

Indigenous People Fight for the Native Land

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Summary: The Idle No More movement is a Democratic campaign that seeks to aid indigenous populations in shedding light on the issues that they face regarding sustainability, sovereignty, and national identity but it lacks an angle that will draw people in and make them want to be involved.

Background

According to their website, Idle No More seeks to assert Indigenous inherent rights to sovereignty and reinstitute traditional laws and Nation to Nation Treaties by protecting the lands and waters from corporate destruction. This organization had its start in Canada and eventually made its way into the states. “Idle No More calls on people to join in a peaceful revolution, to honour Indigenous sovereignty, and to protect the land and water.” INM will continue to pressure government and industry to protect the environment.

Canada has had great success using their land and natural resources to turn a profit. Unfortunately, doing this is becoming detrimental to the country. According to the website, “The taking of resources has left the land and water poisoned—the animals and plants are dying in many areas in Canada.” Many countries are moving towards sustainable living and Idle No More is fighting to make people aware of these problems and demand sustainable living.

While sustainability plays a large role in the movement its main focus is sovereignty. The reason that INM is in place is because the members of the organization feel as though they are being silenced. Their native land is being destroyed and they feel powerless. This is the true cause that they are fighting for. Members of the Idle No More movement have banded together to defend their land and unite with their natives.

Research Question

How is sustainability and sovereignty linked in the Idle No More campaign?

Findings

One article that was published regarding Idle No More was in *Rolling Stone* magazine. The article discussed that the project was taking on the Canadian government. This protest included a group of members standing out in a snowstorm chanting to the beat of native drums. According to the article, the group was protesting the C-45 bill that has recently been passed. “C-45, which passed in December, changes the way that First Nations approve the surrendering or leasing of territory, making it easier to open indigenous treaty lands to development.” (Jarvis, 2013).

A second article that pertained to the campaign was regarding a proposed plan for sustainability in an urban area. The study focused on a number of different ways to create a sustainable environment and neighborhood when developing a city. (AlQahtany, Rezgui & Haijiang (2013). There were also articles that spoke about sustainability in agricultural areas. One specific article discussed putting a sustainability program into place so that they could improve the water supply. The Idle No More campaign seeks to improve the water quality as well. This study was done in South Africa. Sustainability projects are very common and are being employed around the world. (Agholor, 2013).

Tar sands are the most dangerous type of oil for the climate which is where the sustainability portion of this movement comes in. In September, a First Nations leader travelled to Europe “to raise awareness of the devastating impacts of tar sands development on First Nations communities, and to advocate that the EU supports the labelling of tar sands fuel as

highly polluting in the EU Fuel Quality Directive” (2013). “According to the article George Poitras is an internationally recognized name in the global debate on Canada’s tar sands, living downstream from tar sands projects in northeastern Alberta. George will meet with government advisers, Ministers, MPs, and journalists and will address a public meeting” (2013).

The articles and studies that are regarding this topic are very current. My findings show that sustainability is a hot topic and is well researched. The trouble is that the link between sustainability and the peaceful nature of this study needs to be exploited more in order to make more people want to become involved. This is what causes many of these projects to be overlooked. If I was looking to improve this movement I would make it even more unique by playing up the fact that this group is fighting for their indigenous land.

Conclusion

I would like to primarily say that I do not have a great deal of interest for activist campaigns. Personally, I believe that they tend to be overly liberal and one-sided, which is why they sometimes struggle to gain a following. I understand that they are important as is the environment but I rarely follow activist PR. Originally I felt that this campaign was as significant an activist campaign as any other sustainability campaign. However after further research I have realized that it is not just about sustainability but about sovereignty as well. These native people wish to have power over their own territory. What is happening to them is making them feel as though they are left completely powerless and this is something that I believe stands out in the campaign. Everyone can relate to feeling powerless at one point or

another and I feel that this could create a larger following for Idle No More if they play upon that idea in their campaigns. When I was just looking at the surface of the campaign all that I saw was sustainability but it is much more than that. It is a peaceful campaign that puts emphasis on solidarity and sovereignty. There are so many sustainability campaigns and they can be very tiresome but contrary to my earlier beliefs I feel that this one has some captivating characteristics.

The Dawn case study did have a sustainability angle to it but it attracts viewers with animals being harmed. People need to see immediate results of their involvement and are much more likely to be involved when they see that they are helping an animal or a child. Being told that they are cleaning the water in Canada will not draw many donations or helping hands. Again, this is all my opinion but I found this campaign quite dull. Let it be known that I am a Republican and this is not at all my forte. Everything in this section reinforces your thesis statement. In brief but specific detail, please interpret the significance of this case study in the field of activist campaigns.

References

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