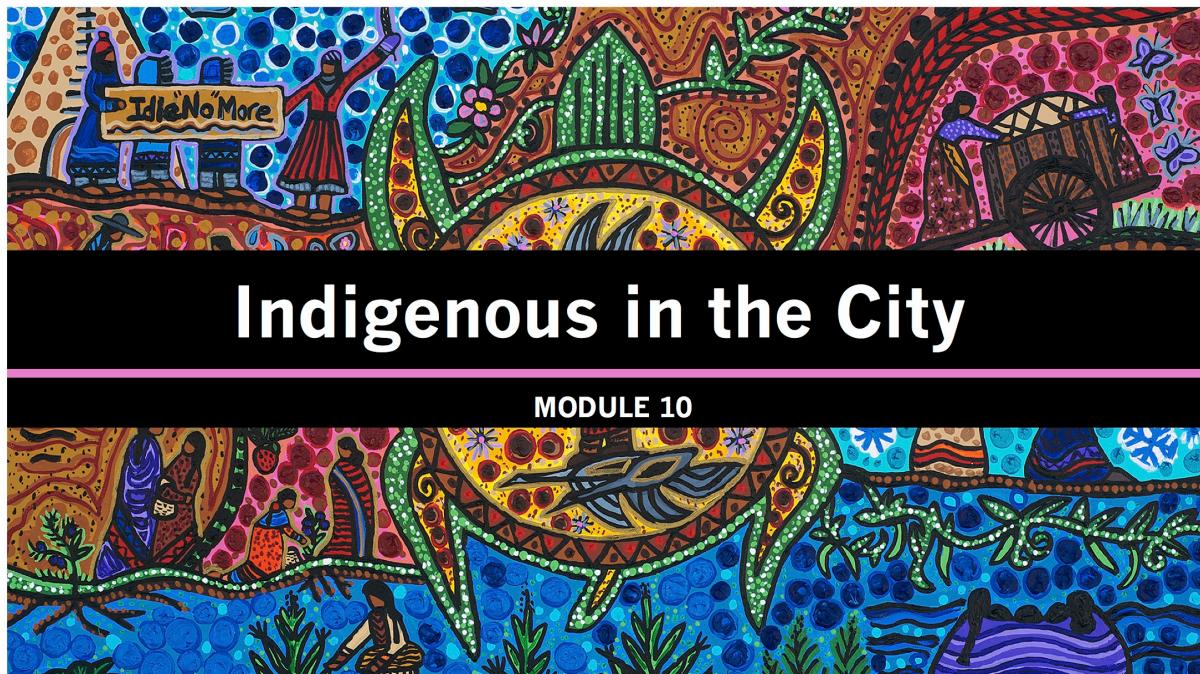


Indigenous Canada: Looking Forward/Looking Back



Cover Image: Artwork by Leah Dorion

The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory and respects the history, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our institution.

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Module 10 Introduction

Inuit, Métis, and off-reserve First Nation individuals constitute the fast growing segment of the population in Canada. Today, over half of all Aboriginal people live in urban areas. This module discusses Indigenous individuals' and families' movement into urban spaces over the last number of decades, how the relationship between Indigenous people and the urban environment has been shaped and continues to evolve. There are prevalent ideas that most Indigenous people in Canada live on reserves or in rural areas; however, we can see from the census data that more than half of all Indigenous people in Canada live in cities or towns (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples). For example, 70,000 Indigenous people live in Winnipeg, which is the same as the entire Northwest Territories.



Figure 1 Montreal; Credit: Lima Pix/Mauricio Lima

This module also touches on notions of what is deemed authentic Indigenous culture and how Indigenous people living in urban spaces are often thought of as disconnected from their land, culture, and tradition. This module explores where these ideas come from and gives alternative perspectives on urban Indigenous identity, culture, and the growing presence and power of urban Indigenous populations.

Section One: Urban Indigeneity

What is Identity?

Cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall suggests thinking about identity as being the essence of who we are, as linked to an underlying way of being, shared cultural norms and history, and also what we may become as a people (Andersen, 2013, 49). This last point acknowledges that identity is somewhat fluid, changing and evolving while remaining grounded in core ways of being and common histories.

As discussed in previously, Indigenous identities are often tied to place and the land (Basso 1996 and Cruikshank 2005). Part of the challenge with understanding urban Indigeneity is that Indigenous people living in cities are not always connected to a land base, but does that make them less Indigenous?



Figure 2 Wanuskewin Heritage Park (five kilometres north of Saskatoon), 2010; Credit: Rae McLeod

Death of a Culture OR Engines of Cultural Power?

Urban spaces and Indigenous people can be regarded in two broad ways. First, urban places are often thought of as neither safe nor comfortable spaces for Indigeneity to flourish, such that cities are where “Indigenous culture goes to die.” Second, an alternative way to think about urban spaces is that they are what scholar Renya Ramirez calls Native “hubs” and what Métis scholar Chris Andersen refers to as “engines” of Indigenous cultural power (Ramirez 2007 and Andersen 2013). In short, cities are spaces where Indigenous culture and society can and does flourish.

Previous modules covered a number of historical government policies, including the Indian Act, that intentionally forced, or at least encouraged, the migration of Indigenous individuals and families off of reserves and into urban centres (Drees 2002, 3–4). Government officials thought that removing Indigenous people from their traditional subsistence lifestyle and culture would make them more likely to assimilate into settler society (McCallum 2014, 76). This approach is based on the notion that Indigenous culture and urban life are incommensurable or mutually exclusive, and that Indigenous culture simply cannot exist in an urban context. However, there are ways in which Indigenous culture everywhere has been enriched by modern urban places, and the coming together of diverse Indigenous cultures has influenced urban Indigenous identity.

The Unique Experiences of Indigenous in the City

Although most people are likely used to thinking about “real” Indigeneity as existing on reserves or in rural spaces more generally, urban Indigenous communities have a number of distinct characteristics that make urban life different from that of reserves and other rural areas. Some of the research of Métis scholar Chris Andersen aids in identifying and discussing key elements of the complexities of the urban Indigenous experience (Andersen 2013).

Economic Marginalization

Urban Indigenous residents are likely to be poorer than their non-Indigenous neighbours (Obonsawin and Howard-Bobiwash 1997, 28). This varies from city to city, but the trend is demonstrated in nationwide data. This economic marginalization, existence on the economics fringes of society, can contribute to other elements of urban life. Indigenous urban residents tend to experience higher rates of unemployment, single parenthood, homelessness, domestic violence, and more (Janovicek 2007). While this is not completely different from the experiences of Indigenous people living on reserve, the urban context within which it occurs, in a majority of non-Indigenous residents, is different. On reserve, the lower socio-economic status of Indigenous peoples is equated to lack of opportunities and other reasons. However, Indigenous people in the city are

just as likely to experience disproportionate economic and social outcomes, even though there is a perceived increase in economic opportunities that are enjoyed by non-Indigenous people within the city.

Growing Professional and Middle Class

More recent research into the social and economic status of urban Indigenous people has shown that there is a growing professional and middle class (FitzMaurice and McCaskill 2011, 342; Newhouse 2001, 23.). Data from the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey and the 2006 Census indicate that about one-third of Aboriginal people were considered middle income earners or those with a household income of between approximately forty and eighty thousand dollars. While on the surface this seems promising, the same data indicates that Aboriginal people were more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be low income earners and less likely to be high income earners. Low income earners are those earning less than \$40,000, and high income earners are those earning more than \$80,000 (Parriag and Chaulk 2013, 38). In addition, there are still significant income disparities between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. A current estimate suggests that it would take more than sixty years for the gap to close (Wilson and MacDonald 2010, 3; Harmon 2010).

Cultural Diversity

Urban Indigenous populations are highly diverse. Indigenous individuals and their families arrive to urban centres from many different types of Indigenous communities, whether from reserves, smaller towns, or other cities (FitzMaurice and McCaskill 2011, 328).

Indigenous people who live in urban spaces have noted that they feel as much



Figure 3 Annual powwow at University of Saskatchewan, 2012; Credit: Warren Long

connection and attachment to other Indigenous people living in their city as they do to their home community or cultural group (Lawrence 2004).

Legal Diversity

Urban Indigenous residents fall into a complex mix of status Indians, non-status Indians, Métis, Inuit, registered Indians including those who belong to Indian bands and those who do not, treaty Indians, non-treaty Indians, and numerous cultural groups that are the product of the effects of what is often called out-marriage (FitzMaurice and McCaskill 2001, 329 and Palmater 2011, 28). This intricate legal diversity creates real challenges, such as responsibilities of the federal government and other levels of jurisdiction, in terms of providing programs, services, and funding.

Status Blindness

The notion of status blindness refers to the idea that in the context of urban Indigenous service delivery, all services are available to any Indigenous person regardless of their legal identity as status, non-status, Métis or otherwise. Urban spaces result in a sort of melting pot of Indigenous cultural practice and traditions, and urban Indigenous organizations and institutions welcome all Indigenous residents to participate and share their unique cultural practice (Lawrence 2004 and Palmater 2011).

Urban Aboriginal Policy Ethos

Policy ethos refers to the general approach taken in the development of public policy. There has been much discussion about the policy vacuum in urban places around the delivery of programs and services (Cairns 2000, 123). The federal government is generally responsible for providing funding for Indigenous programming, but this obligation largely concerns on-reserve First Nations programs. Federal dollars are also provided to provinces and municipalities for the delivery of a variety of services. There is a lack of funding and administration for Indigenous people living in cities and towns.

From a policy perspective, this was not something that the federal government expected, given their assumption that Indigenous people who moved to cities would not

need specific programs and services unique from non-Indigenous residents. However, it has become clear that Indigenous people require culturally relevant programs and services related to education, healthcare, and other social supports. The establishment of the many urban Indigenous institutions is a testament to that need, but the funding and policy development is still trying to catch up (Anderson 1999).

Informal Networks

Informal networks with family and friends play a powerful role in the general quality of life for urban Indigenous residents (Hill and Le Camp 1997, 60). For example, informal networks play a crucial role in preventing the move from “hidden” to “absolute” homelessness, especially for those moving from First Nations reserves into cities. Unlike on reserves where social networks might be comprised mostly of extended family, informal urban networks are more likely to consist of friends. However, the presence of second- and even third-generation urban Indigenous residents, family, especially extended family, continues to play a role in meaningful social attachments for urban Indigenous people. This is evidence of the continued connections between urban and non-urban locales.

Attachment to Non-Urban Communities

Indigenous peoples migrate between cities and between the city and the reserve. Reasons for this are complex, but there are a number of push-pull factors. A continued connection to longstanding cultural communities is important to urban Indigenous residents’ well-being and overall sense of identity (Norris, Clatworthy, and Peters 2013, 29-45).

Such migrations can be interpreted in the context of attachments to land, as discussed previously. They can also be understood as part of a revitalization of political and economic ties to other places. Surveys show that urban Indigenous residents maintain links to their home communities for a variety of reasons (FitzMaurice and McCaskill 2001, 337). These continued ties, though valuable for a number of reasons, have become strongly linked to more recent struggles over political representation. As such,

Indigenous peoples are asking questions about who represents their people, home communities, and urban Indigenous institutions.

Political Representation of Urban Indigenous People

A unified political voice for urban Indigenous residents does not exist, in part because of their diversity (FitzMaurice and McCaskill 2001 345-348). Urban institutions also sometimes clash with more longstanding political organizations, such as the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Indigenous Women in Urban Indigenous Social Relations

Generally speaking, slightly more Indigenous women than men live in urban centres.

Specific policies contributed to the forceful or encouraged migration of Indigenous women in particular, including provisions in the Indian Act that devalued the traditional roles of Indigenous women and forced them out of their First Nations communities (Jamieson 1978, 67–74).



Figure 4 Annual women's memorial march, Vancouver, 2010; Credit: kim kim

Indigenous women have a disproportionate vulnerability to violence; however, there are some positive statistics as well (Monture-Okanee 1992, 193). Indigenous women are more likely to be involved as decision makers in the institutions of urban Indigenous community development, as compared to Indigenous men. It has been suggested that Indigenous women have been the main drivers behind community development work within the urban context, an improvement on the far lower rates of women's political power on reserves (Howard 2009, 105–124; Maracle 2012, 70).

Section Two: Impact of City Life

Racism in Cities

Historically, Canadian government policies and actions have resulted in deep systemic institutional and personal racism against Indigenous people, such as the residential school system. It is important to understand that there are differences between racism and prejudice, between institutional and personal racism, and between conscious and unconscious racism (Andersen, 2015).

Briefly, racism is often said to refer to the processes through which certain aspects of humanity's physical and cultural differences are emphasized, elevated, and distinguished in ways that privilege certain groups while oppressing others. Because of this structural element of racism, scholars suggest that individual acts should be understood as examples of prejudice, while the term racism should be reserved for more structural examples, such as court cases, legislation, and grade school textbooks. Likewise, Canadians can often act in ways that reproduce racism without knowing they are doing so, which is unconscious racism. Various forms of racism develop through the common social, educational, and institutional narratives of a society.

Most of the research on urban Indigenous people over the last number of decades has been focused on the exclusion of Indigenous people, where many Indigenous residents continue to live on the fringes of Canadian urban society at a much higher rate than other cultural groups (Andersen, 2013). There is some evidence of a growing middle class of Indigenous urban residents; however, the underpinning racial prejudice, based in ideas that Indigenous people do not belong in urban spaces, continues to exist (FitzMaurice and McCaskill 2011, 342). The history of colonial policies in Canada over the last 150 years has resulted in the creation of deep and lasting stereotypes of Indigenous people in perception and treatment.

Many Indigenous people living in urban centres experience many forms of racism, often on a daily basis (FitzMaurice and McCaskill 2001, 342–343). They may be denied

applications while in search of a place to live or a job once they meet in person, or if they have a noticeable accent over the phone. Indigenous urban residents have reported that they have intentionally and frequently hidden their identity and monitored their appearance and behaviour to avoid the experience of racism in their daily lives. Racism is also experienced through the ongoing sexual violence and degradation of Indigenous women and often by police and the judicial, health, and social services systems (Waldram 1997, 56).

Examples of the sometimes-intense hostility displayed by police and the justice system towards both Indigenous men and women have become well known in some western cities. One of the most notorious cases was the murder of Neil Stonechild and the Stonechild Inquiry into the so-called “Starlight Tours”, a practice by which police officers would transport Native men to the edge of the city, remove their jackets and shoes, and direct them to cool off or walk home in the middle of winter (Reber and Renaud 2006). Neil Stonechild’s frozen body was found on the outskirts of Saskatoon in November of 1990. He was last seen alive in police custody. After ten years with no resolve for his family about the circumstances of his death, three other young Indigenous men were found dead in the same area, and one Indigenous man, Darrel Night, managed to make it to safety from the freezing temperatures (Razack 2015, 164).

Another example that has become symbolic of the violence against Indigenous people and the failure of the judicial system is the 1995 murder of Pamela George, a young Saulteaux woman. She was killed in Regina by two white male university students who were not charged with murder but a lesser sentence of manslaughter with the reasoning that, as a sex worker, Pamela’s high-risk lifestyle contributed to her death. This ruling symbolizes the deep systemic racism,



Figure 5 Anti-colonial street art in Montreal, 2015;
Credit: dignidadrebelde/Flickr

marginalization, and justified violence against Indigenous women (Razack 2008, 249).

These accounts are two glimpses into the hundreds of testimonies of racial violence that is a harsh reality of historical and modern Indigenous experience, an experience that has been formally documented in various studies, inquiries, and during the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples process in the 1990s.

Cities are Where Indigenous Culture goes to Die

Is it true that cities are “where Indigenous culture goes to die” (Peters & Andersen, 2013, 9)? Specific government policies were developed to force or encourage the migration of Indigenous people to cities with the intent to finalize their assimilation into Canadian society. The expectation was that cities were the places where Indigenous people would go to assimilate and become civilized, and Indigenous culture would slowly fade under the growing dominance of mainstream Canadian society.

There is some truth to this notion. Traditional subsistence culture and connection to the land influenced the identity of many Indigenous groups, and urban environments could be disconnected from this Indigenous identity. For example, Dene and Inuit from the Northwest Territories, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Nunavut often express their culture through their retained practices of hunting, fishing, trapping, whaling, and otherwise harvesting and preparing traditional foods. Being on the land is deeply connected to northern Indigenous identity, and northerners often report feeling alienated in urban settings. That being said, identity is somewhat fluid and is grounded in shared history and ways of being. Indigenous peoples have embraced modernity, engaged with urban spaces and western institutions, and adapted cultural practices to honour Indigenous ways of being while acknowledging the realities of modern life (Deloria 2004).

Southern Inuit Communities

Many Inuit living in southern cities have come together to form social, health, and educational organizations that have resulted in the creation of southern Inuit communities within urban spaces. For example, there are over 735 Inuit who call

Ottawa home. Inuit organizations based in Ottawa have become the main gateways for Inuit who come from the eastern Arctic for medical treatment, to seek higher education, and in search of alternative employment opportunities (<http://tungasuvvingatinuit.ca/overview/>).

Many Inuit maintain strong connections to their home communities, and extensive food sharing networks mean that Inuit living in the south frequently receive traditional northern foods like fish, muktuk or whale blubber, caribou and muskox meat from visiting relatives.

There are also strong language and culture programs in Ottawa along with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the national Inuit organization that represents the four Inuit regions – Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavik (northern Quebec), Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories. The ITK is an advocacy group that speaks to Inuit interests across Canada (<https://www.itk.ca/what-we-do/>).



Figure 6 Inuit food preparation, Puvirnituq, Quebec, 2002; Credit: Francis Bourgouin

Engines of Cultural Power

Urban environments have been unsuccessful at extinguishing Indigenous cultural practices and ways of being. Instead, in some ways urban centres have become engines of cultural power (Andersen 2013 46). Numerous institutions and organizations deliver services to the urban Indigenous population, such as the Inuit community in Ottawa. Many other types of urban Indigenous organizations, grounded in Indigenous worldview and culture, represent and serve the diverse Aboriginal communities of Canada's cities. The Friendship Centre is one of the most well known and longstanding urban Indigenous organizations.

Friendship Centres

The concept of Friendship Centres began in 1951 as increased numbers of Aboriginal people were moving from reserves and other rural areas to urban spaces. Individuals pushed for the establishment of organizations to help address some of the needs expressed by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. At first, Friendship Centres relied on volunteers and were funded by small grants, churches, and fundraising efforts (Sanderson and Bobowash 1997; Howard 2011, 87; Quart 2013, 132).

Over time, the centres began to organize first into provincial and territorial associations, and eventually in 1972 the National Association of Friendship Centres was established to represent Friendship Centres nationally.

Friendship Centres are often the place where many Indigenous residents will go first when moving to a new place. The centre can connect people to the local community, provide cultural support, and is a place to learn about how to access services that support employment and housing searches or perhaps local educational opportunities. Many Indigenous residents in cities report feeling just as connected to other Indigenous people living in urban spaces as they do to their home community, and the Friendship Centre is a hub of Indigenous culture (Howard 2011, 92–93).

Friendship Centres and similar institutions play a central role in providing culturally based programs and services for urban Indigenous residents. Such programs often aim to bridge some of the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in urban settings. The centres draw from multiple Indigenous worldviews and teachings representative of the Indigenous people who access their services. Indigenous residents may visit a Friendship Centre as they are looking for employment and training support, educational information, health services, and to connect with other community



Figure 7 Friendship Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 2010; Credit: Hans-Jürgen Hübner

organizations (Obonsawin and Howard Bobiwash 1997, 28). The National Association of Friendship Centres represents 118 individual centres and seven provincial or territorial associations across Canada.

Neechi Commons

In 1990, Neechi Commons began as Neechi Foods, a grocery co-op in Winnipeg's inner city. It is a worker co-op, and employees are co-op members. Neechi is Winnipeg's largest commercial employer of Aboriginal people, and they also provide quality foods and produce at reasonable prices, offer a subsidized fruit basket for kids, and purchase fish, berries and wild rice from Aboriginal producers. Now in a newly renovated heritage building, Neechi has expanded its services and community profile to include a restaurant, catering, fruit and vegetable market, and arts store. "It is truly a community store, based around the principles of an Aboriginal owned and operated worker co-operative." ("About Us", Neechi Commons). It works in partnership with the Local Investment Toward Employment and Social Purchasing Portal to encourage development and employment in the local community. Nonetheless, Neechi Commons faces the challenges of competing with large grocery retailers.

Neechi Commons serves as a place of cultural power, reaching out to local artists, designers, musicians, and other community members by offering space for community projects. For example, Rebecca Belmore's community based project called Trace, which is now part of the permanent collection at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, is comprised of handmade clay beads.

Belmore used a corner room in Neechi Commons as an accessible collective space for people to participate in making of the clay beads. Neechi Commons facilitated cultural power in the form of public engagement and activism by providing the time and space for community to participate.

Section Three: Governance

What is Governance?

Governance is generally understood to describe the social structures that determine how decisions are made and how individuals are represented in societal decision-making (Frankes 2000, 100–106). For instance, with the governance model in Canada, individuals elect Members of Parliament representatives at the federal level, and decision making takes place in the House of Commons.

Indigenous worldviews are foundational in the development of Indigenous governance structures, including concepts of law and legal principles, which are different from European models (Borrows 2010 23–58). However, through pieces of legislation, including most notoriously the Indian Act, the Canadian government has imposed state governance practices upon Indigenous peoples. As a result, the current way that most First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities govern their communities is based in a model that imitates the Canadian federal, provincial, and territorial governments.

Governance of Urban Indigenous Communities

The governance of urban Indigenous communities has been challenging, as there is not a clear structure or idea of what level(s) of government (federal, provincial, or municipal) should be involved (Frankes 2000, 106-115). There are a few ways that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) identified for improving urban Indigenous governance.



Figure 8 Interior of the legislative assembly of Nunavut, Iqaluit, 2001; Credit: CambridgeBayWeather

First, existing public institutions could change to accommodate urban Indigenous residents who want to be more involved in urban governance and decision-making. Second, options based in Indigenous self-

government would be considered, including the need to consider the objectives of Indigenous self-government and how they might be achieved, given the diversity of urban Indigenous populations (FitzMaurice and McCaskill 2011, 345-348).

Changing Existing Institutions

Reforming existing governance structure to be more inclusive of Indigenous representation could help to close the policy gaps for urban Indigenous residents. Some possibilities highlighted by RCAP for addressing issues at the municipal level include: (1) having Indigenous members for school boards, boards of health, hospital boards, police commissions, and other institutions whose work affects the lives of urban Indigenous people; (2) having permanent Indigenous affairs committees for municipal councils, school boards and other agencies, boards, and commissions; and (3) looking at co-managing urban initiatives, particularly in areas where federal, provincial or territorial legislation has recognized a role for Indigenous governments (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples).

Self-Government in an Urban Setting

Changing existing institutions alone will not address the complex challenges in urban Indigenous communities. RCAP also outlines a model that would collectively represent diverse Indigenous communities in urban spaces, communities that would create themselves through voluntary association. The urban community of interest model is discussed in detail in RCAP as a possible way forward in urban Indigenous governance that would work with existing levels of municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal governments.

Urban Reserves

There are two types of urban reserves – those that already existed with urban centres having grown up around them, and those that have been newly created within the boundaries of cities (Government of Canada, “Urban Reserves”). There are differences between these two types, and there are examples of both across Canada.

In some instances, reserves have been encroached upon by urban sprawl. For example, the Tsuut'ina Nation is located just southwest of Calgary. Because the city has grown over the decades, the reserve is now located at the city limits. This urban growth has in some cases created conflict between expanding municipalities and First Nations.

In the Calgary example, there was a long and somewhat contentious negotiation over the development of a ring road that needed to pass through the Tsuut'ina Nation. A final agreement was reached in 2013 between the Government of Alberta and the Tsuut'ina Nation for the transfer of 428 hectares of reserve lands to allow for the construction of road and utility corridor (Sweetgrass 2013). The total cost for the land and compensation for the impacts of the road was \$340.7 million dollars, and the province has until 2022 to build the road under these terms. This deal was not necessarily supported by all band members, even though there was a referendum on the decision. Each band member will receive approximately \$60,000 as a portion of the sale. These payouts to individual band members are viewed by many non-Indigenous Calgarians as just another hand out, playing into the stereotyping of Indigenous people as living on government support.

Newly Created Urban Reserves

The mid 1980s saw the creation of a number of new urban reserves in Canada. The primary driver behind this was federal policy (developed in 1987 and consolidated in 1991) – the Additions to Reserves Policy, and in western Canada, the Treaty Land Entitlement process.

The Additions to Reserves Policy is intended to fulfill existing legal obligations including Treaty Land Entitlements and negotiated settlements. The Treaty Land Entitlement process acknowledges that the land allocations that were agreed to in treaty have not always been honoured (Government of Canada, “Treaty Land Entitlement”). Some First Nations that have established land entitlement through this process have sought out urban locations for their land holdings for economic development purposes (Newhouse and Peters 2003). This process allows First Nations to buy parcels of land with federal

funding based on treaty entitlement, but this does not automatically make it a reserve. In order for the land to become a reserve, the First Nation and the federal government have to go through a process that can take many years, including environmental assessments prior to being able to officially designate the land parcel as a reserve.

Usually the creation of an urban reserve is not for groups of Indigenous urban residents. It is a territorial extension of an existing band's parent reserve in a rural area. In Winnipeg, the Long Plain First Nation, located some 100 kilometres west of the city, now has a 1.4-hectare urban property with reserve status (Paul 2013). In this case, the urban reserve is an extension of the parent band, governed by the rural chief and council, providing an urban land base and often urban economic opportunities for its members. In Saskatoon, Muskeg Lake First Nation entered into a business relationship with the city through the creation of an urban reserve that contains a number of different business interests. By developing a relationship with municipal leaders in Saskatoon, Muskeg Lake First Nation was able to extend their economic potential to a large investment space, despite being located more than one hundred and thirty kilometers northwest of the city itself (Anderson 1999, 162).

Conclusion

Spaces of Protest

Urban places have become hubs in the development of modern Indigenous culture, identity, and economic growth. Urban Indigenous identity can be seen as distinct from other forms of Indigenous identity while remaining connected to foundational elements of cultural practice, history, and cultural norms grounded in Indigenous worldview (Ramirez 2007, 58–83).

There are many Indigenous people in urban places that are connected through informal networks, such as extended family, urban-based Indigenous institutions, and social media networks. These connections make communication and mobilization around social issues easier.



Figure 9 Idle No More, 2014; Credit: OFL Communications

Indigenous people are connected better than ever before, sharing common worldviews, common experiences of racism and marginalization, and many are highly motivated to stand up against their continued oppression. The concentration in urban centres allows also for the reclaiming of certain areas in the city, making the Indigenous presence in the city more visible.

Urban spaces as hubs and engines of Indigenous cultural power have influenced the extent to which Indigenous people have become increasingly engaged in social movements and protesting in urban spaces. There are countless examples from the last two decades of urban protest led by Indigenous community groups and individuals.

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- Figure 5. Anti-colonial street art in Montreal, 2015; Credit: dignidadrebelde/Flickr; License: CC BY 2.0
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- Figure 6. Inuit food preparation, Puvirnituq, Quebec, 2002; Credit: Francis Bourgouin; License: CC BY 2.0
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- Figure 7. Friendship Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 2010; Credit: Hans-Jürgen Hübner; License: CC BY 3.0
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- Figure 8. Interior of the legislative assembly of Nunavut, Iqaluit, 2001; Credit: CambridgeBayWeather; License: Public domain; URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Interior_Legislative_Assembly_of_Nunavut.JPG
- Figure 9. Idle No More, 2014; Credit: OFL Communications; License: CC BY 2.0
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