toronto Star, February 1 2013, A14). These iterations indicate the gendered and racialized discursive context in which Chief Spence encountered predominant narratives, which aimed to discredit her action and belittle her efforts.

Crisis

A year prior to the hunger strike, after Spence declared a State of Emergency in October 2011 the Attawapiskat First Nation emerged in the media spotlight as a community in crisis. In order to bring some visibility to the ongoing environmental justice conditions facing communities like Attawapiskat and other northern Indigenous communities, New Democrat Member of Parliament (MP) Charlie Angus sought to shed light on citizen's lived realities using the accessible technological tools of the time: Facebook and YouTube. In November, shortly after the State of Emergency declaration, Angus visited the community with a borrowed flip video camera “shot some footage of the squalor” then uploaded his 10-minute video to YouTube and wrote an accompanying essay entitled “What if they declared an emergency and nobody came?” on HuffingtonPost (Globe and Mail, December 10 2011, A15). Attawapiskat then found itself in the media spotlight.

A media frenzy began to overwhelm the community. Several accounts referred to the “tragic tale of Attawapiskat” while noting that this slow-moving, long-term crisis was “in rehearsal for six years” (The Globe and Mail, December 10 2011; A15). In 2009, when an earlier housing crisis hit the community, as an “act of charity”, De Beers workers redesigned and installed some industrial accommodation trailers, which envisioned as temporary emergency housing, became permanent fixtures in the

community (National Post, February 22 2013, A1; The Star Phoenix, December 16 2011, A11). Although not widely reported in the media, two other communities in the James Bay area – Kashechewan and Fort Albany – declared State of Emergencies around the same time, prompting Angus and Member of the Provincial Parliament (MPP) Giles Bisson to visit. When these communities withdrew their request for immediate intervention, Angus commented that Attawapiskat is “Ground Zero” for their inhabitable living conditions (Globe and Mail, December 10 2011, A15). At the same time, these conditions demonstrate how this moment of “crisis” has become more of a systemic geopolitical problem in the James Bay region. These crisis events are not isolated incidents (The Times & Transcript, December 10 2011, D6; The Globe and Mail, December 13 2011, A9). They mirror the ongoing emergency conditions encountered in daily life by other Indigenous communities as well. In former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Shawn Atleo’s words: “these conditions are right across the country. We have many Attawapiskat’s” (The Globe and Mail, December 13 2011, A9). While Attawapiskat’s experiences serve as a beacon, guiding the general public towards their everyday lived-realities, these events also signal that the “housing crisis” was not an isolated event. Rather, it is part of a larger problem, endemic to the assemblage of settler-colonial conditions across the country.

The housing crisis reached United Nations (UN) officials in December 2011. UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya commented on the “dire” circumstances much alike “Third World conditions” experienced in Attawapiskat (Edmonton Journal, December 21 2011, A7; Ottawa Citizen, December 21 2011, A3; Windsor Star, December 21 2011, C8; Globe and Mail, December 21 2011; A11; The Star Phoenix, December 21 2011, A5). At the same time, he remarked that this experience was not unique but reflective of the broader socio-economic realities experienced by Indigenous peoples globally. As such it reveals the invisible, geopolitical edges of the Canadian state, a country with a reputation for respecting human rights and adhering to principles of multiculturalism. The situation in Attawapiskat calls this reputation into question.

Framing the community as one in crisis emerges both external to and from within Attawapiskat. Life itself is a constant struggle. When she was Chief, Theresa Spence expressed shock about the Government of Canada’s response to the housing crisis –

which entailed sending in a third party manager – she stated: “It’s very unprofessional and very rude of him to put us in third-party [management] while we are in crisis. As we speak today, the people in Attawapiskat - and it’s not just only Attawapiskat but other first nations - are living in tent frames and sheds” (Globe and Mail, December 7 2011, A5). Painting a picture of the community as one constantly in crisis has come to be the dominant portrayal of the community. This is in part due to ongoing issues pertaining to the health and safety of the community. For instance, the J. R. Nakogee elementary school was contaminated by a diesel spill in 1979; a new school was build in 2013, three decades after the discovery of a leaking underground pipe (Angus 2015; Guelph Mercury, December 17 2011; D3). Many homes do not have running water. Concerns about water contamination emerged in the wake of the Walkerton public inquiry, when Attawapiskat requested standing at the hearings (The Globe and Mail, September 5, 2000, A2). Individuals at times use buckets for human excrement. Hospital staff report high rates of respiratory and skin infections, exacerbated by overcrowding (Toronto Star, November 30 2011, A1). Infections can spread quickly in such conditions. In addition to a housing crisis, flooding and sewer back-ups led to another State of Emergency declaration in 2013 and reveal the geopolitical context that “plagues” the community, rendering it largely uninhabitable (Globe and Mail, May 1 2013, A6; Prince George Citizen May 1 2013, p. 14). These events triggered an evacuation of the local hospital and shut down the schools. Heavy snowfall and rapid snow melt overwhelmed the community’s infrastructure. While remote reserves are not foreign to spring-time flooding, the effects of a changing climate led to an early rise in waters, although local rivers remained frozen.

Just six months after the flooding and sewer back-ups in May 2013, a fire from within construction trailers – donated to the community the nearby De Beers Victor diamond mine – forced residents to leave their homes. Yet again, the community declared a State of Emergency. The Ontario Government flew evacuees to Kapuskasing, 400km south of the community (Times Colonist, November 24 2013, A2). While serious disaster was averted and no lives were lost, the evacuation reveals a reality where the short-term housing fix – temporary De Beers trailers – became the norm, thus normalizing “slow violence” and everyday catastrophe (Nixon 2011). In this respect, the housing crisis –

rather than a stand-alone event – emerges on Canada’s geopolitical landscape as an everyday reality and an ongoing condition. Attributing responsibility for these ongoing conditions continues to puzzle policy-makers and the general public.

Blame

As the national media spotlight began to expose Attawapiskat’s housing conditions, journalists, public officials and citizens chimed in to a burgeoning debate about life in remote Indigenous communities. Numerous accounts portrayed Attawapiskat as isolated along the James Bay, a “daunting body of water” and economically unviable, referring to its “destitution and squalor” and “wretched situation” (The Times & Transcript, December 10 2011, D6; The Calgary Herald, December 2 2011, A14). The culprit bore many faces: the natural environment, a remote location, lacking social responsibility from the neighbouring De Beers diamond mine, community leadership and multi-level government authorities: local, provincial and federal. Outstanding questions about who to blame for the housing crisis reveals the messy and wicked realities for the assemblage of Indigenous environmental justice policies. While the health of Canadian citizens falls primarily under provincial jurisdiction, when it comes to citizens of Indigenous communities, the federal government plays a much larger role. When the source of responsibility is difficult to locate, effective and swift emergency response to crises in Indigenous communities becomes a challenge for policy-makers.

Environmental justice issues such as the housing crisis expose the opaque qualities of Canadian federalism. Noting that the provincial government is “part of a team”, according to former provincial Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and current Premier of Ontario Kathleen Wynne: “The Federal Government has to take the lead” (The Globe and Mail, November 29 2011, A7). Yet, the federal government’s response situated blame within the community’s leadership and questioned their financial management. The former Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) John Duncan responded to the crisis in November 2011 before the House of Commons to explain that officials were on their way “to investigate why the First Nation is facing so many challenges given the significant funding for

housing, infrastructure, education and administration” (Globe and Mail, November 29 2011, A7). According to his records, Duncan claimed that AANDC provided \$80-million to the Attawapiskat First Nation since 2006 in addition to \$500,000 for urgent housing repairs (Globe and Mail, November 29 2011, A7). The community’s response noted that most of this money went to education and infrastructure including roads and hydro lines.

A significant amount of attention focused on leadership in Attawapiskat as largely to blame for the ongoing crises conditions. National Post journalist Jonathan Kay referred to the community as “programmed for poverty” claiming that Spence’s hunger strike served as a distraction for the “real scandal” apparent in “the well-funded wasteland she calls home” (National Post, January 8 2013, A12). He went so far as to ask his readers to: “Put aside culture for a moment” and claimed that: “In economic terms, Attawapiskat exists as a pure sinkhole for resources produced elsewhere” (National Post, January 8 2013, A12). The ability to “put aside culture” perpetuates the persistence of a settler-colonial paradigm and overlooks the intimate connection that Cree people have to their lands, which is essential for community health. Several other media accounts noted the “deplorable conditions” and referred to community “disfunction”, “ineptitude of the community leaders” and prevalence of “similarly troubled northern outposts” while arguing for the need to rethink the structure of “failed remote reserve system” of governance itself (Edmonton Journal, December 2 2011, A22; Ottawa Citizen, December 1, 2011, A14; The Calgary Herald, December 2 2011, A14; Vancouver Sun, December 1 2011, B2). Writing for the Vancouver Sun, journalist Barbara Jaffe asserted that solutions to the ‘dysfunctional’ problems facing remote and ‘troubled’ northern communities around James Bay must be solved by communities themselves (Vancouver Sun, December 1 2011, B2). While in part she presents an important perspective – that communities should exercise self-determination and have their voices heard in addressing challenges– she missed the larger systemic geopolitical context and failed to account for Canada’s longstanding responsibilities to respect Indigenous rights and treaties, as outlined in the constitution. It is overly simplistic to suggest that the community bears the burden of responsibility for addressing the systemic settler-colonial status quo. This is a shared responsibility and pointing fingers at local leadership eclipses the recognition of traditional and contemporary treaty relationships.

Accountability

The housing crisis in Attawapiskat left officials startled and a battle over jurisdiction ensued. Housing concerns have been a longstanding issue in the community and reveal the opaque context for governance, responsibility and accountability. Back in 2007, then Chief Mike Carpenter requested funding from the Province of Ontario to address Attawapiskat's housing shortage (Spence Affidavit, Federal Court of Canada, Filed December 16th 2011: 97). The Province refused this request on the grounds that on-reserve housing falls under federal jurisdiction. In 2007, at the time of the request, Chief and Council estimated that the community required approximately 300 additional housing units in order to ensure the health and safety of its community members (Spence Affidavit, Federal Court of Canada, Filed December 16th 2011: 97). Since 2007, 53 housing units were built and the population of Attawapiskat continues to grow. Most of the funding for housing came from non-governmental sources. Most of the additional units were built with mortgages provided by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) with the issuance of a ministerial guarantee from then AANDC (Spence Affidavit, Federal Court of Canada, Filed December 16th 2011: 97). Funding to complete these projects were obtained by minor capital funding from AANDC and First Nation Resources including allocation from its Impact Benefit Agreement (IBA) trust fund. At the same time, while the community built additional housing units, issues related to overcrowding and unsafe housing continued to affect the community's wellbeing.

One month after Attawapiskat First Nation officials declared a State of Emergency in October 2011, the federal government voiced concerns about a lack of financial oversight and misspent funds within the community. Tied to its promise of short term "relief" – in the form of renovations to 5 homes and 15 new modular homes with federal funds at a cost of \$1.2 million – was the imposition of a third party manager (Globe and Mail, December 12 2011, A7; The Leader-Post, December 10 2011, B6). As the winter road only opens once the ice freezes, the community had to wait until early in the new year for the homes to arrive. The federal government also committed to modifying the local sports complex and healing lodge to provide temporary housing for residents as well as sending in necessities including toilets, wood stoves and building

materials (The Leader-Post, December 10 2011, B6). Evacuating some residents was also on the table as an interim measure for the protection of community member's health and safety. Divergent interpretations regarding how best to meet the health and safety needs of the community soon became apparent. According to then AANDC Minister John Duncan during a House of Commons press conference:

Our government has prioritized the urgent health and safety needs of the residents of Attawapiskat [...] We've been working around the clock with the community and Emergency Management Ontario to ensure the residents and especially the children of Attawapiskat have access to safe, warm shelter for the coming months (Times Colonist, December 10 2011, A9; Ottawa Citizen, December 10 2011, A8; The Leader-Post, December 10 2011, B6).

His remarks draw into view the significance of intergovernmental cooperation and jurisdictional ambiguity regarding the policy assemblage of Indigenous environmental justice.

At the same time as the government promised to send in temporary relief, its slow response received widespread criticism from the opposition party members. They also criticized the federal government's costly decision to send in a third party manager. Funding for the third party manager was paid out of federal funding earmarked for band administration, not the emergency funds for Attawapiskat (The Globe and Mail, December 1 2011, A4; The Leader-Post, December 10 2011, B6). The federal government simultaneously announced that it would proceed with an audit of all band spending over the previous five years. This swift and heavy-handed response to a slow-moving crisis drew fire from the Official Opposition. In Charlie Angus' words, this decision was a form of "punishment" for residents living in Attawapiskat (The Leader-Post, December 10 2011, B6; The Globe and Mail, December 1 2011, A4). Similarly, in Theresa Spence's words: "It's like calling an ambulance because there's an emergency situation, and then they send in the police to arrest you" (Globe and Mail, December 12 2011, A7). Adding insult to injury, this discourse exposed the persistent pattern of systemic colonial violence in Canada.

The third party manager would have the authority to determine how best to spend "necessary" funds, thus removing control from the local authorities. During debate in the House of Commons, then Liberal leader Bob Rae referred to an Auditor-General's report from 2003, which identified issues associated with assigning third party managers to

address band administration. In former Auditor-General Sheila Fraser's words: "Third-party management is an extreme intervention, intended to be temporary" (The Leader-Post, December 10 2011, B6). When the third party manager Jacques Marion arrived in Attawapiskat, local leadership asked him to leave (Ottawa Citizen, December 6 2011, A4). This top-down decision highlighted the federal government's desire to fix the housing crisis by shifting blame to the community and then removing its authority to manage its finances, citing a lack of accountability. From a distance, in Ottawa federal authorities announced that it would send in a private accounting company and strip the community from its agency over financial matters (The Globe and Mail, December 1 2011, A4; Windsor Star, January 8 2013, B2). These acts accompanied Red Cross's arrival in December that year to deliver emergency aid to those living in makeshift housing without adequate heat or running water.

Official responses revealed the Prime Minister's belief in the inability of local leadership to improve the lives of its population. In Prime Minister Steven Harper's words before the House of Commons: "This government has made large-scale investments in this community, and this government is determined and is prepared to take the steps necessary to ensure results with those funds" (The Globe and Mail, December 1 2011, A4). This solution clearly demonstrated a view that blamed Attawapiskat for its troubles while alerting attention to the structural challenges that Canadian jurisdiction poses for communities who encounter ongoing, endemic emergencies, which differs from official responses to disasters in non-Indigenous settings. As Charlie Angus responded to the Prime Minister: "Why is it that when it's a first nation community in distress, this government's response is contempt?" (The Globe and Mail, December 1 2011, A4). From the perspective of the federal government, it provided crucial assistance in order to facilitate the efficient, timely and effective public administration of the community's finances.

The federal government's decision to impose a third party manager transformed how Attawapiskat came to be perceived by the general public. It "exposed the people of Attawapiskat to criticism, distrust, and even hateful words on the part of the Canadian public" (Spence Affidavit, Federal Court of Canada, Filed December 16th 2011: 106). Online comments, public debate and media portrayals referred to the Chief and Council

as lazy, stupid and corrupt. Canadians began to call for the “dissolution of Attawapiskat, the imposition of forced birth control and abortion and the removal of all our children” (Spence Affidavit, Federal Court of Canada, Filed December 16th 2011: 106). Such racist comments emerged in public discussions pertaining to the imposition of a third party manager, which reinforced inaccurate and racist assumptions about Indigenous peoples in general and the peoples of Attawapiskat in particular. Finally, subject to Attawapiskat’s request for judicial review, in August 2012, the Federal Court of Canada determined that the federal government’s decision to impose a third party manager was unreasonable and an embarrassment to the country (Galloway 2012).

Closing Reflections: Prismatic Inquiry as an Atmosphere of Engagement

Rather than quietly disappear, Spence’s hunger strike made the everyday experiences of living within emergency conditions visible. In doing so, she struck at the heart of Canadian sovereignty and rattled the public. Contributing to debates in the scholarly fields of biopolitics, settler-colonial studies and environmental justice, this paper developed and applied a prismatic orientation to the study of contemporary forms and expressions of biopower in Attawapiskat, exposing invisible, structural violence across the country. To shed light on the community’s lived-realities, this discussion turned to the everyday experiences facing the Attawapiskat First Nation, where residents live in a constant state of emergency. Specifically, the community is repeatedly left with limited alternatives than to declare a State of Emergency due to environmental concerns ranging from poor housing to flooding and sewage backup. These systemic conditions led to the emergence of then Chief Theresa Spence’s high profile 44-day hunger strike in December 2012. A prismatic approach to Spence’s hunger strike highlights the significance of corporeal protest as well as implications of Chief Spence’s core demand: that the Canadian state must recognize and respect treaty rights and relationships. Sharing responsibilities for interrupting the settler-colonial status quo requires a turn towards the affective dimensions of an engaged academic-activist scholarly approach to research.

To investigate contemporary forms and manifestations of biopower, a prismatic method of engagement seeks to document and better understand how individuals and

communities are affected by public policies in their everyday lives. Elsewhere I refer to this as “sensing policy” (Wiebe 2016). It became clear to me while conducting this background research that developing a better understanding of life in a state of emergency would require a deepened appreciation for Attawapiskat’s “affective terrain” (Wiebe 2013). Turning to Indigenous female leaders was my starting point to do so. After a year of correspondence back and forth with community members, I received an invitation from a respected female community leader to attend the annual traditional powwow at the end of August 2015. When we first spoke over the phone, she noted: “we are always in crisis”. At that time, both the hospital and band office had been relocated due to a diesel leak. For the same reason, the elementary and high school had been previously relocated in the community. Evidently, this is a community constantly facing stress due to the built environment. As discussed in this paper, numerous media articles have covered Attawapiskat’s housing situation, painting a picture of a community constantly in crisis and in need of intervention (CBC, 2011; Halfe & Towell, 2014; Huffington Post, 2015; National Post, 2015). This portrayal buries voices and only paints a partial image. As Indigenous journalist and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) reporter Angela Sterritt advises, covering stories in Indigenous communities must avoid the “victim narrative” (CBC 2016). Her piece also informs readers about the importance of placing Indigenous stories in historical context. Most stories about Indigenous communities expose tough and troubling circumstances. Aligned with Sterritt’s important advice, academics too must “get beyond the crisis” to find balance in telling stories (CBC 2016). In order to truly understand everyday struggles and to write intelligently and respectfully about Indigenous communities requires an investment into relationship-building.

To conduct respectful and relevant community engaged research work, scholars cannot just write from afar. Some effort into building relationships is critical. In my view, this means visiting the place and connecting with those affected by policies in their daily lives. Elsewhere I have discussed how genuine community engaged research must be relevant to communities, collaboratively designed, involve community members through equitable participation and aim towards action and social change (Wiebe & Taylor, 2014; Wiebe, 2016). From my perspective, meaningful community engaged research involves sustainable connections with communities, including both people and the place. To better

understand the underlying forces that propelled Theresa Spence's hunger strike and to work with her community on the shared pursuit of telling an alternative story about Attawapiskat that interrupts the predominant media portrayal required seeing, feeling and participating in the lifeblood of the community. This is crucial to gaining an appreciation for a sense of the community's atmosphere. My time in Attawapiskat affected me deeply and left a lasting impression as I continued to reflect on the dynamics of this engaging, affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009, 2014). During my initial visit in the summer of 2015, by volunteering, listening, observing and participating in community events, I become reciprocally embroiled within an atmosphere of engagement. My departure coincided with an invitation to return in the winter. In February 2016, I returned to launch a youth-driven digital storytelling project with the senior art class at the local high school. After this week of immersion, I subsequently sat down with Theresa Spence over breakfast to discuss what life is like in a constant state of emergency.

As a community engaged researcher committed to environmental justice, I felt a strong sense of responsibility to follow through on my intention of collaboratively telling an untold story of Attawapiskat, to counter dominant media portrayals of a defunct community constantly in crisis and to celebrate the vibrant beauty of the people who call this place their home. When I returned to the community to launch the digital storytelling project, during my introduction to the captive high school audience, I presented external media coverage and suggested that together through the collaborative process, we could begin to interrupt the predominantly negative media portrayals of the community with stories from the perspectives of those living on the ground. To follow-up with the youth, I will return in June 2016 to see what stories they intend to share with a wider audience about their everyday experiences living in a constant state of emergency, where their home and connection to Mother Earth is both in constant crisis and a source of comfort. When Theresa Spence and I parted ways on February 13th, 2016, she said to me "you are part of the treaty too". Her words resonate with me as I write these pages and reflect on the implications of her words. Our conversation was a meaningful prompt to think critically about creating space for diverse ways of knowing and our shared responsibilities for radically interrupting the settler-colonial status quo.

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Appendix A: Declaration of Commitment

January 23rd, 2013

First Nations: Working Towards Fundamental Change

In the true spirit of commitment to initiate dialogue to discuss both Treaty and non-Treaty Indigenous issues on behalf of our First Nations Peoples of Canada, Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat First Nation and Mr. Raymond Robinson of Cross Lake, Manitoba will continue their Hunger Strike, pending outcome of this written Declaration. We also like to acknowledge Mr. Jean Sock of Elsipogtog, New Brunswick and all other Fasters who have shown their deep dedication and courage in support of protecting and honouring both Treaty and non-Treaty obligations as written, entered into or understood by all Peoples, with the Federal Government of Canada including each Provincial/Territorial signatory.

Further, we agree the self-sacrifice and the spiritual courage of Chief Theresa Spence, along with Elder Raymond Robinson and all other fasters have made clear the need for fundamental change in the relationship of First Nations and the Crown. We fully commit to carry forward the urgent and coordinated action required until concrete and tangible results are achieved in order to allow First Nations to forge their own destiny.

Therefore, we solemnly commit to undertake political, spiritual and all other advocacy efforts to implement a renewed First Nations – Crown relationship where inherent Treaty and non-Treaty Rights are recognized, honoured and fully implemented as they should be, within the next five years.

This Declaration includes, but is not limited to, ensuring commitments made by the Prime Minister of Canada on January 11th, 2013 are followed through and implemented as quickly as possible as led by First Nation on a high-level priority with open transparency and trust. Furthermore, immediate steps are taken working together to achieve the below priorities:

1. An immediate meeting to be arranged between the Crown, Federal Governments, Provincial Governments and all First Nations to discuss outstanding issues regarding the Treaty Relationship, as well as for non-Treaty area relationships.
2. Clear work-plans that shall include deliverables and timelines that outline how commitments will be achieved, including immediate action for short, medium and long-term goals. Addressing the housing crisis within our First Nation communities shall be considered as a short-term immediate action.
3. Frameworks and mandates for the implementation and enforcement of Treaties between Treaty parties on a Nation-to-Nation basis.
4. Reforming and modifying the comprehensive claims policy based on inherent rights of First Nations.

5. A commitment towards resource revenue sharing, requiring the participation and involvement of provinces and territories currently benefiting from resource development from traditional lands.
6. Commitment towards ensuring a greater collective oversight and action towards ensuring the sustainability of the land through a sustained environmental oversight.
7. A comprehensive review and meaningful consultation in regards to Bill C-38 and C-45 to ensure it is consistent with Section 35 of the Constitution Act (1982).
8. Ensure that all federal legislation has the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations where inherent and Treaty rights are affected or impacted.
9. A revised fiscal relationship between First Nations and Canada that is equitable, sustainable and includes indexing and the removal of arbitrary funding caps.
10. A National Public Commission of Inquiry on Violence Against Indigenous Women of all ages.
11. Equity in capital construction of First Nation schools, including funding parity with Provincial funding formulas with additional funding support for First Nation languages.
12. A change in how government operates that would include direct oversight, a dedicated Cabinet Committee and Secretariat within the Privy Council Office with specific responsibility for the First Nation-Crown relationship to ensure implementation.
13. The full implementation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – UNDRIP.

As expressed from time to time by Chief Theresa Spence, “Our Treaty Rights continue to be violated and ignored”. Elder Raymond Robinson says, “Treaties were entered into on a Nation to Nation basis and we need to do our best to re-bridge that balance to walk and work together as was the original intent of the treaties”. Far too long, we have been denied an equitable stature within Canadian Society. The time is ours and no longer will we be silenced and idle. We will continue to call upon the insistence of truth, justice, fairness for all our First Nation Peoples.

As fully endorsed and supported by:

Assembly of First Nations National Executive Committee
 Native Women’s Association of Canada
 Liberal Party of Canada Parliamentary Caucus
 New Democratic Party National Caucus
 Green Party of Canada Leader and MP for Saanich–Gulf Islands Elizabeth May