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Displacement of Indigenous People in Canada under the Indian Act: Participatory Video with Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan First Nations on Flood Impacts

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Abstract

Four participatory video research projects were undertaken over eight years with two Indigenous communities displaced by a flood. The films focus on how floodwaters were diverted away from non-Indigenous regions to Indigenous communities at Lake St. Martin by Canada's colonial government. This displacement repeats the colonial pattern of forcibly relocating Indigenous people away from their land, resources, and good life. This participatory video research of flood stories underwent a content, process, and outcome analysis. The environmental, social, cultural, health and economic impacts are documented in the films, including poverty, environmental injustice, gang predation, separation of families, food insecurity, illness, culture loss, addictions, and racism. The films captured the lived experience of Elders, youth and, families during their eight years of displacement to temporary, unsuitable accommodations and upon relocation. In terms of process, community members engaged in filming, scriptwriting, and narrating to tell their stories. The process was transformative, decolonizing, and built community research capacity. The participatory video research was helpful for lawyers advocating for compensation. The popularity of the videos online exceeded that of academic papers and helped fuel a movement to wake people to the ongoing colonial injustices faced by Indigenous people across Canada. This paper not only analyzes the films but traces the roots of Indigenous displacement by man-made flooding to the Indian Act and colonization, calling for abolishing the Indian Act and decolonization.

Keywords

Flood, Indigenous, Displacement, Participatory Video, Film, Decolonization, Environmental Justice, Climate Change, Environmental Racism, Indian Act

1. Introduction

The colonial view of land as a place for commodification and control differs from the Indigenous view of land as the foundation of identity, relationships, and spirituality (Thistle, 2017). Traditional land uses of Indigenous people are based on spiritual, reciprocal relations to the animals, land, and waterway (Thistle, 2017). Colonial powers undermined these relations by forced relocation. Displacement of Indigenous people from their Native homeland is the colonial approach for occupation and settlement in Canada, the United States, Australia, and many other countries. Indigenous people in Canada today are the diverse descendants of those displaced by Europeans through conquest, occupation, settlement, legal, and environmental destruction (Parrott, 2020).

Displacing Indigenous peoples from their Native homeland negatively impacts their cultural survival. Recognizing relocation's severe consequences on Indigenous peoples' survival as distinct cultures, displacement of Indigenous communities contravenes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2008). Land destruction and displacement are associated with severe psychological distress, a cultural identity crisis, and dysfunction levels. This trauma is akin to a death in the immediate family of Indigenous people, and is associated with higher morbidity and mortality rates (O'Sullivan & Handal, 1988). The most severe and enduring impacts occur for Indigenous communities where the disaster is man-made rather than a natural occurrence and where the entire community is affected (Martin et al., 2017; O'Sullivan & Handal, 1988).

This paper examines the potential for participatory video to document the impacts for two *Anishinaabe* communities in the Interlake region of Manitoba, Canada displaced by man-made floods. *Anishinaabe* is the Indigenous language spoken in Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin First Nations. Also, *Anishinaabe* is the name people from these communities call themselves, as language identifies who they are. The *Anishinaabe* community members filmed their lived experiences of flooding, displacement, and resettlement, producing four participatory videos over eight years that are the focus of this paper (Thompson et al., 2014; Ballard, 2012; Ballard & Thompson, 2013).

This paper starts with a literature review of displacement, decolonizing research methods, and participatory video research. The methods section describes the analysis of the four participatory videos for their decolonizing content, the process to engage community members as partners, and the videos' impact. In the findings, we gauged the ability of films to engage community members fully

to offer a reflective filming process that built research capacity for decolonization. An analysis of the process, product, and content gauged whether the participatory video was effective at the engagement of people in research to get their message out. The discussion and conclusion analyzed if filming the *Anishinaabe* lived experience of displacement after the 2011 flood helped shift public opinion from racism to decolonization.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Indigenous People and Displacement from Native Land

Displacement is the colonial history of Indigenous people in many countries. Regarding Canada, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP, 1996: p. 132) summarized colonialism with one word, displacement: "Regardless of the approach to colonialism, the most appropriate term to describe that impact is 'displacement'". The RCAP reported how colonial policies, particularly the Indian Act, took away control of land and resources but also cultural, education and governance systems: "Aboriginal peoples lost control and management of their own lands and resources, and their traditional customs and forms of organization were interfered with" (RCAP, 1996: p. 132).

To claim sovereignty for the British Crown and create the Canadian constitutional monarchy, Indigenous people were forcibly relocated from their vast Native land to tiny reserves (RCAP, 1996). The prime land upon which Indigenous people had lived and hunted was confiscated for settler occupation, with swampy and other non-desirable lands remote from settlements relegated as "Indian reserves". The land on these Indian or Indigenous reserves amounts to below 0.02% of the ten million square kilometers of Canada's Native land (Longman, Riddle, Wilson, & Desai, 2020: p. 4).

Eleven years after Canada's confederation in 1867, Canada's federal government legislated the Indian Act (1876), which resulted in an oppressive rule over Indigenous cultural practices, education, health, and systems of governance. From 1884 to 1940, reserves were operated like prisons (Indian Act, 1884), with revisions to the Indian Act outlawing any Indigenous person to leave the confines of their Indian reserve without written permission from the Indian Agent. Confining Indigenous people to these tiny reserves undermined seasonal migration for hunts and rituals, culture, visits to important cultural sites, subsistence patterns and kinship networks, and spiritual loss. These Indian reserves segregated Indigenous people on marginal land, typically in remote locations away from settlers.

The Indian Act is an artifact of colonialism, yet remains in effect today. The colonial government, under the *Indian Act* (1876, Section 12), denied Indigenous people's humanity by declaring, "A person means an individual other than an Indian". The Indian Act continues to make Indigenous people wards of the state to control their land and resources through its land trust (Blacksmith et al., 2021). This decree remains the basis of Indigenous people's legal status as "wards

of the state" (Joseph, 2018). Under the Indian Act, the Crown gave itself trustee legal rights over their wards to control Native land, resources, and most aspects of Indigenous people's lives (Joseph, 2018). In 1884, the Indian Act was amended to require all Indigenous children under the age of 16 to attend residential schools, away from their Indigenous communities, where many children were physically, culturally, and emotionally abused (TRC, 2015). Many thousands of Indigenous children died at residential schools, which Canada's colonial government made compulsory for Indigenous children (TRC, 2015). Despite this genocide of Indigenous people in Canada, the Indian Act and the "wards of the state" status for Indigenous people in Canada remain in place today, continuing to place Indigenous people and communities at risk.

The Indian Act continues to colonize Canada. The Indian Act advances the Crown's conquest of Canada by enabling the forcible relocation of Indigenous people from reserves (Wolfe, 2006). The Indian Act created a land trust to control and profit from the business of the land and its resources. The Indian Act (1876, s.46) provides a legal means to expropriate Indigenous land for settlers, industry or government for any or no reason: "The Indian Act, 1876 Section 46 allowed Indians' land to be expropriated by any private group or level of the government wanting a way through it" (Joseph, 2018: p. 33).

Today, Indigenous reserve lands remain segregated from Canada's cities and towns. This segregation remains an artifact of colonial policy. Policy to keep Indigenous people far away from settlers revised the Indian Act (1911, s. 49a), which states: "an Indian reserve which adjoins or is situated wholly or partly within an incorporated town or city having a population of not less than eight thousand" could be removed without their consent for the public interest". Indigenous communities and people were forcibly relocated and segregated away from colonial settlements to marginal lands in remote areas. For example, a prosperous group of Dakota Oyate, who had purchased fee-simple land in Portage la Prairie, and who never signed treaty was removed to an Indian reserve in 1911 using the Indian Act (Blacksmith et al., 2021). This Native land theft is not reconciled, despite land-based reconciliation and decolonization being considered central to Indigenous resurgence and well-being (Atleo, 2015). Atleo calls for land-based reconciliation, stating: "For Indigenous peoples, economic social justice is preceded by restitution, a giving back of what was stolen" (Atleo, 2015).

Canada, today, is a nation of immigrants. Indigenous people were replaced with settlers in what historian Wolfe called the "logic of elimination". The displacement of Indigenous people was not one event in the nineteenth and early twentieth century but remains an ongoing process in Canada (Wolfe, 2006). The displacement of Indigenous people by the colonial governments in Canada continues to occur to further colonial power and wealth.

Forced relocation of Indigenous reserves occurred throughout Canada. In eastern Canada, the James Cree and Inuit of Quebec were forced to relocate their reserves due to hydro development that caused flooding of their lands (Marsh, 2022; Thompson, 2005). Also, in 1948, many Innu communities in Labrador

were forced to relocate when Newfoundland joined Canada (Burns, 2006). In the far north, Canada forcibly relocated many Inuit people to demonstrate its colonial sovereignty on its northern coast (Madwar, 2018). In the west, the Kitsilano (Sen̓áḵw) were displaced from their Native reserve located in Vancouver, British Columbia (Joseph, 2018). These relocations reveal a colonial pattern of displacement, which is also visible in Manitoba.

Canada's colonial government relocated numerous Indigenous communities in Manitoba. Colonial government displaced the *Ininew* people at York Factory from the Hudson Bay coast to an inland boreal area (HTFC, 2016). Displacement in the other direction from inland boreal to the Hudson Bay coast for the *Saysai Dene* of Tadoule Lake. Colonial governments forced both communities from their homes burning them down to prevent their return from their relocation to different ecozones, without any provision for houses or other infrastructure (Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 2000). After encountering homelessness, starvation, and addiction, the *Dene* walked back hundreds of miles in sub-zero weather to their land of caribou country. Their land and caribou are key for their cultural survival, food security, and identity, although unable to return to their original reserve land (Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 2000). Also, the colonial government permanently displaced the *Ininew* from Chemawawin and South Indian Lake due to flooding for hydro development (Thompson, 2015). Many other First Nation communities are impacted by floodwaters diverted away from settler communities to the doorsteps of First Nation homes. For example, the *Anishinaabe* community of Lake St. Martin Reserve was flooded and displaced to a location, not of their own choosing (Ballard, 2012). And temporary displacement by flooding continues at Peguis First Nation.

The flooding of Indigenous communities is expected to increase with climate change magnifying flood events (Thistlethwaite et al., 2020). Indigenous reserve communities bear high flood risks (Thistlethwaite et al., 2020): "Canadian Indigenous communities bear significant financial, psychological, and social burdens associated with flooding, and they have been disproportionately affected by flood-related displacement" (Chakraborty et al., 2021: p. 821).

The Indian Act and other colonial policies place Indigenous communities at a high-risk position for flooding, which is counter to reconciliation. Land-based reconciliation and decolonization is central to Indigenous resurgence and well-being. Atleo (2015) calls for justice and land-back, stating: "For Indigenous peoples, economic social justice is preceded by restitution, a giving back of what was stolen".

2.2. Decolonizing Research

Decolonizing research requires identifying colonial structures and institutions with a view to transforming them (Laenui, 2000). Decolonization goes beyond promoting Indigenous leadership in the existing colonial structures and institutions. Decolonization is about dismantling the structures and policies that colonize Indigenous people to bring the land back to life under Indigenous gover-

nance (Jung, 2019; Laenui, 2000).

Five steps in the decolonization process have been identified by Laenui (2000). These five decolonizing steps are: 1) Rediscovery and Recovery, 2) Mourning, 3) Dreaming, 4) Commitment, and 5) Action. These steps prevent deeper entrenchment "in the systems, values, and controls put here by the colonizer" (Laenui, 2000: p. 6). Step one towards decolonization is to rediscover and recover the Indigenous worldview. This phase of rediscovery of precolonial "history and recovery of one's culture, language, identity, etc. is fundamental to the movement for decolonization" (Laenui, 2000: p. 4) Step two is to mourn the genocide and massive loss of the web of relationships and responsibilities with the animals, lands, waterways, and culture. People need time to lament their victimization to be able to cope with their traumatic losses. Step three is considered the most crucial for decolonization, to dream in an Indigenous worldview, as: "here is where the full panorama of possibilities are expressed, considered through debate and consensus and building dreams on further dreams which eventually become the flooring of a new social order" (Laenui, 2000: p. 4). Step four is a firm commitment by "people combining their voices in a clear statement of their desired direction", playing a "participatory role in the formation of their own social order" (Laenui, 2000: p. 5). Finally, step five is action on the ground for decolonization (Laenui, 2000). Decolonizing research can play a part in step one and step two to inform the dreams, commitments, and actions.

Decolonizing research must deconstruct power dynamics to see Canada's colonial history and policies that continue to subjugate Indigenous people. Whether through video or firsthand, Indigenous people's stories of displacement unveil oppressive systemic issues and help to share their worldviews. Hendry (2005: p. 495) explains how stories of lived experiences affect us deeply: "Through telling our lives, we engage in the Act of meaning-making. This is a sacred act. Stories are what make us human. We are our narratives. They are not something that can be outside ourselves because they are what give shape to us, what gives the meaning".

Stories and videos of the lived experiences of Indigenous people provide an opportunity for awareness and transformation. This narrative research, or story-based research, offers beneficial, respectful strategies for research with Indigenous communities. Cunsolo Willox et al. (2013: p. 130) define narrative research as "providing a method for sharing stories, giving voice to those traditionally marginalized, and providing a less exploitative research method than other modes". Creative tools, such as PV, are helpful to wrestle research away from the academic elite in order to amplify the voices of Indigenous community members (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013; Hendry, 2005). However, narrative analysis can further marginalize individuals and communities if non-Indigenous researchers manipulate the process to emulate colonial views.

As colonial views dominate in modern society, colonialism infiltrates research unless very consciously disrupted (Joseph, 2018). Creative approaches to research help disrupt the destructive ideas behind progress, and development that

dominate in many societies around the world to regenerative an Indigenous worldview. The education system in Canada, like that of most colonial states around the world, tells a one-sided colonial, patriarchal history without debate or question of the doctrine of discovery, perpetual economic growth, the Indian Act or colonialism. Another narrative of interconnectedness with nature is needed (Kimmerer, 2013).

Decolonizing research concerning Indigenous people requires employing Indigenous research methods and Indigenous researchers (Smith, 2012). Indigenous views are important to counter the unsustainable development views that dominate. With the sixth extinction period and the surpassing of many climate change tipping points, human well-being requires Indigenous wisdom to overcome ecological ruin (Meinshausen et al., 2022; Anderson & Anderson, 2020; Joseph, 2018). Indigenous research requires building Indigenous people's capacity to recover from being marginalized: "An important task of Indigenous research in 'becoming' a community of researchers is about capacity building, developing and mentoring researchers, as well as creating the space and support for new approaches to research and new examinations of Indigenous research" (Smith, 2012: p. 92). Participatory video offers a culturally acceptable way to undertake research on Indigenous issues (Thompson, 2018).

2.3. Participatory Video

Participatory video (PV) falls under the umbrella of Participatory Action Research (PAR). Four PAR elements are central to PV, namely: participation, action, research, and social change for social justice. Reason and Bradbury (2001: p. 156) explain that PAR requires partnerships to form between communities and academics. This partnership integrates local voices with other experts to overcome community struggles by being: "Grounded in lived experience, developed in partnership" so that the research "addresses significant problems, works with (rather than simply studies) people, develops new ways of seeing/interpreting the world (i.e., theory) and leaves infrastructure in its wake". Research participants play a pivotal role in developing the research strategy from the beginning stages of determining the research focus and study approach to the final dissemination stage.

Participatory video offers a collective process of creation, reflection, and introspection, regarding images and representation to transform critical consciousness. Participatory video research offers a way to awaken marginalized people to the hegemonic order so they recognize their role and power. This awakening occurs from deconstructing socio-economic and political relations. This awakening follows Freire's (1970) three stages of consciousness. At the magical or first level, people accept the status quo without review or resistance. At the second level, exploited people are awake and angered by corruption and unfairness but feel so marginalized that they perceive the system as being unchangeable. Not clearly seeing their own role in maintaining the system, their

anger is often misdirected to self-harm and lateral violence (Freire, 1970). At the third level of critical consciousness, people become aware of the structures supporting oppression as well as their role in contributing to oppressive systems. At this stage, people are empowered to act to bring meaningful change. We must strive for this critical consciousness to decolonize narratives, research and education systems that shape our society (Freire, 1970; Liebenberg, 2018).

Participatory video offers a direct learning experience for the "researcher" to engage in the research and film documentation process (Lunch & Lunch, 2006). Community members are engaged in telling their story in each stage of video making (e.g., shooting, scriptwriting, editing the film, and audience engagement). However, the researcher or video professionals, rather than the participant, in some cases do guide or deploy the camera to improve the technical quality of the film (Chowdhury et al., 2010; Lunch & Lunch, 2006).

A key aspect of PV is recognizing that local people are experts of their own stories and capable of its documentation. Chowdhury et al. (2015) explained how PV carefully negotiates power relationships, making efforts to transform hierarchical dynamics between researchers and community members into partnerships. Researchers in the PV process from outside the community must struggle "alongside" rather than "stare at" participants in the research process. Their key role is to build community research capacity (Quarry & Ramírez, 2009).

Participatory video research claims to empower through its research process and the final film product. The PV research process engages community members in telling their stories mediated through technology. These local people are the experts of their own reality. Films are able to amplify voices from structurally disadvantaged communities to reveal their lived experiences (Chowdhury et al., 2010; Chowdhury et al., 2015; Smillie, 2017; Thompson, 2018). Sharing stories of lived experiences is a powerful way to shift perceptions. For example, Indigenous people begin to rewrite history from an Indigenous worldview, rather than the colonial text.

Participatory video is an iterative process intended to value local cultural expression and Indigenous knowledge. The PV process provides a culturally sensitive approach to air the issues of structurally disadvantaged communities (Thompson, 2018). Enhancing creativity and building individuals' capacity to network with others is central to this approach (Lunch & Lunch, 2006; Witteveen & Lie, 2009). Community engagement builds bridges between communities and decision-makers and enables individuals to gain more control over decisions impacting their lives (Chowdhury et al., 2015).

The adage "seeing is believing" applies to PV. The photographic nature offers research credibility. Photos or films are valued as a higher truth experience than other forms of media. This "window" is able to convince policymakers, community members and the general public (Horton et al., 2011; Klerkx et al., 2011). As a result, documentary film, including PV, is often used in education, advocacy,

health promotion (Millán & Frediani, 2014) and lobbying (Smillie, 2017; Thompson, 2018; VISTA, 2019). MacDonald et al. (2015) found their videos empowered Indigenous youth and informed communities about climate change.

2.4. The History of Participatory Video in Social Change

Participatory video (PV) is part of the Canadian legacy of filmmaking that started in 1967 to empower remote and rural people (Smillie, 2017; Thompson, 2018). The first pioneer was Don Snowden who built alliances on Fogo Island with remote fishing villages around Newfoundland to lobby the government against relocation (Crocker, 2008; Newhook, 2009). The Fogo films document how rural poverty arose from people's inability to access information, lack of political power, limited economic opportunities and adversarial policy (Smillie, 2017). By the government seeing and hearing from community members, mediated by technology, their plan to relocate Fogo Islanders to Newfoundland was halted (Crocker, 2008). This ability of films to change policy by promoting dialogue, resulted in PV education implementation around the world (Smillie, 2017). Video-sharing platforms, such as YouTube, provide an instant distribution vehicle (Thompson, 2018). The PVs offer a popular and accessible medium to foster development, social change, and education in the information age.

2.5. Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin First Nations

The four films tell the story of Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin First Nations. The 2011 "super flood" permanently displaced Indigenous community members from Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin reserves. The Portage Diversion west of Portage La Prairie is a 29 km man-made channel to connection two previously disconnected watersheds from the Assiniboine River northward into Lake Manitoba. Then, to release the floodwaters from Lake Manitoba they opened the Fairford Water Control Structure bringing the floodwaters to the doorsteps of two communities—Lake St. Martin First Nation, with a population of 2811 (INAC, 2019) and Little Saskatchewan First Nation, with a population of 1305 (INAC, 2019). These neighboring communities are approximately 225 km northwest of Winnipeg and downstream from the Fairford Water Control Structure at Lake St. Martin's Narrows, as shown in **Figure 1**.

To forever reroute floodwater away from settlers more man-made diversions were made. In 2011, a $100 million emergency channel was built to reroute water through Lake St. Martin to Lake Winnipeg. This channel was constructed without an impact assessment, to redirect more floodwater to the Lake St. Martin basin despite its many risks for Indigenous communities (Thompson et al., 2014). **Figure 1** shows the Lake St. Martin Outlet Channel and the impacted Indigenous communities.

This paper analyzes the four PVs made from 2011 to 2019. These films document the human-made flood, emergency evacuation, prolonged displacement, and relocation over an eight-year period. This PV research covers the aftermath

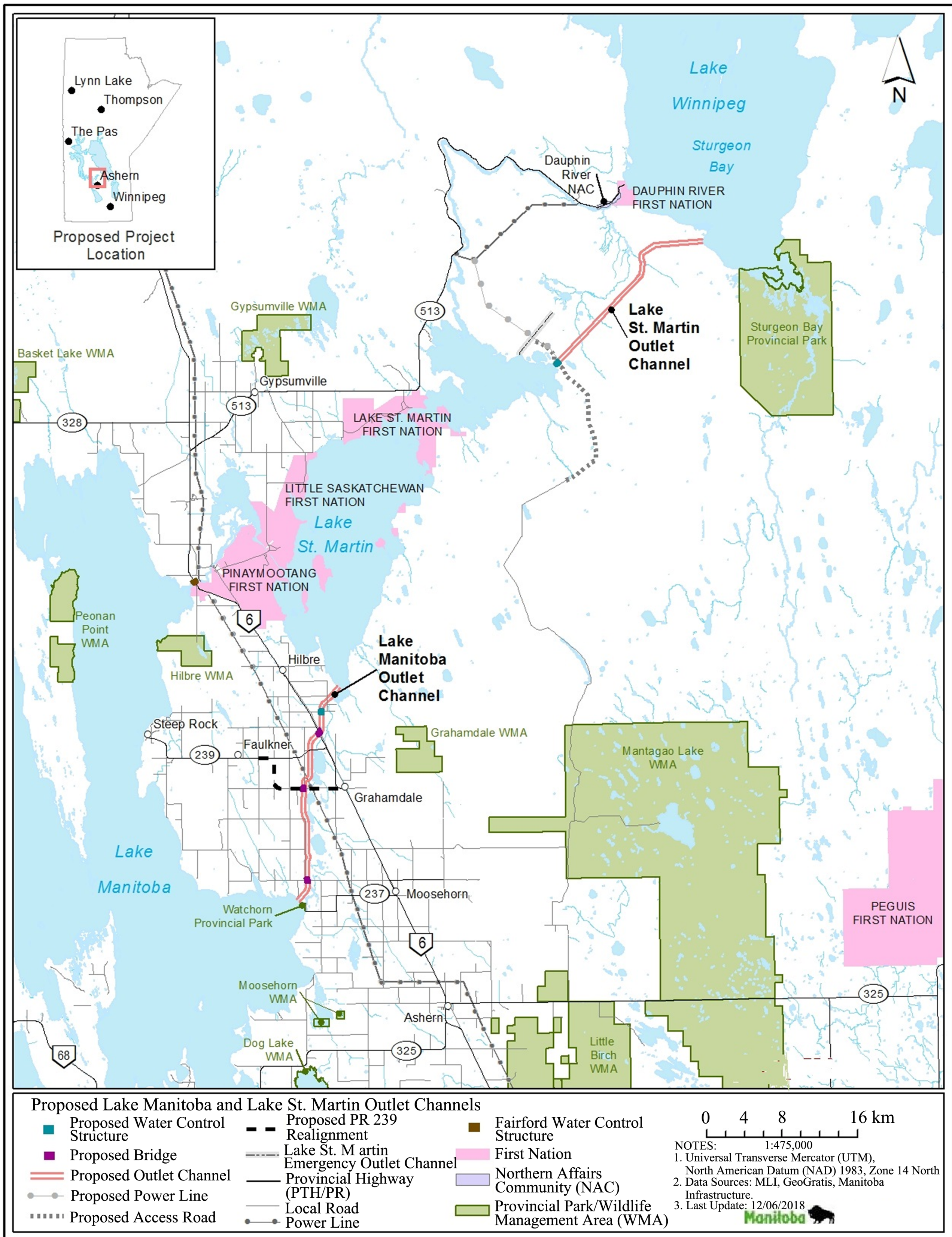

Figure 1. First Nation communities impacted by diversions and outlet channels to Lake St. Martin in Manitoba, Canada. Source: Manitoba Infrastructure, n.d.

of the flood and the two communities' resettlement at sites dictated by the province, despite Lake St. Martin selecting another site for relocation.

3. Method

The four films were evaluated for their content, process, and influence, according to different indicators. For content, we analyzed each film for its coverage of the many impacts of displacement and flooding, including cultural, economic, environmental, health and social. Also, we assessed whether the content of the film focused on Indigenous and decolonizing views. The method of reviewing each film for its thematic content is verifiable through a review of the films, available on YouTube.

Regarding community engagement processes, which is a key part of participatory video, we reviewed each film to assess engagement in the different aspects of filmmaking (Boni et al., 2017; Millán & Frediani, 2014). The credits clearly list the roles in the films, identifying community engagement in all areas. For each video we determined whether community members were involved to direct, interview, write script, film, edit, narrate, workshop, and integrate *Anishinaabe* language.

We analyzed different indicators of the films' success. These indicators include Public Access URL, a film distributor, showing at film festivals, release prior to papers and contribution to a policy shift (Lunch & Lunch, 2006). Also, on the date of September 9th, 2022 the number of YouTube views of the different PVs and the H-Index of Google for each related journal paper to compare popularity. However, these numbers did not capture the DVD views, which were distributed widely and sent to libraries to be viewed many times.

4. Findings

Participatory video research engaged community members successfully in the research during three critical phases. The first film documented the flood emergency and evacuation in *Flooding Hope*: *The Lake St. Martin Story* (Ballard et al., 2012). After several years of prolonged displacement, we filmed *Wounded Spirit*: *Forced Evacuation of Little Saskatchewan First Nation* (Ballard et al., 2016) and *Name Your Baby Mooskaahan*: *Flooding out Youth from Little Saskatchewan* (Sumner et al., 2018) with Elders and Youth, respectively. Finally, the resettlement issues are told through a series of vignettes with youth in *Returning to Home* (Figueiredo et al., 2019; Oni et al., 2019; Solademi et al., 2020; Stormhunter et al., 2020). The four participatory videos produced, over these eight years from displacement to resettlement, have their content, engagement, and product impact summarized in **Table 1**.

4.1. Content

Flooding Hope documented the emergency evacuation of Lake St. Martin community members displaced when floodwaters were diverted to their doorsteps.

Table 1. Engagement, content, and product analysis for four participatory videos.

Name of Participatory video/Film Analysis Theme	Flooding Hope	Wounded Spirit	Name Your Baby Mooskaahn	Return to Home Vignettes
Content Analysis				
Economic impact documented	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health Impact documented	✓	✓	✓	✓
Environmental impact documented	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social impact documented	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cultural impact documented	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decolonizing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Environmental injustice	✓	✓	✓	✓
Valorizes Indigenous knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engagement Analysis				
Community did interviews	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community directed shooting	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community input into the editing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community applied editing software	×	×	×	×
Community member narrated the script	×	×	✓	✓
Anishinaabe language is spoken	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community workshopped the film	✓	✓	✓	✓
Product Analysis				
Video ahead of paper	✓	✓	✓	✓
YouTube URL	✓	✓	✓	✓
DVD Distributor	✓	×	✓	×
Showed at film festivals, workshops, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policy change	✓	✓	✓	✓

The chaos that this man-made flood created for the evacuees was made worse by the lack of necessary services and infrastructure. Evacuees lacked counseling services, adequate housing, traditional food, etc., and had to move from one hotel to another hotel, without control over their accommodation arrangements.

Two films covered the uncertainty and the tragic loss people experienced during eight years of displacement. *Wounded Spirit* focused on Elders' stories of health, cultural and spiritual struggles emanating from displacement. *Name Your Baby Mooskhan* profiled the trauma experienced by youth that grew up away from home and family after the flood. Many evacuees resided in hotels and

temporary housing in Winnipeg for years, without suitable arrangements for long-term accommodations. Some families were relocated 12 times from hotel to hotel, which was destabilizing.

Youth and Elders from the community of Little Saskatchewan teamed up with a class of University of Manitoba graduate students to do participatory videos about returning home. Four vignettes resulted from that workshop, called *Returning Home*. Resettlement started in 2018 and 2019 after the federal court settlement provided some funding to rebuild housing for community members in a new location away from Lake St. Martin. The videos were to help understand the issues faced by youth returning to a community they were too young to remember leaving. Each vignette showed the displacement consequences, with some focusing on the social aspects, such as the vignette called *Youth Role Models Combat Crystal Meth*: *Little Saskatchewan First Nation*. This vignette and another, called *We are Coming Home*, focus on how displacement undermined their community by bringing negative influences, including addictive illegal drugs and gangs, without providing adequate funding for their school with all the returning students, healing or addiction services, sports programming or recreational facilities. The cultural and economic aspects are discussed by *Back to the School* (*Little Saskatchewan First Nation*), with the constant underfunding of First Nation school that needs funding for more teachers and programs. Also, *8 Years Displaced* discusses the impact of mold and the lack of any waste management in a flooded dump creating toxic contamination.

4.2. Community Engagement Analysis

The community members fully participated in the PV. *Anishinaabe* community members directed, filmed, reviewed drafts, and participated as both interviewers and interviewees. However, community members refrained from hands-on editing. A Metis professional videographer, Kaoru Suzuki, was employed to assist community members to edit and take drone footage. Kaoru ended up doing most of the hands-on editing work for the different PVs alongside the community members who directed the editing process.

Anishinaabe community members played central roles in directing the research and making the films. Dr. Myrle Ballard, a community member of flood-impacted Lake St. Martin First Nation, was the lead researcher, co-director, co-scriptwriter, and co-videographer for both *Flooding Hope* and *Wounded Spirit*. Dr. Ballard also shared this video widely at conferences, film festivals, and the United Nations.

Isabella Sumner from Little Saskatchewan was the co-editor, community engagement person, and narrator of *Name Your Baby Mooskaahan.* Isabella believed that participatory filming was the best way to bring awareness to the issues that arose from the government diverting floodwaters to her community. Isabella was keen to involve the educational assistants and youth at the Little Saskatchewan School in a participatory film workshop. Isabella Sumner planned

a two-day community-based film workshop. Tragically, Isabella died a month before the workshop was to occur from flood-induced health issues. In tribute to Isabella's legacy her husband, sons, and sister organized her workshop with the school, which resulted in the vignettes collectively called *Returning Home.*

4.3. Film Impact Analysis

The four films provided compelling testimony of the community members' hardships. Lawyers of Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan First Nations used these films to fight for compensation and analyze environmental impacts. The films effectively provided credible evidence of the hardships the community members endured. The films also shifted the public narrative from racism and colonialism to reconciliation and decolonization by making the public aware of the harm that flood diversion did to those Indigenous people displaced. Thirty health workers from the Interlake Health District came together to see the film, resulting in them adopting an ethical framework to apply to health procedures and programs for these flood-impacted communities.

The films were the start of a decolonizing journey for many. The films engaged community members to reflect and process collectively their trauma from flooding, displacement, and racism. Also, policymakers, academics, and health professionals became more concerned about the negative impacts of colonial policy. These videos' circle of influence extended to the United Nations' forums on racism in the Hague and regarding Indigenous peoples in New York. Also, community people organized against colonial policies by showing these films at meetings and in community halls. Links were shared on community members' social media. Also, *Flooding Hope* was featured in the Winnipeg Free Press, a dozen film festivals worldwide, education programs and 12,000 views on YouTube. The films remain a vital part of a communication strategy to lobby for the inclusion of reserves at the decision-making table regarding disaster, environment, and health.

Most films were shown at different workshops, film festivals, and conferences as well as distributed widely through YouTube, Winnipeg Film Group, and DVDs. The DVD covers are shown in **Figures 2-4**. The PV research was released faster by film, than through print media in journal articles, although both were based on the same interviews. While the uptake of journal papers was limited to academics, films reached a broad audience through YouTube. Also, the film's uptake was an order of magnitude higher at a few thousand times, than for the published papers. However, three papers (Thompson et al., 2012; Thompson, 2015; Martin et al., 2017) were cited 30 times each, and Ballard & Thompson (2013) was cited nineteen times.

Three videos were published as DVDs to circulate to libraries, educators, and interested people. The *Name Your Baby Mooskhan* DVD was given to hundreds of people at Isabella's funeral and her film was readapted to a shorter version called *Flood Children* to play at film festivals.

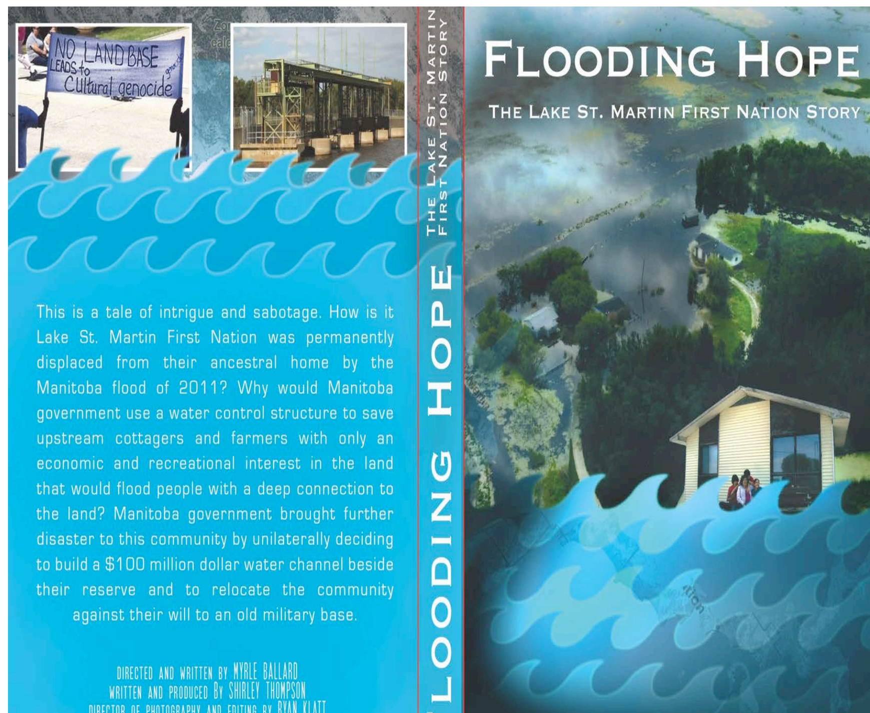

Figure 2. Trap sheet of flooding hope: The Lake St. martin story.

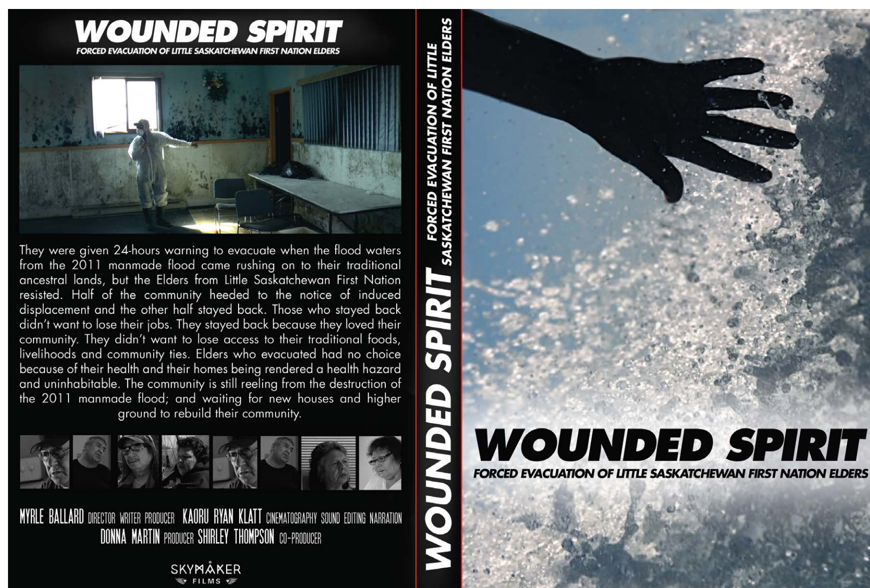

Figure 3. Trap sheet of wounded Spirit: Forced evacuation of little Saskatchewan first nation elders.

5. Discussion

Participatory videos amplified Indigenous people's voices who were displaced by the 2011 superflood. The PV stories and visuals in this media effectively debunked racist myths about First Nations getting everything for free to reveal the economic and environmental injustices they face. The films revealed the sinister role of the colonial government in environmental and social injustices against

Figure 4. Trap sheet of name your baby Mooskaahn: Flooding out youth from Little Saskatchewan.

these displaced communities. These stories of hardship and neglect provided an awakening for many to the colonial government's racism towards Indigenous people. Youth were often separated from their family and community. Youth also had their education, and cultural lives upset by the flood, making youth at high risk from addictions, gangs and abuse. The PVs ask for healing centres, sports programs, addiction centres and educational funding. Although some project funding resulted from the films, this funding was sorely inadequate to start to bring equity in services to non-First Nations or deal with the trauma from the flood.

Community empowerment resulted from the films. Community members talked publicly about the big forces on the Indigenous communities including poverty, racism, and colonialism. However, changing these systemic aspects takes time. Although the film showed how unjust the system was towards Indigenous people, the Indian Act was not directly implicated. The Indian Act is the legal lever instituting systemic racism and causing displacement but remains entrenched in law unchanged. The intact Indian Act will do further damage, continuing to displace Indigenous communities in the future.

The Indian Act remains a powerful force in Canada that continues to displace and withhold land rights from Indigenous people (Blacksmith et al., 2021). Due to the Indian Act land trust, the Province did not pay the price of its decision to send floodwater to Indigenous reserve land. The Indigenous people suffer health, culture, environment, and economic impacts (Ballard & Thompson, 2013) in Manitoba's racist game of disaster capitalism, while the Province benefits from an influx of money from the federal government. With Indian reserve land in trust to the federal Crown, federal money pays for First Nation's people compensation, hotels, and relocation costs, which feeds the Province's economy

(Ballard & Thompson, 2013; Thompson et al., 2014). As a result, the Province is incentivized to target First Nations on Lake St. Martin for further flooding by the Indian Act trust payout by the federal government (Ballard & Thompson, 2013). Thus, the flood models, which determine provincial floodwater management based on the least cost scenario, assign no monetary value to infrastructure or land in First Nations. As a result, flooding First Nations are the least cost scenario to manage floodwater.

Climate change will increase flooding risks, particularly for First Nations. The scale, duration, and number of floods are expected to swell with many tipping points of climate change already surpassed (Meinshausen et al., 2022). These increased risks disproportionately affect Indigenous communities for many reasons. Indigenous communities in Canada often live in economic poverty with few services, inadequate infrastructure, and no community ring dykes (Adegun & Thompson, 2021; Thompson et al., 2020). With climate change increasing flood events, First Nations downstream from water diversions or upstream of dams are at high risk due to the Indian Act (Meinshausen et al., 2022; Adegun & Thompson, 2021; Thompson et al., 2020). Many Indigenous communities suffer, with many listed previously as being displaced. Others are repeatedly temporarily displaced. For example, Manitoba's Peguis Reserve regularly has to evacuate due to flooding, with 2100 community members evacuated in May 2022 and more than 800 people remaining displaced five months later. Despite floods in 2006, 2009, 2011, 2014, and 2022, Peguis First Nation lacks a ring dike to protect its 3053 inhabitants (Bergen, 2022). As the Red River regularly floods, all other communities along its banks—including smaller towns of Morris, Emerson, and St. Adolphe—have ring dikes built and funded by colonial government to protect all housing under Provincial jurisdiction from flooding (Bergen, 2022). Tragically most First Nations in Manitoba lack ring dykes.

Climate change puts remote and isolated Indigenous communities at higher risk for impacts from floods, fires, power outages and food shortages. The 122 Indigenous communities in Canada without access roads provide an escape route to a service center with a hospital and facilities in a disaster (Thompson et al., 2022). For example, York Landing in Manitoba, where York Factory First Nation reserve was relocated, is surrounded by hydro dams, which fluctuate the water. Despite being highly impacted from dams, the community lacks an access road to safety. These fly-in communities are at high risk from forest fires but particularly communities that lack both an airport and a road, including Wasagamack. When a forest fire surrounded Wasagamack, many boat trips were required for the 1800 people inhabitants to escape to safety.

6. Conclusion

The compelling stories of people undergoing displacement and flooding at Lake St. Martin were amplified through participatory video. Indigenous community members built research capacity by interviewing, filming, scriptwriting and nar-

rating while telling their stories on film. Films were viewed thousands of times, which was more effective for knowledge mobilization than academic journal papers.

People's racist views were transformed when confronted by the visual evidence in the films of the impact of a man-made flood and testimonies of displaced people. Originally, settlers complained about evacuees' price tag to taxpayers but they changed their minds after seeing the Indigenous evacuees' hardships, including poverty, health impacts, and racism, apparent from the films. The films effectively documented the environmental, social, health cultural, and economic costs of displacement for two Indigenous communities over eight years.

This participatory video research had a high truth value, as seeing is believing. Lawyers relied heavily on these films to advocate for a monetary settlement for the displaced communities. The four participatory videos provide a powerful way to understand and process the impacts of flooding and displacement on Indigenous community members from Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin First Nations. Elders and youth shared their lived experiences with temporary accommodation, poverty, environmental injustice, gangs, lack of services, and racism during their displacement.

The participatory videos started to shift relations from racism to reconciliation by creating opportunities for dialogue. People witnessed in the films the inequities experienced by Indigenous people on reserves compared to infrastructure, program and treatment in settler communities. The film was a safe way to engage policymakers about the human suffering caused by their policies. Through the film process, community members effectively demanded changes in health delivery, flood policy, disaster response, emergency measures approach, resettlement, and housing policy.

The shift caused by the films on public perception follows Freire's (1970) three stages of consciousness. After witnessing on film the inequities experienced by Indigenous people, the magical or first level of accepting the status quo was no longer bearable. The community members and some members of the public became aware of the injustice of inequality (Freire, 1970). While many misdirected their anger to self-harm and lateral violence (Freire, 1970), many others reached critical consciousness, acting to bring about meaningful change and transformation. This transformation to critical consciousness was decolonizing.

This critical consciousness provides a bridge to decolonize our minds, which is a long pathway with many steps according to Laenui (2000). Laenui (2000) offers a five-step pathway to decolonization. The first step of this path is to discover the Indigenous worldview and mourn what was lost, in order to dream anew through Indigenous eyes for resurgence, and action for equality. The PV methods offer tools to decolonize, particularly to rediscover and recover the Indigenous worldview and mourn the massive loss. These first few steps, assisted by

PV, will help focus the dreams, commitments, and actions for decolonization.

The narratives of those displaced were important stories to share by PV to wake people up to the inequities faced by Indigenous communities. Chief Theresa Spence, after seeing *Flooding Hope*, started her hunger strike, which was part of a national movement for Indigenous rights that began in 2011/2012. The Idle-No-More movement demands we awake to protect the land from destruction. Land-back and abolishing the Indian Act are key calls for action. These films by revealing the inequities and injustices, call for the Canadian legal system and our minds to decolonize and provide equality for First Nations.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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