

Indigenous Nations United: Idle No More Campaign

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Summary: The Idle No More campaign is an example of media relations, as it handles many aspects described in the theory. Idle No More utilizes the news media through, and in addition to, social media networks to promote the information, goals and progress of the rights of First Nations; all this to have an impact on public policy by countries, organizations and corporations considered responsible for the system of unfair/unethical behaviors restricting First Nations' sovereignty.

Background

The Idle No More movement is intended to benefit the First Nations, primarily of Canada that have been affected through colonization. According to the Idle No More website, <http://www.idlenomore.ca/vision> , the mission objective states: "Idle No More calls on all people to join in a peaceful revolution, to honour Indigenous sovereignty, and to protect the land and water." INM is a(n) (ideally) non-violent movement that uses peaceful protests and demonstrations to attempt to bring change.

The movement works with all Indigenous Peoples and First Nations activist groups throughout Canada as the goals are relatively similar. The website promotes solidarity for these activist groups, as well as, attempts to raise awareness for other First Nations causes in Canada. Additionally, the INM website lays out the major changes it wishes to have met.

In addition to the website, and work with other groups, INM invokes their message throughout social media. Facebook, Twitter, as well as, live streams of their rallies/demonstrations/protests allow for a much large audience to be involved. INM uses forums and an image forum to further display the protests. Also, INM uses traditional news media to further expand their message. Press releases and interviews with media outlets are often done, to tell of demonstrations and other similar events the INM wishes to be known.

The Idle No More movement through their website, social networks and press campaigns attempt to influence public policy by governments and corporations, by having powerful media relations in an attempt to evoke the changes the INM and other First Nations laid out.

Findings

The Idle No More movement attempts to raise awareness for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and First Nations of Canada. INM utilizes demonstrations, walks (etc..) to heighten awareness of their mission. INM additionally utilizes social media networks to further generate support and raise awareness. The INM attempts to impact media outlets through the use of their demonstrations. These demonstrations, and high usage of media, social and traditional, are intended to raise awareness which will lead to further developments. Such developments as government or organizational involvement will either restrict corporations practicing incorrect practices, or implement laws to preserve or reimburse Indigenous Peoples for lands and resources used.

According to Dr. Carl Botan and Dr. Vincent Hazleton in their book, *Public Relations Theory II*, media relations is described in three stages: framing, information subsidies and agenda building process. Traditionally, media relations is considered to be done in a top-down fashion but this is not true. According to Botan and Hazleton, “Not every issue, or the consequences reported about it, evolves following the same pattern. An issue could arise in society, be produced by an organization, or be uncovered by a news medium” (Botan & Hazleton, 2006).

Media relations can have an impact on public policy, which can restore sovereignty. Botan and Hazleton, later in the book discuss public policy, and explain it as: “Legislatures, executive agencies, courts and local governments make public policy” (Botan & Hazleton, 2006). However, they quickly state: “As a by-product of their existence and pursuit of profit, corporations can potentially create policies that affect publics, including individuals who have limited recourse” (Botan & Hazleton, 2006).

Conclusion

The INM attempts to use media relations to impact public policy to regain sovereignty. The public policy of the past, has set up a situation where Indigenous People have been exploited by governments and corporations for selfish aims. These aims have not have the interests of the First Nations in mind.

The INM, first established the goals and message it wished to display. Once it had done that, it began utilizing the social media and demonstrations to reinforce the message and to proclaim change was

needed. Through the use of social media, live streams, demonstrations, solidarity with other groups and so forth, the INM has increased the amount of people associated with the cause.

Now that the cause has been established, and the people are openly protesting and causing action, the INM wants to impact the news media more. The story is growing, and the traditional news media can express the goals to an international level. Once the message is very large, and protesting is becoming a nuisance then public policy can change. Either from corporations attempting to uphold or change their image, due to boycotting. Or through rewriting or creating new laws that will protect/reimburse First Nations or repeal laws that are unethical.

The INM utilizing media relations to generate enough hype to change Canadian public policy is a solid approach, and the only real one available. Further research will need to be done on the impact of activism groups in forming public policy. However, the INM expresses the use of media relations to attempt to change public policy in as best a way as any.

References

- Botan, C. H., & Hazleton, V. (2006). *Public relations theory*. New York [u.a.]: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Join the Idle No More Movement. (n.d.). *Idle No More*. Retrieved October 31, 2013, from <http://www.idlenomore.ca/>