



# Are the pens working for justice? News media coverage of renewable energy involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada



Chad Walker, Alyssa Alexander, Mary Beth Doucette, Diana Lewis, Hanna Tait Neufeld, Debbie Martin, Jeff Masuda, Robert Stefanelli, Heather Castleden\*

Department of Geography and Planning, Queen's University, Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room E208, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

Some are suggesting that renewable energy by, for, and in Indigenous communities can provide a vehicle for both Indigenous-settler reconciliation, and climate change mitigation in Canada. Yet very little empirical research aimed at understanding this kind of energy transition has been published to date. In this paper, we present findings from an analysis of five large, mainstream (CBC, Globe and Mail, National Post, Vancouver Sun, Toronto Star) and Indigenous (APTN) Canadian media outlets from 2008 to 2017 ( $n = 153$ ). Using Etuaptmunk (Two-Eyed Seeing) and energy justice frameworks, we are interested in the ways Indigenous Peoples are being written about and perceived among the Canadian public. We use content analysis to understand more about the types of issues being brought forth into the public eye, and critical discourse analysis to assess each outlet's telling and framing of these stories. Findings indicate that stories of Indigenous opposition to large scale hydro development dominate our sample – articles of protest, lawsuits, and threats to nation-to-nation-building that are more commonly seen in extractive industries. Stories covering other technologies (e.g. solar, wind) showcase excitement, positive socio-economic benefit, and opportunities for reconciliation. Second, and against the backdrop of historical misrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples, we find what some may deem exemplars of fair coverage of Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy. Despite the absence of overt racist phrases — as seen in the recent past — authors rarely attend to the colonial history that has created structural issues prevalent in communities today. In the face of long-standing (energy) injustices, we question how far the coverage goes towards raising alternative and Indigenous perspectives. We close the paper with what we see as potential for future research trajectories to critically consider the role of the news media in addressing nation-to-nation relationships in Canada and other colonized territories.

## 1. Introduction

In 2015, Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau campaigned on a platform that included building nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous<sup>1</sup> Peoples. This included a promise to implement all 94 Calls

to Action presented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission<sup>2</sup> [1]. Under his direction, the government has also adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) without qualification. In sum, it *appears* Canada has now committed to Indigenous-settler reconciliation.<sup>3</sup>

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [cw135@queensu.ca](mailto:cw135@queensu.ca) (C. Walker), [aalexander@queensu.ca](mailto:aalexander@queensu.ca) (A. Alexander), [marybeth\\_doucette@cbu.ca](mailto:marybeth_doucette@cbu.ca) (M.B. Doucette), [diana.lewis@uwo.ca](mailto:diana.lewis@uwo.ca) (D. Lewis), [hannahtn@uoguelph.ca](mailto:hannahtn@uoguelph.ca) (H.T. Neufeld), [dhmartin@dal.ca](mailto:dhmartin@dal.ca) (D. Martin), [jeff.masuda@queensu.ca](mailto:jeff.masuda@queensu.ca) (J. Masuda), [Robert.stefanelli@queensu.ca](mailto:Robert.stefanelli@queensu.ca) (R. Stefanelli), [heather.castleden@queensu.ca](mailto:heather.castleden@queensu.ca) (H. Castleden).

<sup>1</sup> Indigenous in the Canadian context refers to all individuals who self-identify (i.e. status and non-status) as First Nations, Métis or Inuit (see Joseph [116] for further reading).

<sup>2</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada was established in 2006 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. It was brought forth by an increasing number of lawsuits filed by survivors (Nagy [118]). Several of the Calls to Action (i.e. 92) deal with the need for collaborative and sustainable economic development in Indigenous communities.

<sup>3</sup> The TRC defines reconciliation as "...establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in [Canada]. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour" [1].

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To fulfill these promises and more, some are suggesting that renewable energy can provide a vehicle for Indigenous-settler reconciliation — while also addressing climate change mitigation in Canada. Indeed, though reconciling Indigenous-settler<sup>4</sup> relations and mitigating climate change must be done in several independent ways, the development of renewable energy by, for, and/or within Indigenous communities presents opportunities to address both in the same space. Based on resource (e.g. wind, solar) potential and the fact that Indigenous Peoples possess a sophisticated understanding of their local environments [2,3], they may be well-positioned to play a major role in the renewable energy transition across Canada [4,5].

Given the power the media plays in shaping our views, in this paper, we investigate the ways in which six large media outlets are writing about Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy transitions in Canada. This study was shaped by Etuaptmuk (Two-Eyed Seeing) and energy justice frameworks, utilizing content and critical discourse analyses through five mainstream (CBC, Globe and Mail, National Post, Vancouver Sun, Toronto Star) and one Indigenous (APTN) news outlets, who published articles from 2008 to 2017 (n = 153). In part because Indigenous Peoples and their involvement in renewable energy has received little attention in terms of academic research, the nine-year media analysis presented here examines trends related to increasing renewable energy development and its commensurability with the values held by Indigenous Peoples in Canada. In the context of ongoing colonialism and the lasting effects of resource extraction, we take a critical look at the processes behind renewable energy, as well as portrayals of Indigenous Peoples, under the premise that similar dynamics may be occurring within ‘green energy’ development. Despite the promises of healthier relationships and environments, renewable energy may still result in inequitable and unjust developmental processes. We conclude the paper by making recommendations for future research trajectories and methodologies.

### 1.1. Background

Amongst the many articles of the UNDRIP, the key message that Indigenous leaders in Canada are citing is the need for Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) regarding the adoption of legislation that may affect them (Article 19) and, with special relevance to this study, projects on traditional Indigenous territories (Article 32; see also Articles 18 and 27). Though FPIC is thought to be an important piece toward Indigenous self-determination and reconciliation efforts [6,7], in practice it is rarely executed [8]. More often, thinly veiled processes of consultation are used, leading UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to declare there is an Indigenous rights crisis in Canada [9]. Legal scholar Sasha Boutilier [10] has even gone as far as to write that FPIC is incompatible with existing Canadian law.<sup>5</sup> Yet both before and after his election, Prime Minister Trudeau has continually claimed that the relationship with Indigenous Peoples is the most important one to his government. In 2017, he stated the Liberals are:

“...working together with Indigenous Peoples to build a nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown, government-to-government relationship – one based on respect, partnership, and recognition of rights... [and] determined to make a real difference in the lives of Indigenous Peoples.” [11].

Within six months of his election, Trudeau also signed the Paris

<sup>4</sup> The term *settler* refers to those people with connections to the violent, damaging and entangled history of colonialism. Its usage also helps one to recognize how such a history has continued to shape the lives of Indigenous Peoples to this day and thus accept responsibility as Indigenous people struggle for justice and change [112].

<sup>5</sup> Boutilier suggests major changes are needed; including the creation of an Aboriginal Parliament (re: Article 19) and amendments to environmental assessments (re: Article 32).

Agreement — entering Canada into a new international agreement to address global climate change. With 11% of national greenhouse gas emissions coming from the electricity sector ([12]; 42% of global emissions come from electricity and heat; see [13]), scientists have called for a rapid transition away from traditional, fossil-fuel sources and toward low-carbon renewable sources like wind, solar, geothermal, biomass and hydro power (e.g. [14–18]). Addressing climate change is vital for many Indigenous communities around the world who stand to suffer some of the worst impacts of a warming planet [19,20].

## 2. Scope and literature review

This research project is a part of a larger program of research which strives to engage in the process of reconciling knowledge systems and relationships through the vehicle of renewable energy. The research program entitled A SHARED Future (Achieving Strength, Health, and Autonomy through Renewable Energy Development for the Future) [21] has adopted Etuaptmuk or Two-Eyed Seeing as a guiding principle. Etuaptmuk is a Mi'kmaq framework — developed by Elders Murdina and Albert Marshall (Eskasoni First Nation) in collaboration with Dr. Cheryl Bartlett — for seeing the world through both western scientific and Indigenous knowledge/values. It “refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing. . . and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” ([136], para. 3). Etuaptmuk was adopted by our program of research because it is “interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and pluralistic” [134] and “adamantly, respectfully, and passionately asks that we bring together our different ways of knowing to motivate people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to use all our understandings so we can leave the world a better place” [22,23]. Approaching the question of Indigenous renewable energy projects by applying Etuaptmuk has led to this study examining how the Canadian media influences perspectives at the intersecting space of Indigenous peoples, reconciliation, and renewable energy projects.

Because there is a relative paucity of research examining Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy in Canada, here we also draw upon emerging energy justice literature [24–28]. We do so because in Canadian and other colonial contexts, Indigenous Peoples face significant health and socio-economic disparities [29] in part because of environmental threats. It is within such settler states that governments face a dual energy justice challenge whereby low-carbon transitions must be carefully executed as to not further disenfranchise Indigenous populations [8].

Early research looking at Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy is showing that development has the potential to strengthen communities and create independent and sustainable revenue; allowing Indigenous communities around the world to pursue self-determination [8,30,31], and avoid the rising cost of traditional energy supply<sup>6</sup> [32,137]. Lawrence [33] suggests that ongoing colonial control in economic development is driving the pursuit of renewable energy opportunities as means to support more Indigenous autonomy (see also [34,35]). These trends are supported by the findings in recent research by Stefanelli et al. [36] and Smith and Scott [37], whose research shows that communities are moving forward with renewable energy because it aligns with their views and culture — including those related to socio-economic goals. Some of these themes are found in case-study research of Kanaka Bar Indian Band (British Columbia, Canada), whose local hydro project is helping to address impacts of colonization and increase self-determination [25]. In a broader sense, renewable energy development may also link to traditional ecological knowledge in the co-

<sup>6</sup> Though there has been a recent increase in community-based and Indigenous-owned renewable energy development in Canada, most energy capacity is still in the hands of traditional provincial utilities and large corporations [122].

management of natural resources [38,39], Seven Generations Teaching,<sup>7</sup> [40], and the Maori sustainability ethic [8].

Despite this apparent promise of renewables to benefit Indigenous communities and help Canada transition to low-carbon systems, there is a danger in blindly following this course of action.<sup>8</sup> Like attempts in the past, promises from government are meaningless—and divides can actually widen—if efforts are not made to balance economic development goals with *true* reconciliation<sup>9</sup> [41,42]. This means gaining a better understanding of the debates regarding renewable energy across Canada, which are set within a system of settler-capitalism [37] — often marketed by proponents as economic advancement. However, like the ongoing histories of oil and gas development, such projects may not align with the value Indigenous populations place on healthy and sustainable environments [43]. Indeed, if renewable energy is built in this way, development may simply retell the story of dispossession, disempowerment, and energy injustice [24,44].

Related to larger ideas of energy justice, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities playing host to areas of fossil-fuel capitalism have been labelled sacrifice zones [45] — places that live with dangerous health consequences for the ‘betterment’ of larger society<sup>10</sup> (see also [27,46,47]). Targeted communities are often home to marginalized populations, including Indigenous populations of Canada [48]. In the case of extractive development of the tar sands in northern Alberta, Canada, Huseman and Short [49] refer to a “slow industrial genocide” targeting Indigenous health and ways of life (p. 216). People living in such communities are often involved in resistance movements (e.g. protests and lawsuits), and have since become the ‘face’ of environmental and/or climate justice movements [50,131].

As a result of the rightful demonization of fossil fuel development, the importance of renewable energy has been elevated in recent years. Development has seen a surge of interest from governments and corporations looking to address problems including climate change. In many cases, these projects have excluded voices and decision-making ability of local people [27,51–53,133]. In doing so, Scott and Smith [48] argue that new kinds of sacrifice zones are growing in the “wake of Green Energy Enthusiasm” (p. 372). And while threats are differentiated by fossil-fuel and renewable energy development, in cases of large-scale hydro, the flooding of Indigenous territories means local populations are similarly dispossessed. In other instances, development destroys ways of life including lands used for fishing, hunting and cultural ceremonies [135]. Even non-hydro sources of renewable energy do not always experience favourable discourses among Indigenous populations. History was shown to shape views of those in conflict with wind energy development, where turbines reminded Indigenous Korean Peoples of iron stakes driven into mountains during Japanese colonialism [54]. In these cases, conflicts between Indigenous and settler interests often arise when cultural and environmental concerns take a back seat to revenue [26,27,55]. Researchers studying in western Panama have argued that government disregarding treaty rights in the pursuit of hydro development are exercising [low] carbon colonialism or green authoritarianism [56]. This type of practice ignores the

<sup>7</sup> *Seven Generations Teachings stress that decisions need to consider the ramifications seven generations into the future (see also Borrows [113]).*

<sup>8</sup> *It should be noted that while the focus here in this paper is the overall Canadian landscape of Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy, electricity production is largely an exercise of provincial/territorial authority (see Pineau [119]).*

<sup>9</sup> *More than two years after Trudeau’s election, reconciliation has become somewhat of a ‘dirty word’ because of empty promises and a lack of meaningful consultation with Indigenous Peoples related to policy and infrastructure (see Ansoos, 2017; Hall, 2018).*

<sup>10</sup> *A contemporary example of this issue can be seen through the way Justin Trudeau talks about the development of Kinder Morgan Pipeline as being in Canada’s “national interest” (Hall, 2018) despite damaging construction, risk of oil spills and investments in infrastructure that contributes to climate change in Indigenous communities.*

principles of UNDRIP [57], and has been called “land grabbing” or “green grabbing” in other contexts [58].

### 2.1. Research context: indigenous peoples and the media

In this paper we employ multiple methods, qualitative content and critical discourse analyses, to investigate the ways in which renewable energy and Indigenous Peoples are being written about in Canadian news media.<sup>11</sup> In doing so, two primary objectives were sought. First, this paper aimed to identify the major themes emerging from news coverage (via content analysis). This was done to help identify the roles Indigenous Peoples are playing in — and the set of motivations shaping support for — renewable energy. Secondly, we looked to critically analyze how authors were presenting these stories in the context of Indigenous-settler relationships and resource development (via critical discourse analysis). Here, the focus was twofold. First to compare differences among the five mainstream sources, and second, between the collection of mainstream and Indigenous (APTN) sources. In both regards, we were interested to access depth [59] and see if a dominant or western discourse is obscuring Indigenous perspectives [60]. Comparing the messages and meanings between media sources is said to increase our understanding of media’s biases [61,62]. Both objectives are set within the context of implications for the UNDRIP, FPIC, and reconciliation efforts in Canada.

Mainstream media plays a large role in shaping dominant society’s views, and our civic agenda [63–65,66]. Newspapers in particular have been noted to provide a space in which readers can connect with imagined communities, of which they do not belong (i.e. minority groups; see [67]). The analysis of media allows us a way to “[access] social discourse as presented by particular stakeholders” ([59]; p. 29) and better understand normative attitudes of society [61]. The power of media can become a problem because our words are never neutral, but are often accepted as such [68]. Fiske [69] writes that media reproduces the dominant sense of reality, not reality itself, through tailored messaging. Given this understanding, and more specific criticism from Philo [70] that media analysis too often focuses on a form of reality via social meanings, we also engage with the ways in which content is produced and (likely) perceived by readers.

Stories produced by the media can diverge from objective visions of ‘reality’ through processes of framing<sup>12</sup> [71–73] — when reporters present a specific narrative that tells people what is, and what is not a problem [74]. This can have the impact of marginalizing minority actors [75]. Hegemony is therefore practiced by elites in society who construct ‘common sense’ ways of thinking by making “the power of the dominant group appear both natural and legitimate” [76]. In Canada, the media is so pervasive that it perpetuates not only negative perceptions of Indigeneity among settlers, but also self-images that Indigenous Peoples may have [77].

In looking at mainstream coverage of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, the promises of ethical coverage in journalism have been absent [78]. In perhaps the country’s most comprehensive account, Anderson and Robertson [79] track discourses of Indigenous Peoples through newspaper articles from 1869 to 2009 and suggest that the images produced have not changed significantly since settler-colonialism first began. While perhaps no longer always overt (see [80,81]), coded and subtle forms of

<sup>11</sup> *We recognize that traditional news media sources are becoming increasingly ‘overtaken’ by social media outlets which blur the line between who is producing versus consuming the news. Here we focus on the established relationship between producers of news (traditional outlets) and consumers of news (general public).*

<sup>12</sup> *Another prominent media strategy is agenda-setting. This refers to the media’s focus on particular issues or agendas, as to affect public perception regarding which issues are important and which are not (Combs, 2014; McCombs and Shaw, 1972). In this study, because our focus was only on the (broad) issue of Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy in Canada, we believed our ability to detect agenda-setting would be limited.*

racism continue to perpetuate inaccurate perceptions of marginalized groups in the media (see also [82,83]). Through these practices, Indigenous Peoples are portrayed as immature, deprived, and resistant to 'progress' [79]. Anishinaabe scholar Hayden King [80] writes that the consensus of Canadian newspapers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was to cast Indigenous Peoples "as savages to be mocked, excused, or contained so the great promise of Canada could be realized". Through his review of thousands of Toronto Star articles published starting in 1909, Les Couchi [81] of Nipissing First Nation found racist portrayals of Indigenous Peoples as "savage, unruly, drunk and lazy" in the 1930s and 40s that led to prejudices in "governments and boardrooms" in the decades that followed.

In cases of resource development, Indigenous communities are often portrayed as "standing in the way of badly needed jobs" while authors ignore important historical context,<sup>13</sup> and the spiritual and cultural connections to traditional lands ([78]; p. 56). In some cases, Indigenous resistance against development are often conflated as "terrorism" [84,138] or "eco-terrorism" [43,139]. Such representations have been aided by government and legitimized through 'otherness' [43]. Canadian examples include officials such as former federal Minister of the Environment, Peter Kent who labelled protest as "mischief" [85] and former Minister of Natural Resources Joe Oliver who stated pipeline construction "shouldn't be held hostage by aboriginal and environmental groups...[who are] unlawful people [opposing] lawful development" [86]. Such destructive narratives will continue to serve power so long as "[news]papers are striving to find 'balance'" [80] between colonial forces and Indigenous perspectives.

Part of the reason why the media continues to misrepresent Indigenous Peoples may be connected to the fact that Indigenous Peoples are underrepresented in media professions. In television, a study from the Canadian Association of Broadcasters [142] showed that Indigenous underrepresentation led to stories focused on inaccuracies and negative stereotypes. The lack of minorities in the media has also been highlighted in other places, including the United States, where minorities made up only 13% of journalists at daily newspapers [87]. In Australia, Mesikämmen [117] tells how normative journalistic practices — including the privileging of 'official' and 'expert' voices— has the effect of silencing Indigenous perspectives and continues dominant discourses of settlers. Thus, in Canada and other colonial states, Indigenous communities oscillate between invisible and hypervisible in the media-consuming public [78].

In order to set up a comparative element that may contrast the mainstream media and provide more Indigenous-focused story-telling, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) was included as an additional media news source in this study. Indigenous media<sup>14</sup> is said to challenge the framing of dominant cultures by making visible historical and contextual realities [140], and by "tearing down antiquated power relations" [88]. APTN was chosen over a growing number of Indigenous news outlets in Canada due to its relatively large readership/viewership and thus, we propose, ability to influence the thinking of Canadian readers. In past research, Clark [78] has shown that stories on APTN showcased and emphasized historical context that challenged colonial stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples as "backwards, problem people" (p. 54).

In the absence of previous media analyses focused specifically on renewable energy within Indigenous communities,<sup>15</sup> this work builds

<sup>13</sup> Without including such context, the media's publications thus help to imply that problems or 'tumult' in Indigenous communities are caused directly by things like substance abuse and general local dysfunction (King, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> We recognize that APTN is just one of a growing number of Indigenous-based news outlets in Canada. Others include: Kukulwes.com, Muskrat Magazine, The Eastern Door, Wawatay News, and Windspeaker. For more information on these Independent and Indigenous-created outlets, see Baker [111].

<sup>15</sup> We do recognize there is some emerging research focused on media portrayals of renewable/sustainable energy transitions (e.g. Ganowski et al., 2018; Smith et al.

upon the important insights gained through critical analyses of other media discourses [63,79,89,90–92,93,94]. A major concern here is that journalists may share the same ignorance of structural and historical oppressions that have led to the current state of Indigenous-settler culture [63,95]. If this is the case, media is positioned to fall short of a fair representation of Indigenous Peoples and the reality of renewable energy development in their communities.

### 3. Methods

We use Etuaptmunk and energy justice frameworks, employing techniques of content and critical discourse analyses to understand how the media represented Indigenous involvement in renewable energy in Canada over nine years (2008–2017). Content analysis began the data analysis, and helped us organize major themes via frequencies ([96]; as in [97]). With regard to the critical discourse analysis that followed, we pay special attention to framing [71], and relevance structuring [91], to see how different perspectives are written and arranged.

In order to achieve the two objectives above (see 1.2.) and examine a range of perspectives, six major Canadian news outlets were identified. Five of these are mainstream media sources, including four long-standing English newspapers with the highest readerships [98]: The Globe and Mail, National Post, Toronto Star, and Vancouver Sun. As a fifth mainstream outlet, we also decided to include online articles written by the public news entity the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The CBC is also a television and radio network [99]. We compare the outputs of these five mainstream sources against each other, as well as with Indigenous media — through online articles from the APTN. Like the CBC, APTN produces television content but also publishes written articles online as well. More information about each news outlet can be found in Table 1. Partisanship is noted here because systematic biases as seen in media coverage is influenced by political slant [62,100].

The first step of the data collection process was to compile news articles that referenced Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy in Canada from November 2008 to November 2017. This time frame was chosen to capture the recent increase of Indigenous involvement in renewable energy across Canada. The search for media articles involved conducting English-language, Boolean phrase searches within two databases: Canadian Major Dailies and Google News (advanced search). Search terms (see below) involved all combinations of terms related to renewable energy and those terms most commonly used to characterize Indigenous Peoples in Canada.<sup>16</sup>

Renewable energy terms<sup>17</sup> (n = 8)

- "green energy" or "clean energy" or "renewable energy" or "wind energy" or "solar energy" or "hydro" or "geothermal" or "biomass"

Indigenous People's terms (n = 6)

- "Native" or "Aboriginal" or "Indigenous" or "First Nations" or "Metis" or "Inuit"

Through all possible combinations of the terms above, 48 searches were performed in each database. Articles were included within the final sample if they discussed: i) a renewable energy project owned by

(footnote continued)

[120]; Songso and Buzzelli [121]) but can find no such research set within Indigenous contexts — in Canada or elsewhere.

<sup>16</sup> Many Indigenous nations are now using their own language or names of smaller communities (i.e. Mi'kmaw in Atlantic Canada) to identify themselves so we recognize we may have missed some in our search.

<sup>17</sup> This was done to identify any articles that concerned a popular type of renewable energy without mentioning the term renewable itself.

**Table 1**  
SELECT CANADIAN NEWS OUTLETS: PARTISANSHIP AND READERSHIP/  
VIEWERSHIP.

MEDIA OUTLET	PARTISANSHIP / POLITICAL LEAN	TOTAL READERSHIP <sup>1</sup> / VIEWERSHIP <sup>2</sup> (Weekly)
CBC	Liberal <sup>a</sup> Left-centre <sup>f</sup>	4,000,000 (2017)
The Globe and Mail	Left to centre <sup>b</sup> Moderately Conservative <sup>c</sup> Mixed opinions <sup>a</sup> Right-centre <sup>f</sup>	2,018,923 (2015)
National Post	Right to centre <sup>b</sup> Aggressively neo-Conservative [and] ideologically driven <sup>d</sup> Conservative <sup>a</sup> Right-centre <sup>f</sup>	1,116,647 (2015)
Vancouver Sun	Centre-left [and] a middlebrow newspaper <sup>e</sup> Right-centre <sup>f</sup>	820,719 (2015)
Toronto Star <sup>4</sup>	Left <sup>b</sup> Left-centre <sup>f</sup>	2,231,338 (2015)
APTN	Least-biased / centre <sup>f</sup>	125,000 (2016)

<sup>3</sup>For a recent discussion surrounding the political orientation of the CBC, and Canadian media more generally, see Loreto and Stewart [128].

<sup>a</sup> Abacus Data [123].

<sup>b</sup> Ganowski et al. [97].

<sup>c</sup> Thériault [130].

<sup>d</sup> Dorman and Pyman [126].

<sup>e</sup> Greenberg [127].

<sup>f</sup> MBFC [129].

<sup>1</sup> These values include the weekly total of circulation for both print and digital versions (see [98]).

<sup>2</sup> These values include: i) the total number of unique online visits across all CBC digital platforms (October to December 2017; in [125]) and ii) weekly online viewership [124].

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps aligning with this left-of-centre orientation, the Toronto Star has been said to have a reputation for bringing “the plight of Indigenous Peoples to its front pages” [81].

or having significant involvement of Indigenous Peoples; or ii) renewable energy policies or development related to Indigenous communities in Canada. With duplicates removed, there was a final sample of 153 articles.<sup>18</sup> The highest number of articles came from the CBC (n = 55) followed by the Vancouver Sun (n = 29), the Globe and Mail (n = 27), APTN (n = 19), Toronto Star (n = 13) and National Post (n = 10). The sample of articles was skewed toward more recent years, with almost 87% (n = 133) published from 2013 to 2017. Though there is a fair degree of heterogeneity by news source, a small minority of articles overall were written by female (29.4%) or Indigenous (16.3%) authors (see Table 2).

After data collection, articles were imported into NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis software. NVivo can assist researchers in both the organization of themes and practices of “elaborate story telling” (p. 229) that bring us closer to meanings in qualitative data [101]. Articles were first analyzed to identify major themes using qualitative content analysis [132]. These counts (frequencies) helped us identify the major themes present. Using these findings as a starting point, we used critical discourse analysis (see [59]) to look into the ways in which authors may be influencing readers via their narratives. Critical discourse analysis has been said to be useful in understanding language use as a constructivist exercise in power relations [102], as specifically to assess how minorities are portrayed in the media [90,92].

This study was completed within a diverse team of settler, Indigenous, and mixed ancestry social scientists from across Canada. Of the nine authors of this paper, three identify as Indigenous women, and one as a woman with mixed ancestry. Five authors identify as settlers

(three male, two female) with respectful research relations within Indigenous contexts. Each author played an important role including developing research questions, data collection and analysis, and helping to connect findings to larger ideas of Etuaptmuk, energy justice, colonialism, and contemporary Indigenous-settler relations. While the first author led data collection and analyses, a total of four independent coders (co-authors) were used during data analysis. This was done to increase what is known as intercoder reliability or agreement in the findings [103,141].

#### 4. Results

Findings here represent the two analyses performed across the 153 articles. We begin by describing general, emergent themes (topics) in the stories presented (i.e. content analysis). Through this initial round of coding, we read through each article in order to ascertain the primary themes that each was covering. Because most covered several themes within the same text, we code for multiple themes and decided to limit this to the three most pertinent codes per article. From the sample of 153 articles, we coded for 286 themes (approximately 1.9 codes/article). The eight most prevalent themes are shown in Table 3. These ideas are elaborated upon in section 4.1.

Second, because we were interested in how Indigenous Peoples are being portrayed among each mainstream and Indigenous media outlet, we present the critical discourse analysis of each newspaper/network. We were focused on how authors may use context and framing to shape readers’ perceptions of Indigenous Peoples (see section 4.2).

##### 4.1. Emergent themes (content analysis)

Some of the most frequent themes covered the **shortcomings with hydro power** (n = 58), as well as the stories of **protests** (n = 34) and **lawsuits** (n = 25) **related to hydro development**. Most of these covered two controversial projects situated in British Columbia (Site C) and Newfoundland and Labrador (Muskrat Falls). Site C was especially controversial from 2015 to 2016 and opposed by Treaty 8 First Nation communities largely due to clearing of old-growth forest and flooding on sacred traditional lands. Many articles were devoted to these ongoing challenges against the project. Muskrat Falls is located along the lower Churchill River in Labrador and was contentious for some of the same reasons as Site C. Opposition centered on the threats to local Indigenous health posed by flooding and the creation of methylmercury in water systems. Most stories devoted to historical injustices related to large-scale hydro development across the country described how reparations have been paid to local Indigenous communities, but in no way reflect the devastation that has occurred.

Other prominent themes covered **general renewable energy policy and development** (n = 28) and **excitement of Indigenous communities** to move forward with renewable energy (n = 22). With reference to the former, these articles covered stories of how federal and provincial governments either are (or are not) adequately supporting the development of renewable energy and/or climate change in Indigenous communities. Authors often cited the tremendous need that remote, diesel-reliant communities in particular have to transition to more renewable sources. Many conclusions centered around the idea of improving pathways for communities to join the ‘green energy revolution’ (Morin, 2017a).<sup>19</sup> Stories on the high levels of excitement related to how Indigenous communities are leading development opportunities or creating meaningful partnerships with industry. Excitement was also showcased in a July 2016 story about people representing Indigenous communities from across Canada meeting in Quebec to discuss moving forward with renewable energy. Two months

<sup>19</sup> Note: bibliographic information all media articles analyzed here (i.e. the dataset) can be found in the Appendices A–F.

<sup>18</sup> A full list of all articles, by media outlet, can be found within Appendices A–F.

**Table 2**  
AUTHORSHIP BY GENDER (FEMALE) AND INDIGENOUS STATUS.

MEDIA OUTLET	Total number of articles	Canadian Press / No known author (%)	Female authorship (% of authored sample <sup>a</sup> )	Indigenous authorship (% of authored sample <sup>a</sup> )
CBC	55	18 (32.7)	21 (56.8)	8 (21.6)
The Globe and Mail	27	3 (11.1)	5 (20.8)	0 (0)
National Post	10	2 (20)	1 (12.5%)	0 (0)
Vancouver Sun	29	1 (3.4)	3 (10.7)	4 (14.3)
Toronto Star	13	1 (7.7)	5 (41.7)	1 (8.3)
APTN	19	0 (0)	10 (52.6)	12 (63.2)
TOTALS	153	25 (16.3)	45 (29.4)	25 (16.3)

<sup>a</sup> 'Authored sample' represents the total number of articles minus the number written by the Canadian Press or with no known author.

**Table 3**  
THE EIGHT MOST PREVELANT THEMES (n = 153 articles).

THEME	number of articles CONTAINING THEME (% of total sample)
Problems with (large-scale) hydro power protesting hydro	58 (37.9)
general renewable energy economies and policies	34 (22.2)
lawsuits over hydro development excitement to move forward with renewable energy	28 (18.3)
socio-economic benefits development as threat to reconciliation	25 (16.3)
indigenous communities being left behind in green energy movement	22 (14.3)
	18 (11.8)
	17 (11.1)
	14 (9.2)

later, at the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Energy and Innovation Summit, groups gathered to celebrate achievements and share the knowledge of Mi'kmaq communities who had recently developed four wind energy projects.

One of the reasons for this level of excitement and optimism seemed to be that development has or will lead to **improvements of socio-economic conditions** (n = 18). Indigenous Peoples were often quoted on how projects have helped to improve the well-being of local residents — whether through less reliance on diesel fuel, an influx of jobs, and/or more sustainable revenue. In a 2014 article, Cara McKenna tells the story of T'Sou-ke First Nation in BC — a community who have partnered with developers to build renewable energy projects that have led to a more sustainable and independent community. In 2017, Jesse Winter reported on Six Nations of the Grand River, who have created a development corporation and are involved with 17 renewable energy initiatives. These projects are estimated to bring in more than \$100 million over 20 years for the First Nation and include a rooftop solar project with 2307 panels, and a 230 MW wind project.

Finally, two other prominent themes spoke about renewable energy in a negative light. This included the construction of renewable energy as a **threat to reconciliation** (n = 17). Most of these articles were referencing the kind of injustices that continue to occur with large-scale hydro. Relating to federal promises, three articles specifically mention the Liberal government and how these issues are a test for reconciliation (Bailey, 2016a) or that government has already “bulldozed” or “betrayed” commitments to Indigenous rights (Kurjata, 2016; Tremonti, 2016). In a similar vein, the idea that **Indigenous communities were being left behind** (n = 14) with reference to the aforementioned ‘green energy revolution’, also arose. This theme contrasts with some of the findings above likely because experiences vary by province/territory and community. Indeed, these articles related to funding cuts at all levels of government, yet because electricity production is largely an exercise of provincial sovereignty, most authors were critical of the promises of provincial governments (e.g. Cayo, 2010; Morin, 2017a; Sayers, 2013).

#### 4.2. The framing and contextualization of indigenous stories (critical discourse analysis)

Per the second objective of this study, we read through each article to examine the ways Indigenous Peoples and communities were being portrayed by each media outlet. This critical discourse analysis focused on comparing the portrayal of Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy among mainstream and Indigenous media outlets. Given the prominence of hydro development, we were especially interested in looking at ways in which authors contextualized protests, lawsuits and other efforts at taking back power.

##### 4.2.1. Mainstream media

4.2.1.1. *CBC (n = 55): important context given.* The CBC often wrote in a way that offered historical or cultural context that helped frame stories of resistance against hydro projects. Most of these were shown through giving space for direct quotes from Indigenous leaders, community members, and allies. In a 2016(a) piece by Sue Bailey, we learn about the views of Inuit resident and critic of Muskrat Falls Jim Learning who says it is time for government to “step up”:

“Step up... [and] back us up, because there are three aboriginal cultures in this territory of Labrador being ignored. This more or less puts the pressure on truth and reconciliation to be, in fact, truth and reconciliation”

The article goes on to quote Labrador Liberal MP Yvonne Jones, federal NDP critic Charlie Angus and closes with perspectives from chairperson of the Council of Canadians, Maude Barlow. She believes that the problems at Muskrat Falls represent a larger story of Canada.

“I think you're going to find that Muskrat Falls becomes a real symbol of everything that's wrong with the way we exploit our resources, to the benefit of a few corporate investors, and put the lives and livelihoods of people at risk”

4.2.1.2. *A [structured] balanced approach.* While a few articles shared the same kind of supportive tone, most others in the CBC presented multiple perspectives — both for and against the resistance to hydro development in Indigenous territories. Although these articles often led with quotes from Indigenous leaders, they closed with voices of people in dominant positions of power (i.e. politicians, provincial energy authorities). The passages below show how Fontaine (2016), and Burgmann (2015), close with these pro-hydro perspectives.

"[Manitoba Hydro] is more than happy to talk to them but I want to be very, very clear that [Indigenous Peoples] were the ones who walked away from the negotiating table, not us," said [Manitoba Hydro spokesman] Scott Powell. "We've even offered to bring in a mediator at our expense to help with the discussions."

“Last month, [B.C.] Forests Minister Steve Thomson said each of the two dozen approved permit applications was reviewed for its

potential impact on the environment and on aboriginal treaty rights. Thomson said the province conducted an "appropriate consultation process".

**4.2.1.3. *Globe and mail (n = 27): the sharing of Indigenous histories.*** Articles within the *Globe and Mail* that covered hydro development shared some similarities with the 'balanced coverage' approach seen in the CBC. Several articles included quotations from Indigenous Peoples and white settlers, but most often closed with the latter. What made *Globe and Mail* articles stand out was the sometimes large amount of historical detail that was shared regarding land rights and violations associated with hydro projects. In three examples below, the reader is given a history of what has set up protests and lawsuits. Hume (2015) commits to sharing the century-old story of treaty violation in communities close to present-day Site C.

"A key part of the claim by the two bands was that the project would violate Treaty 8, a document signed by eight First Nations in the region more than 100 years ago...Under Treaty 8, the bands were promised they could continue to hunt, trap and fish throughout the area in the same manner as they had before agreeing to surrender their lands."

MacGregor (2015) takes the reader through a history of settling at Chaudiere Falls on the Ottawa River where hydro development is being planned. The author does so in a way that recognizes the impact of settlers on Indigenous Peoples in the area. In the passage below, we are given the detailed description of French explorer Samuel de Champlain's early impressions of the area.

"[The Falls were] once the area's greatest tourist draw...Samuel de Champlain wrote about it and the Prince of Wales rode a timber raft over it to the cheers of 20,000 loyal citizens standing along the banks...Champlain noted in his 1613 diary that the water falls "with such impetuosity" that it could be heard "more than two leagues away."

Later, McGregor weaves in current day debates of the area's use with historical context that helps the reader understand the importance of the land to the Algonquin.

"Earlier this month, [Anishinabe architect] Mr. Cardinal was joined by influential author John Ralston Saul and Algonquin elder Evelyn Commanda to protest the [hydro] development. Ms. Commanda is the daughter of "Grandfather" William Commanda, the late Algonquin elder so widely revered by First Nations. It was William Commanda who first spoke of a vision for Akikodjiwan, the sacred falls and islands of the river that should be returned to the Algonquin. The area is also all unceded land and the subject of a current land claim."

**4.2.1.4. *National Post (n = 10): Community context.*** Of the 10 articles published by the *National Post*, six covered controversies and debates around the development of hydro power. Two presented the 'balanced story' that has been seen across other media outlets, while the other four focused much more on Indigenous perspectives and stories. One article by Colby Cash (2016) was about the Muskrat Falls 'fiasco' and contained the subtitle 'maybe you'd be protesting, too'. The overall tone of the article was very sympathetic to local concerns. One way this was accomplished was through a detailed explanation of the 'poisoning' of Lake Melville.

"There are no chemical plants involved in the Muskrat Falls controversy. The problem is pervasive mercury spewed into the sea and air, in microscopic amounts, by human industrial activity around the world. This mercury is methylated naturally by bacteria living on, and near, the surface of rivers like the Churchill, which runs over Muskrat Falls and into the Lake Melville estuary where the Innu and

Inuit catch fish and seals."

Another way reporters from the *National Post* wrote about these issues was through detail about how damaging a current reliance on diesel-fueled electricity was for remote Indigenous communities. Sunny Freeman (2017) wrote about how 'the diesel dilemma' has brought a multitude of problems.

"Diesel energy means companies and residents alike are prone to blackouts due to shortages as well as hazardous leaks and spills. The lack of reliability, volatile pricing and cost of hauling the fuel, often via ice roads or planes, in addition to the increasing viability of alternatives, has made getting off diesel a priority."

**4.2.1.5. *Toronto Star (n = 13): historical and contemporary context.*** Work from the *Toronto Star* also told the stories of those protesting hydro and often contained context to help the reader. One article by Peter Gorrie showed depth regarding the history of land theft associated with hydro development across Canada. The title, "Our own Three Gorges" is in reference to 'sacrifice' of nine communities along the St. Lawrence River, including the Mohawks on the Akwesasne Reserve, that led to the Moses-Saunders power stations. Gorrie goes on to explain connections to other hydro-related land appropriations on Indigenous territories:

"40 years ago, 2500 Tsay Keh Dene lost their land in central B.C. when the Bennett Dam flooded their section of the Columbia River Valley. They were relocated to a town 200 km away. Many, ostracized, moved back as close to their former home as they could get...Up on James Bay, Hydro-Québec built a new town, Chisasibi, for Cree displaced by flooding for power dams. A new project is turning a major river, the Rupert, into a muddy, intermittent stream, wiping out hunting and trapping grounds."

The *Toronto Star* also referenced contemporary reasons for injustice in hydro development. This included one paper written by National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Perry Bellegarde (2016). In it, he gives a detailed explanation of UNDRIP, and how this contrasted with the ways communities are being treated along the Peace River near Site C.

"On the occasion of the 9th anniversary of [UNDRIP], many are wondering how Canada squares its "unqualified support" for the UN declaration with its decisions to issue permits and approvals for the Site C dam project in northern British Columbia. The UN declaration sets out minimum standards for ensuring Indigenous Peoples enjoy their human rights, as Peoples and as individuals."

**4.2.1.6. *Vancouver Sun (n = 29): a new structure - the opinion piece.*** Articles published in the *Vancouver Sun* stood out compared to the rest of the mainstream media due to their propensity to publish opinion pieces (n = 5), which showed a stronger commitment to sharing Indigenous perspectives. In contrast to 'balanced coverage' approach, these articles (by both settlers and Indigenous Peoples) took a stand against longstanding injustices related to hydro development. Like Gorrie (2016), Izony and Dowlatabadi (2016) describe the impact of flooding in the territory of Tsay Keh Dene First Nation.

"It was where the Tsay Keh Dene had derived their livelihoods, established their identity and honoured their ancestors for millennia. The developers were in such a hurry that they did not harvest the timber in the valley, but crushed it under giant rollers. They also obliterated the rights and title of the Tsay Keh Dene."

The authors finish the article with a statement of just how "criminal" this continued pattern of development is in the context of the need for reconciliation in Canada.

"Inadequate consultation and disrespect for First Nations was not

excusable half a century ago; it should be criminal now. The Tsay Keh Dene and other First Nations are and continue to be treated as if they are minors. This power imbalance forces First Nations to acquiesce on matters they should have control of.”

Another opinion piece by Craig Benjamin (2016) asserts that Site C flooding would not only “wash away thousands of years of Indigenous cultural sites and flood... other waterways on which First Nations rely for subsistence and ceremony” but that underlying practices are ignoring constitutional and treaty rights, as well as promises made by the federal government related to UNDRIP.

“This is not a trivial matter. Treaties and other Indigenous Peoples’ rights are enshrined in the Constitution. Yet the federal and provincial governments both greenlighted a project their own environmental assessment said would cause severe and irreversible harm to Indigenous traditions and cultural heritage...This should be cause of major concern for the federal government, which has repeatedly expressed its desire for reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.”

#### 4.2.2. Indigenous media

4.2.2.1. *APTN (n = 19): a stronger commitment to context and indigeneity.* In comparison to mainstream media, articles published through APTN showed a stronger and more consistent commitment to historical context related to renewable energy. While much of the focus related to Site C and Muskrat Falls, APTN told of the history in this space which has taken place across Canada. In central Canada, Tim Fontaine describes the ongoing dispute between the Pimicikamak Cree and Manitoba Hydro.

“The occupation is the latest in a long history of disputes between Manitoba Hydro and the Pimicikamak Cree, who say the province has yet to implement the Northern Flood Agreement. The NFA is supposed to compensate northern First Nations affected by hydro development... Pimicikamak Coun. Darwin Paupanekis told APTN that it’s time governments begin repairing and honouring treaty relations with the Cree, whatever the cost.”

This re-telling of history was common in articles published in APTN. A 2017 article from APTN described how protests related to hydro development and the history of colonialism are intertwined. Trina Roache does this through the citing of a letter written by five Canadian Members of Parliament. Part of the letter states:

“Our country is struggling with a colonial legacy that continues to disproportionately marginalize, criminalize and deprive Indigenous Peoples of political agency...this context makes decisions to imprison Indigenous men and women for using protest to assert their right to determine how their traditional lands are used particularly abhorrent.”

APTN also wrote about the cultural explanations of why many Indigenous Peoples are opposed to hydro. Jorge Barrera gives the reader the details needed to understand flooding of Treaty 8 territory, but also how doing so will affect the lives of Indigenous Peoples.

“[The] earth fill dam will lead to the diversion of the Peace River and the creation of an 83 km reservoir that would flood a swath of Treaty 8 territory...Two dams have already disturbed about 70 per cent of the Peace River wiping out Treaty 8 hunting grounds and wildlife corridors, along with contaminating the fish and destroying cultural and spiritual sites forever...Treaty 8 has language that guarantees the right to fish and trap in specific locations threatened by Site C..”

That Site C and Muskrat Falls would drastically change the lives of local Indigenous Peoples was a point echoed by others publishing in the APTN, and inspired a hunger strike by Inuit artist Billy Gauthier of

Labrador. Using the words of Gauthier and another protestor, Delilah Saunders, Trina Roache (2016) writes that the strike brought Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples together:

“Saunders said the hunger strike was part of a much bigger battle that brought people in Labrador together... “Labradorians have built a new relationship between Indigenous groups,” she said. “It’s huge. It’s something that people have just dreamed of before and now it’s happening. Everyone is united and together. It’s really beautiful.”

## 5. Discussion

In the context of Indigenous rights and the climate crisis [9,15], this study used content and critical discourse analyses to highlight the influence the media has in the way the Canadians come to understand Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy. As Indigenous communities in Canada are well-positioned to play a major role in a renewable energy transition [4,5], we take a moment here to reflect on the media’s power to shape common civic discourses [64,65]. We sought to capture the ideas being read by Canadians, while thinking critically about the ways reporters have told these stories for nine years. Given the promise of renewable energy to help Indigenous communities along their chosen path of self-determination (Fitzgerald, 2018; [8,31]) and reduce the impacts of a warming planet [19], there presents opportunities to uphold the principles of UNDRIP, FPIC, and move toward the kind of partnerships the federal government of Canada is now espousing [11]. This includes promises made — but not yet kept [104–106] — following the publication of the TRC’s Calls to Action.

Sharing similarities with the discourse surrounding extractive development in Indigenous territories, protests, lawsuits, and opposition to one particular form of renewable energy — large-scale hydro — dominated the headlines of our sample. Problems with the ways in which Site C and Muskrat Falls (in particular) have been planned and built have created ‘green energy’ sacrifice zones [27,45]. These developments that are purported to be for the betterment of larger society [46,47], target Indigenous health and ways of life (as in [49]). Continued development patterns should question the sincerity of the Federal government’s commitments, while also suggesting a new form of energy injustice has arrived [24,44]. Free, prior and informed consent appears to be lacking, and for many Indigenous Peoples, the idea of marrying hydro development and reconciliation is fleeting (as in [41,42]). This local inability to affect the outcome of renewable energy development also aligns with a trend recently seen in non-Indigenous communities of Canada [53,133]. That said, and as APTN reported, opposition to Muskrat Falls may have acted to unite Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples of Labrador. Thus positive relationship building may be the result when reciprocal and understanding partnerships are formed — whether in support of or resistance to renewable energy.

In stories covering other technologies, reporters wrote about how Indigenous communities were excited to move forward. Much of this was associated with the experienced or anticipated socio-economic benefits (see [36,37]). There were also indications that renewable energy fit well with Indigenous Peoples’ ideas around autonomy and self-defined sustainable development [33,34]. The *right* kind of economic growth — one that respects land, water and people [39,40,43] — may be welcomed in many Indigenous communities [8]. There was also coverage on the need for renewable energy policy to be responsive to the unique contexts of Indigenous communities across Canada. Several authors pointed out Indigenous communities’ concerns that they were being ‘left behind’.

In turning a critical gaze to the framing of stories by six media outlets, our analysis showed there was a general fairness to the ways in which articles were written. Using both (western and Indigenous) eyes (see [107]), there were exemplars from each outlet which told of the historical and cultural context needed to better understand the



experiences of Indigenous Peoples. These help tell a more complete story of protests, lawsuits, and opposition movements. This contrasted with the long-history of media outlets to further marginalize Indigenous populations in Canada via racist stereotypes, and portrayals of terrorism [79,84]. That the Conservative-leaning *Globe and Mail* and (especially) *National Post* wrote mostly balanced portrayals of Indigenous Peoples was surprising, but may be explained — through a cynical lens — that some newspapers are naturally critical of Liberal approaches to policy and economic development [108] and that being sympathetic to Indigenous Peoples and their fight against large-scale hydro, helps to accomplish this goal. In other forms of renewable energy, it may be the case that the privileging of economic development aligns with the biases of news outlets. When environmental and socio-cultural concerns take a backseat to economic considerations (as in [26,55]), it becomes easier to report these communities as being made up of “good Natives” that fit in colonialist and settler-capitalist structures (see [37,109]).

Throughout much of our sample, we are reminded of the frameworks that have shaped calls for reconciliation in Canada. UNDRIP, FPIC, the Constitution and the TRC are all mentioned within the context of broken promises and unfair development processes. FPIC is especially absent in stories of large-scale hydro, where development is continuing to flood Indigenous territories. This shares similarities with ideas of [low] carbon colonialism [56] and land grabbing [58] seen in South American contexts. Being conscious of this ignorance of UNDRIP [57], and the “dual energy justice challenge” [8] that remains in settler states, is essential in moving forward together. Given that Boutilier [10] states Indigenous autonomy is incompatible with existing law in Canada (see Article 32), reconciliation via large-scale hydro development may only begin to be achieved through major changes to legislation, including amendments to Environmental Assessments.

Unlike studies by those in the past, locating narratives that employed overt or even nuanced racist tones were difficult to find. That said, and similar to recent findings in Australia [117], the ways in which many authors organized their articles seems to privilege the perspectives of Settler-Canadians who are often in positions of power. Authors would often lead with stories of Indigenous Peoples opposed to hydro projects and close with the views of industry or government representatives. We acknowledge that such a conflict approach to writing may be more likely to ‘sell papers’ or generate online views. Though in reading through the entirety of each article, we were left with the impression that authors may be ignorant of structural and/or historical oppressions [95]. In giving the final word to these people, the reader may believe that concerns of Indigenous Peoples can be extinguished by Western reason (see also “the narratives of the colonizers” in [81]). This finding conflicts with existing media analysis literature on fronting [91] — the idea that states those views shared at the beginning of each article are the most emphasized. The idea also brings into question the practices of media reporters themselves. Speaking to Indigenous Peoples first before turning to people in power may provide the latter group with the chance to present arguments that address and ‘solve’ these debates.

Some of the most effective pieces in our dataset accomplished what we see as fair Indigenous representation through opinion articles and/or by having Indigenous Peoples as authors. This shared the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples without ‘balancing’ [80] the story with counter, privileged narratives. Though this gives the appearance of taking sides in debates around renewable energy, given the continued mistreatment of such communities by settler governments [6,7], we find this strategy appropriate and is best served to expose the environmental injustices still occurring today.

Given this paper was the first to analyze the media’s portrayal of Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy in Canada, there are a number of limitations that may create valuable avenues for future research. First, we recognize that in choosing articles from only six Canadian media outlets, we limited ourselves in not only the number of

stories, but also the types as well. Our focus on news outlets with the largest readership was intentional to investigate what kind of impact portrayals of Indigenous Peoples in renewable energy may be having among the general public. That said, research focused on smaller, rural and especially Indigenous media may provide the opportunity to study the messages reaching the communities that are actually playing host to these types of developments. Future research in this area should also target social media posts and other public commentary. Using ever-more-popular outlets such as Twitter or Facebook to not only gauge which stories are being told, but also how the public is reacting in real-time would likely provide a depth that this study cannot. We also see the need for continued and more broadly defined analyses of Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy transitions using *Etuaptmuk/Two-Eyed Seeing* [22,110]. Using *Etuaptmuk* in this study allowed for critical inquiry into the representations of history and cultural context from settler and Indigenous perspectives. While *Etuaptmuk* arose in Mi’kmaq territory, the principle of embracing Indigenous and western knowledge systems in research is gaining traction in other jurisdictions and should be applied not only here in Canada, but also other colonial states where energy justice is sought. Renewable energy technology and development are rapidly evolving, and there is much we can learn from other jurisdictions who see benefit from varying policy levers.

As part of our analysis suggested, there is also a clear need for research that uses gendered and racialized analyses. The simple work presented here (Table 2) showed that women’s and Indigenous voices were largely being excluded from the conversation around Indigenous Peoples and renewable energy in Canada. Their absence is likely indicative of larger, systemic discrimination in the media more generally. Especially for those with expertise within this area, further research within larger and more diverse data sets, may help provide valuable insight into the pattern that emerged.

## 6. Conclusions

As researchers, we entered this space with cautious optimism that renewable energy may act as a catalyst for change and increase self-determination efforts currently happening in Indigenous communities across Canada. Such projects may help in reconciliation and nation-to-nation building goals that the Federal government is now claiming to value. Yet, our findings show that large-scale hydro development, as currently seen in Labrador and British Columbia in particular, may threaten reconciliation efforts. In what some are calling a new era for Indigenous-settler relations, Federal and provincial governments across the country must begin to see value in renewable energy only when energy autonomy and local decision-making is present. Only then may these projects see success in terms of lowering emissions, *and* improving the socioeconomic well-being of renewable energy communities.

Results here also suggest a problem in the status-quo regarding the portrayal of Indigenous Peoples as they object to large-scale hydro projects. While there is no one strategy to address the ways in which Indigenous Peoples are misrepresented in the media, Les Couchi (Nippising First Nation) and Hayden King (Beausoleil First Nation) provide some help. Following his intensive search and analysis of *Toronto Star* articles covering Indigenous issues in Canada, Couchi [81] writes part of the solution is to have more First Nation, Inuit and Metis Peoples “holding the pens, writing the stories and contributing to how our communities are represented in the press”. We fully agree and add other proposed solutions include rethinking the structure of argumentation in articles covering two or more perspectives, providing appropriate context that can allow readers to understand the full story, and as King [80] points out, the ‘brave’ hiring of Canada’s first Indigenous editor in mainstream media. As the media has shown enormous power to introduce or perpetuate stereotypes and racist ideas about Indigenous Peoples, they must take responsibility and use their platform to help in truth and reconciliation efforts.

**Appendix A. ARTICLES FROM THE CBC (xn = 55)**

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR	DATE PUBLISHED
Alberta Investing \$35 m To Help Indigenous Communities Address Climate Change	Brandi Morin	June 30, 2017(a)
B.C. First Nation Leads With Green Energy, Sustainability	Martha Troian	April 14, 2017
B.C. First Nation Unveils Solar Power Project	CBC News	July 17, 2009
B.C. First Nations Lawyer Says Crown Didn't Consult On Specific Site C Permits	Tamsyn Burgmann (CP*)	August 19, 2015
BC Hydro CEO Refuses To Halt Site C, Despite Amnesty Report	CP	August 10, 2016
BC Hydro Signs \$1.75b Contract For Site C Dam Work	CP	December 22, 2015
Bertin Leblanc Denies Politics Involved In Work For Wind Project	Jacques Poitras	May 18, 2016
Cree, Métis Trappers And Fisherman Block Highway In Northern Manitoba	Tim Fontaine	September 2, 2016
Done With Diesel: First Nation Proposes Hydro Project For Clean Energy Future	Ash Kelly	July 1, 2017
Federal Budget Money Earmarked To Help Indigenous Communities Get Off Diesel	Margo McDiarmid	February 10, 2017
Federal Court Dismisses This First Nations' Challenge Of Site C Dam	Andrew Kurjata	January 23, 2017
First Nations Chief Insults Premier And BC Hydro CEO Over Site C	Josh Pagé	October 27, 2016
First Nations Land Occupation Aims To Stop Site C	Betsy Trumpener	January 5, 2016
First Nations See Economic Future In Canada's Growing Clean Energy Industry	Nicole Ireland	November 5, 2016
First Nations To Discuss Hydroelectric Projects In Yukon	CBC News	May 28, 2015
Fort Chipewyan Metis Launch \$3b Dam Lawsuit	CBC News	December 12, 2013
Fox Lake Cree Nation Blocks Road Access To 3 Hydro Sites	Jillian Taylor	May 12, 2016
Gathering Aims To Spark Green Energy Projects In Indigenous Communities	Waubgeshig Rice	July 12, 2016
Heritage Center's New Solar Panels Move Skidegate Toward Energy Independence	Chantelle Bellrichard	August 25, 2017
How First Nations Got A Head Of The Curve On Clean Energy	Jon Hernandez	March 27, 2017
Hydro, Manitoba First Nations Team Up On Geothermal Conversions	CBC News	June 19, 2014
Indigenous Communities Being Left Behind In Canada's 'Green Revolution': Expert	Brandi Morin	September 29, 2017(b)
Indigenous Communities Embracing Clean Energy, Creating Thousands Of Jobs	Margo McDiarmid	October 11, 2017
Indigenous Communities Should Be Prominent Players At The Resource Table: Leaders	Lenard Monkman	October 12, 2017
Indigenous-Owned Company Brings Renewable Energy To First Nations	Stephanie Cram	April 12, 2017
Innergex And Hydro Québec Pen \$365 m Deal For Gaspé Wind Farm	CP	March 24, 2014
Justin Trudeau Accused Of 'Bulldozing Aboriginal Rights' With Site C	Andrew Kurjata	September 23, 2016
Keeyask Hydro Dam Environmental Hearings Underway	CBC News	October 21, 2017
Kluane Lake Wind Project To Go Ahead, With Investment From Ottawa	Alexandra Byers	October 31, 2013
Lubicon Lake First Nation Using Solar To Power Health Centre	Angela Sterritt	August 21, 2015
Manitoba Aboriginal Affairs Minister Denies Promise Of Hydro Work In Exchange For Supporting Premier	Chris Glover	December 17, 2015
Manitoba Apologizes To First Nation For Environmental Damage	CBC News	January 20, 2015
Manitoba Dam Protesters Demand Revenue Sharing, Hydro Bill Help	Chinta Puxley (CP)	October 23, 2014
Manitoba First Nation To Get Apology From Premier For Jenpeg Dam Harm	CBC News	November 28 2014
Manitoba Hydro Honours Payments Going To First Nations Impacted By Keeyask: Report	CBC News	September 13, 2016
Manitoba Pledges \$150k To Heat Up Geothermal Energy On First Nations	Brett Purdy	November 13, 2015
Metis Want To Stop N.L. Hydro Project	CBC News	March 1, 2011
Mi'kmaq Energy Summit Gives Update On Wind Farm Projects	Jon Tattrie	September 27, 2016
Muskat Falls Opponents Say It's A Test Of Trudeau's Aboriginal Reconciliation	Sue Bailey (CP)	October 20, 2016(a)
Naikun Headaches Hold Lessons For Offshore Wind Projects	Dave Simms	March 30, 2011
Native Protesters Blockade Manitoba Dam Project	CBC News	August 14, 2009
Northwestern Ontario First Nation Finds Alternative To Diesel Fuel	Jackie McKay	October 23, 2017
Nunavut Opens Door To Renewable Energy With New Net Metering Program	Sima Sahar Zerehi	September 16, 2016
Ontario Wind Farm Fight Escalates Over Far Away First Nations Support	Carol Off and Jeff Douglas (CBC)	April 13, 2016
Sagkeeng First Nation Members Reject Manitoba Hydro Deal	CBC News	June 16, 2014
Sask. Party Promises Solar Power, Flare Gas Projects On First Nations	CBC News	April 1, 2016
Scientists Back Inuit In Efforts To Limit Mercury Poisoning Risk From Muskrat Falls Hydro Project	Sheena Goodyear	October 26, 2016
Site C Dam Project Betrays Trudeau's Commitment To First Nations, Say Critics	Anna Maria Tremonti (CBC)	August 24, 2016
Site C Highway Will Destroy Gravesite, Sweat Lodge Say First Nations	Andrew Kurjata	June 8, 2017
Supreme Court Of Canada Refuses To Hear B.C. First Nations' Site C Dam Appeal	CBC News	June 29, 2017
Taku River Tlingit Hydro Project Gets Mixed Reaction In Atlin, B.C.	CBC News	November 20, 2015
Wind, Solar Energy Real Options For Canada's Arctic Communities	Sima Sahar Zerehi	September 17, 2016
Wind, Solar Would It Cost More Than Diesel Power In Parts Of Nunavut: Study	CP	July 1, 2016
Yukon Electrical To Compensate Two First Nations	CBC News	April 4, 2013
Yukon First Nation Leaders Worried About Impact Of Hydro Dams	CBC News	January 30, 2015

\*CP refers to articles from the Canadian Press.

**Appendix B. ARTICLES FROM THE VANOUVER SUN (n = 29)**

ARTICLE TITLE	Author	DATE PUBLISHED
Alberta First Nations Sue Feds Over B.C. Dam Project	Sheila Pratt (Edmonton Journal)	November 14, 2014
Barriers Remain To First Nations Green Energy Projects; Provincial Promises Have Not Panned Out	Don Cayo	September 15, 2010
BC Hydro Rejected Proposal For Seven Smaller Dams That Would Reduce Flooding Of The Peace Valley	Larry Pynn	December 11, 2013
BC Hydro Says Region Will Reap Lasting Rewards; First Nations Leaders Asserts 'None Of Our Concerns Are Being Addressed' Despite Consultation	Larry Pynn	December 12, 2013
Contractors Must Consult With First Nations Prior To BC Hydro Approval	Scott Simpson	August 25, 2009

Federal Court Of Appeal Dismisses First Nations' Challenge Of B.C.'S Site C Dam	CP*	January 23, 2017
Court Denies First Nations 'Veto' On Site C; Ruling Likely To Be Appealed To The Supreme Court Of Canada	Ian Mulgrew	February 3, 2017
First Nations Chiefs To Stage Site C Showdown	Peter O'Neil	September 18, 2014
First Nation Signs Deal For Six Run-Of-River Power Projects	Derrick Penner	August 14, 2014
First Nations See Clean Energy As Game Changer	Judith Sayers	September 11, 2014
First Nations Split Over BC Hydro's Site C Dam Megaproject	Larry Pynn	December 12, 2013
Haida Turn To Wind And Water For New Power; First Nation Wants To Buy 30% Share In Electricity Generating Turbines To Be Built In Stormy Hecate Strait	Scott Simpson	August 14, 2009
Hydro Reveals Offers To First Nations; Big Money	Vaughn Palmer	April 22, 2015
Include First Nations In Renewable Energy Sector; B.C. Must Live Up To Promises	Judith Sayers	October 26 2013
Lower Nicola Indian Band Installs Largest Community-Owned Solar Panel System In B.C.	Nick Eagland	September 7, 2016
Opinion: B.C. Hydro And Duty Of Care	Dennis Izony & Hadi Dowlatabadi	September 29, 2016
Opinion: Clean Energy Gets Warm Welcome From First Nations	Paul Kariya	July 8, 2016
Opinion: Renewable Energy Vital For First Nations And Remote Communities	Robert Daniel Nault	September 5 2013
Opinion: Why B.C. Hydro Must Halt Construction Of The Site C Dam	Craig Benjamin	August 11, 2016
Site C Approval Faces Raft Of Legal Challenges; First Nations, Other Landowners And Environmentalists Promise To Fight Approval Of New Down	Rob Shaw & Gordon Hoekstra	December 17, 2014
Site C Dam Win For Hydro As A Native Veto Rejected By B.C. Court Of Appeal	Ian Mulgrew	February 2, 2017
Site C Project Not In Keeping With Our Original Treaty Rights Or Un Declaration: Bellegarde	Perry Bellegarde	September 11, 2016
Supreme Court Dismisses Two Site C Lawsuits From B.C. First Nations	CP	June 29, 2017
Supreme Court Ruling Means First Nations Can Sue Rio Tinto Over Nechako Water Diversion	Mark Nielson (Prince George Citizen)	October 16, 2015
Vaughn Palmer: BC Hydro Compensation Offers To First Nations Revealed In Court	Vaughn Palmer	April 24, 2015
Vaughn Palmer: Clean Energy Report Becomes A Political Football	Vaughn Palmer	November 20, 2014
Vaughn Palmer: On Site C, Is First Nations Approval Plan A?	Vaughn Palmer	October 17, 2014
Wilson-Raybould Won't Challenge Site C Dam Permits; B.C. Federal Minister Was Once Highly Critical Of Big Hydroelectric Project	Peter O'Neil	August 13, 2016
Winning Energy Race	Jim Middlemiss	November 25, 2010

\*CP refers to articles from the Canadian Press.

## Appendix C. ARTICLES FROM THE GLOBE AND MAIL (n = 27)

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR	DATE PUBLISHED
Aboriginal Group Outraged At Muskrat Falls Project's Approval By Ottawa	CP*	November 28, 2013
B.C. And Band Sign Deal For Power Project, Land	Dirk Meissner	November 17, 2012
BC Green Beater Andrew Weaver Says Economist, Indigenous Rights Changed His Mind On Site C	Justine Hunter	June 19, 2017
BC Hydro Faces Widespread Community Opposition Over Dam	Justine Hunter	December 7, 2013
BC Hydro Slammed By First Nations, Advocacy Groups For Site C Contract	Geordon Omand	November 25, 2015
Crown Land Quietly Offered To First Nations In Return For Site C Dam Site	Mark Hume	February 18, 2016
Development On Ottawa River Drive Draws Divide In Indigenous Communities	Roy MacGregor	November 20, 2015
First Nation Injunction Could Delay Site C Dam By A Year: BC Hydro	Tamsyn Burgmann	August 19, 2015
First Nations Chief Tracks Down Cabinet Members To Protest Site C Dam	Mark Hume	December 13, 2015
First Nations In B.C. Lose Latest Bid To Stop Site C Project	Sunny Dhillon	June 29, 2017
First Nations Launch Federal Court Challenge Of B.C.'S Site C Dam	James Keller	November 12, 2014
First Nations Lose Bid To Nullify Government Ok For Site C Dam	Mark Hume	September 18, 2015
First Nations Protesters Occupy Grounds Of Manitoba Hydro Dam	CP	October 16, 2014
First Nations Strike Out In Court Bids To Stop Site C	Sunny Dhillon	June 30, 2017
Indian Band Compensated For 1960s Dam	Mark Hume	March 31, 2009
Indigenous Communities Must Be Part Of The Global Green Energy Revolution	Jatin Nathwani & Colin Andersen	April 27, 2016
Innergex, Mi'gmaq Communities Join Forces On Planned \$365 Million Gaspé Wind Farm	Bertrand Morotte	March 24, 2014
Innu Reach Deal With Hydro-Québec On \$6.5-Billion Project	Rhéal Séguin	January 24, 2011
Lights Out	Shawn McCarthy	November 24, 2016
Manitoba Premier Apologizes To First Nation For Damage Done By Dam	CP	January 20, 2015
Massive New Project Gives New Life To Old Hydro Dams	Josh O'Kane	November 26, 2013
Natives See Profit In The Wind	Billy Curry	April 11, 2011
Protesters End Occupation Of Manitoba Hydro Dam After Agreeing To Negotiations	Globe and Mail Staff	November 28, 2014
Push To End Energy Poverty In Indigenous Communities Underway	Shawn McCarthy	November 23, 2016
T'Sou-Ke First Nation Turns To Wasabi In Renewable Energy Push	Cara McKenna	August 24, 2014
Wind Farm Stirs Up Friction Between First Nations	Reneta D'Aliesio	October 6, 2012
Work Will Continue On Controversial Muskrat Falls Project	Shawn McCarthy	October 26, 2016

\*CP refers to articles from the Canadian Press.

**Appendix D. ARTICLES FROM APTN (n = 19)**

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR	DATE PUBLISHED
28 People Involved In Protests Against The Muskrat Falls Hydroelectric Project In Labrador Charge	Trina Roache	March 8, 2017
3 Labrador Hunger Strikers Arrive Home To A Heroes Welcome	Trina Roache	October 28, 2016
Alberta First Nation Communities Jumping On 'Solar Revolution'	Brandi Morin	June 9, 2015
Alberta Says It Will Invest In Indigenous Peoples To Build Green Economy	Brandi Morin	December 1, 2015
B.C. Premier Says Site C Could End Up In Supreme Court Over Indigenous Rights	APTN National News (CP*)	November 1, 2017
Billy Gauthier And The Path He Chose To Stop The Provinces' Energy Giant At Muskrat Falls	Tom Fennario	October 23, 2016
Cross Lake First Nation Issues Eviction Notice To Manitoba Hydro, Occupation Continues	Tim Fontaine (files from CP)	October 17, 2014
Fight Against Muskrat Falls Continues As Transformers Arrive On Site	Trina Roache	August 3, 2017
First Nation Communities Lose In Federal Court Over Site C Dam, So Now What?	APTN National News (CP)	January 24, 2017
Inuk Elder Taken Into Custody After Defying Muskrat Falls Injunction	Trina Roache	July 21, 2017
Journalist Charged Among Muskrat Falls Occupation Didn't Have 'Special Status': Judge	APTN National News	March 16, 2016
Justice Minister Wilson-Raybould Should Resign Over Site C, Says Treaty 8 Chief	Jorge Barrera	September 20, 2016
Labrador Indigenous Leaders Echo Calls Of Protestors To Halt Muskrat Falls Dam Project	Ossie Michelin (Special to APTN National News)	June 27, 2016
Mi'kmaq, Local Fishers Unite To Fight Bay Of Fundy Energy Project	Trina Roache	January 20, 2017
Northern Cree Occupy Manitoba Hydro Dam Over Longstanding Grievances	Tim Fontaine	September 29, 2014
On Muskrat Falls, Pm Trudeau Says Relationship With Indigenous Peoples Based On 'Science'	APTN National News	October 25, 2016
Police Move In On #Muskratfalls Camp, Arrests Made In Early Morning Raid	Trina Roache	October 17, 2016
While Muskrat Falls Water Levels Go Down, Inuit Concerns On The Rise	Trina Roache	June 22, 2017
Woman On Hunger Strike Against BC Site C Dam Now In Hospital	APTN National News	April 1, 2016

\*CP refers to articles from the Canadian Press.

**Appendix E. ARTICLES FROM THE TORONTO STAR (n = 13)**

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR	DATE PUBLISHED
Aboriginal Activist Fears B.C. Dam Project Will Destroy Sacred Land	Joanna Smith	February 23, 2016
After Rocky Past, A First Nation Builds Power	Sara Mojtahedzadeh	October 6, 2015
Indigenous Demonstrators, Environmentalists Urge Governments To Stop Using Nuclear Power	Julien Gignac	November 9, 2017
Manitoba Chiefs Angry Over Ottawa's Steep Funding Cuts	Winnipeg Free Press	January 11, 2015
Muskrat Falls Project Will Spike Methylmercury Risk For Indigenous People, Study Finds	Sue Bailey (CP*)	November 9, 2016(b)
Northern Ontario First Nation To Receive Benefit Payments 20 Years After Hydro Plant Started Generating	Ainslie Cruickshank	July 9, 2017
Opening Up The Green Energy Tent	Tyler Hamilton	October 3, 2009
OPG And The Moose Cree Start New Hydro Development	John Spears	June 9, 2010
Our Own Three Gorges	Peter Gorrie	June 29, 2008
Protesters Take Fight Against Muskrat Falls Hydroelectric Project To Ottawa	Adina Bresge (CP)	October 23, 2016
Protests Against Muskrat Falls Hydro Project Escalate As Flooding Set To Begin	Sue Bailey (CP)	October 17, 2016(c)
Site C Dam Approval Another Violation Of First Nations Rights	Perry Bellegarde	September 28, 2016
Six Nations Of Grand River Lead The Charge On Green Energy	Jesse Winter	April 26, 2017

\*CP refers to articles from the Canadian Press.

**Appendix F. ARTICLES FROM THE NATIONAL POST (n = 10)**

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR	DATE PUBLISHED
Aboriginals May Win In Energy Sweeps	Jim Middlemiss	November 24, 2010
Clean Energy Can Advance Indigenous Reconciliation	Jatin Nathwani (The Conversation)	October 26, 2017
Colby Cash: The Muskrat Falls Fiasco – Maybe You'd Be Protesting, Too	Colby Cash	October 24, 2016
Muskrat Falls Activists Released From St. John's Penitentiary Amid Protests	Keith Doucette (CP*)	July 31, 2017
Newfoundland Reaches Deal With Aboriginal Leaders To Monitor Pollution At Giant Muskrat Falls Hydro Project	CP	October 26, 2016
Nine Arrested As Protests Over Muskrat Falls Dam And Fears Of Mercury Contamination Escalate	CP	October 18, 2016
Ontario Township Learns Support Of Six First Nations Helped Energy Giant Win Bid To Build Unwanted Wind Farm	Postmedia Network (London Free Press)	April 13, 2016
Protests, 'Voodoo Economics' And Soaring Costs: How Muskrat Falls Became A 'Boondoggle'	CP	October 23, 2016
Supreme Court Dismisses Two Site C Lawsuits From B.C. First Nations	CP	June 29, 2017
The Diesel Dilemma; Industry And Indigenous Communities Team Up To Take On Shared Problem	Sunny Freeman	January 7, 2017

\*CP refers to articles from the Canadian Press.

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