

CUPW sisters Idle No More

This article explores the Idle No More movement through the eyes of three CUPW Sisters who are actively involved: Darlene Kaboni, from the Wikwemikong First Nation, Dodie Ferguson, from the Cowessess First Nation and Diane Mitchell, a Métis descendant from Ottawa.

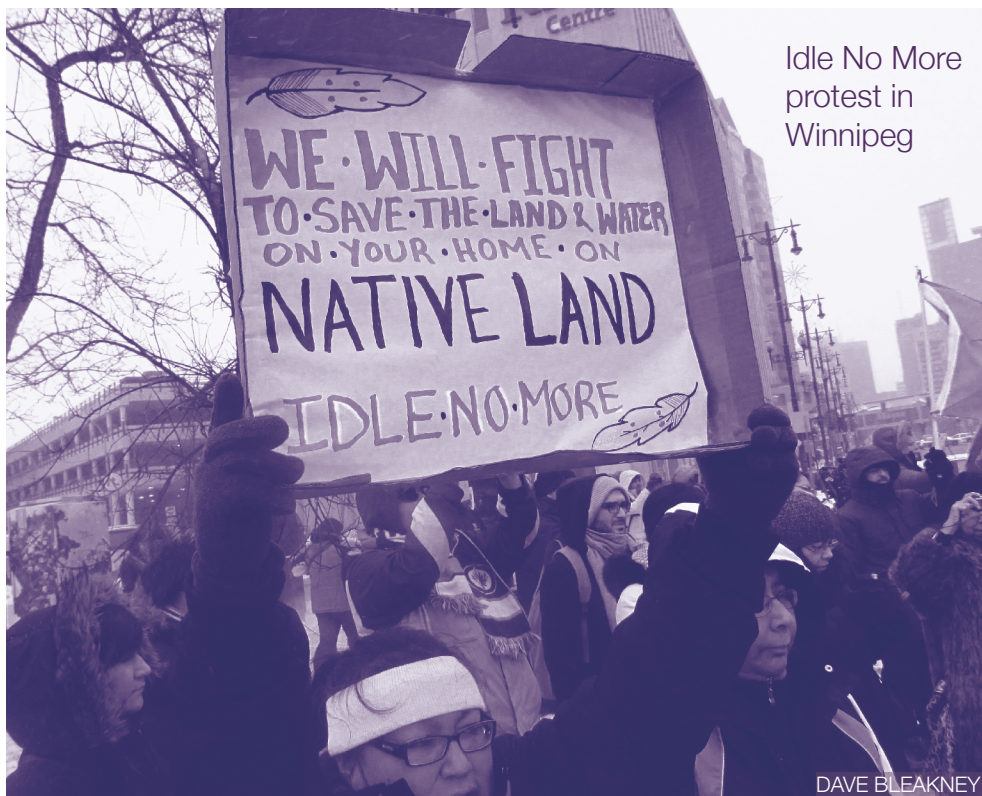
What is the Idle No More movement about?

The Idle No More movement, which began in November 2012, has sparked creative actions and protest from coast to coast to coast in response to Bill C-45, the government's sweeping omnibus budget legislation, and several other bills, which affect treaty rights and the environment.

"Right at the moment, if you care about the environment, if you care about the air you breathe and the water, the only thing left to protect all this, is the indigenous law," said Mitchell.

The 457-page Bill C-45 makes changes to the *Indian Act*, the *Fisheries Act*, the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, and the *Navigable Waters Act*. The bill shows total disregard for treaty rights and environmental protection.

These changes have mobilized many First Nations people who consider



Idle No More protest in Winnipeg

DAVE BLEAKNEY

themselves stewards of the land. "In our culture, we believe that we are merely residents on this land, it isn't ours, we don't own it," said Ferguson. "We are just in charge of maintaining its health and its well-being."

How are women involved in the movement?

The Idle No More movement was sparked by four women from Saskatchewan – Nina Wilson, Sylvia McAdam, Jessica Gordon, and Sheelah

McLean – who held a teach-in about Bill C-45 in November 2012. Women continue to play a lead role in the movement.

Women have always played a vital and key role in First Nations cultures, according to Ferguson. "Prior to European contact, First Nations were matrilineal; things flowed through the women's lines." Patriarchy was introduced into First Nations cultures through European colonization. Continued on page 4...

Happy International Women's Day

Reflections from Palestine

Ruth Breen, from the Fredericton local, went to Palestine in 2012 funded by the Atlantic Region's Solidarity Fund. She shares several Palestinian women's paths to challenge and resist the Israeli occupation.



Mrs Abu Eid

This elderly family matriarch lives in Lod, just outside of Tel Aviv. Originally displaced from Galilee in 1953, the village moved and rebuilt, living in their new home peacefully for decades. In 2010, a building with several units, which was home to an extended family of 100 people, of which 60 were children, was reduced to rubble. This was done with 15 minutes notice. Mrs. Abu Eid described the day. Four bulldozers, 300 police, SWAT teams, police dogs, mounted police, and in two hours their family home was gone. Mrs. Eid now stands alone amidst the rubble; her family has moved on to find homes and work elsewhere. She continues to share her story, naming the inhumanity of this oppression: To Exist is To Resist. This is an example of one of 27,000 house demolitions that have taken place; there are 15,000 pending demolition orders.



Farida Shabam

Her story is rare; one of a house demolition cancelled and an unrecognized village, named Dahmesh, challenging the Israeli state. This community was first displaced from the Jordan Valley in the 1950s and now faces a second displacement. In 2007, the police and bulldozers arrived to demolish the home of Farida and Ali Shabam. The family had prepared for this day; Farida told us how they stayed awake in shifts and always ensured someone was at home once they became aware the demolition was imminent. Farida told us of that day. A large group of family and neighbours barricaded themselves in their home. With NGOs and Al Jazeera media present, the standoff continued through the day until the police left at 6 pm. The family home remained intact. Farida is considered the rock of The Lod popular committee of Dahmesh, which has engaged in many legal battles for the rights of the village. Farida's fearless determination is an inspiration.



The Crying Plant

Two young women university students in Hebron developed The Crying Plant, a system which helps the many farmers who are separated from their land and trees by checkpoints and the separation barrier. This system monitors soil moisture, and automatically waters plants when needed from a reserve. When the reserve container is empty, it triggers a mechanism which phones the farmer's home and when answered makes a crying sound.

The lives of these women should motivate us. Our country plays a key part in perpetuating war crimes and we can use our voice to oppose it. Canada is allowing Israel to terrorize occupied people, breach international law, normalize home demolitions, build prison-style walls and checkpoints, and steal resources.

Let's rethink child care

Think child care is 'just your problem'? Think again. So many families are struggling to find decent child care and are scrambling to piece together care they can afford. It doesn't have to be this way. It's time to re-think child care.

A new campaign on child care is being launched by the labour movement to highlight the difficulties of finding quality child care. Child care is often viewed as an individual problem: "It was your choice to have kids, why should I pay to raise them?" Yet so many parents find the stress of finding, affording, keeping and juggling child care arrangements incredibly stressful. The lack of quality, affordable child care is really a collective problem.

Through this campaign, we want to create space for people to share their stories, to talk with each other about how hard it is, and to begin to visualize what needs to happen to make things better.

The campaign will involve Kitchen Table discussions, small events that encourage sharing stories and experiences relating to child care in Canada and Quebec. This will help identify what is working well and what needs to change.

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What you can do

- Check out the campaign website at www.rethink-childcare.ca;
- Share your own story of child care difficulties;
- Host a kitchen table discussion with a few friends and co-workers.



CUPW members' child care stories

Glenroy, a tractor trailer driver working out of the Gateway plant in Toronto, has a 5 year old and a 19-month old child. "The youngest I used to take to regular day care but that was really, really, really expensive." At \$35 per day and on a single income (Glenroy's partner is a university student), it was difficult money wise. Now, they've found some temporary, less-expensive care with a woman who is home on maternity leave.

Nicole, an RSMC in Innisfil Ontario, has had trouble finding care for her three-year old daughter, Sierra, who has special needs. "I had a hard time finding day care because a lot of people were afraid to take her." Sierra has severe congenital hydrocephalus and is blind and can't walk. Nicole tried to place Sierra in a YMCA child care centre but there was no funding for an aide to work with her. It's hard enough dealing with a child with special needs without having to worry about child care. And no one can work without child care.

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Idle no more

Furthermore, First Nations women have always raised issues that aren't right, said Kaboni. For example, they fought the racist, patriarchal overtones in the Indian Act, which saw First Nations women losing their status if they married a non-native man.

Why is this a collective issue?

All three sisters highlight that this movement has fostered conversations on the workforce and in their communities. "If there's something that you want to know, ask," says Kaboni. "Just ask those questions and don't jump to conclusions without doing your research. Every 'why' will have an answer."

Broader progressive voices and movements have also become involved in

the movement. Ferguson notes that CUPW members and the public have been drawing the connections between the Idle No More movement and the postal lock-out or changes to labour law or the environment. "All of a sudden we're having all these people coming up and saying, you know what, we're all concerned and maybe we should all start being Idle No More because it affects everybody."

"When we can speak as a collective voice, that's when the power happens," says Ferguson. "I'm just so happy that the union is supporting it, that workers are supporting it, that they're actually willing to ask questions of something that for so long has seemed taboo on the workforce."



Cheyenne Ferguson
Dodie Ferguson speaking at a Unity Walk in Regina

What are treaties?

Indigenous peoples and settlers began their relationship as equals. Many different First Nations have negotiated treaties enshrining peaceful co-existence and the sharing of the land and its resources on a nation-to-nation basis. Treaties are binding, reciprocal agreements, from which neither party can unilaterally withdraw or change terms. The Crown has violated these treaties many times and in many ways. Treaty rights are at the heart of the Idle No More movement.

What are inherent rights?

This term means that Indigenous Nations have the inherent right to designate political authority according to their own laws, governing principles, and customs.

What's in Bill C-45?

This bill removes many fish habitat protections and fails to recognize Aboriginal commercial fisheries, lowers the threshold for surrendering reserve lands, and reduces the number of lakes and rivers where navigation and federal environmental assessments are required by 99 per cent. There are currently nine other bills that affect First Nations treaty rights.

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Rethink child care

This campaign was developed by CUPW, the Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Auto Workers, Canadian Union of Public Employees, United Food and Commercial Workers, Communications, Energy and Paperworkers and the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Comments on The Rose?

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