

Multiple Jeopardy:

the Evolution of

A Native Women's Movement

ABSTRACT/RESUME

Cette présentation traitera des dimensions politiques de la situation des femmes autochtones. Les femmes autochtones se perçoivent comme des victimes, non pas d'une double discrimination, mais bien d'une discrimination aux multiples facettes, et leur prise de conscience du caractère unique de cette oppression a été un facteur important de l'évolution d'un mouvement des femmes autochtones distinct du mouvement féministe nord-américain et du mouvement autochtone.

Nous traitons des caractéristiques de l'histoire du mouvement des femmes autochtones ainsi que du rôle changeant de ces dernières dans l'action politique orientée vers le changement social, dans la dernière décennie. Il est

by

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Courtesy, The Indian News
DIAND



Native Women's Association,
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Courtesy, The Indian News
DIAND

aussi question de la nature des relations de ce mouvement avec les autres groupes autochtones, avec le gouvernement fédéral et avec les organisations de femmes non autochtones.

Preface

During the past decade Native communities in Canada have been in a continual state of political ferment. Vigorous new Native organizations have emerged, expanded and divided around the key issues of land claims and revisions to the Indian Act. (1) And Native and government bureaucracies have burgeoned in complexly symbiotic attempts to manage and control these developments and each other.

Native* women, however, have seldom been involved at the formal political** level in this process. Given that the Indian Act had denied Indian women any political participation at any level from 1869 to 1951 and that it was only after Indians had obtained the fran-

*Native in this paper refers primarily to status (registered), non-status (or non-registered) Indians and Métis. The Inuit women's situation appears to be rather different and they do not come under the jurisdiction of the Indian Act. Inuit women are, however, associated with the Native Women's Association. Indian is used here to designate both registered Indians and those who identify themselves as Indians.

chise in 1960 that any meaningful Indian political participation was possible, (2) Indian women's lack of representation is perhaps not altogether surprising. But the perpetuation of a system excluding Indian women from access to political power was probably the major impetus for the emergence in the seventies of a dynamic social movement among Native women--status, non-status and Métis--aimed at improving their social and legal position and at obtaining immediate improvements in living conditions at the community level. The emergence of this force among Native women which appears to transcend the political, geographical and cultural schisms in the male-oriented organizations has been largely invisible to non-Natives and most Native men.

The Native women's movement first tested its strength when an Ojibwa Indian, Jeannette Lavell, in a landmark case, contested in the courts between 1970 and 1973 a section of the Indian Act which rules that Indian women (but not Indian men) who marry non-Indians lose their Indian rights and status. Such occasional public protests from Native women, however, have until very recently been dismissed as inspired by an alien non-Native

**Political is used in this paper in its everyday sense of having to do with the policy formation of governing bodies.

women's movement.(3) Buttrressing this position was the assumption that sex discrimination in the Indian Act was either (or both) a manifestation of or a necessary pre-condition for the preservation of Indian culture.(4)

This paper argues that a Native Women's Movement has evolved as a separate, distinct phenomenon which is a unique response to social and political developments within and without Native society. These developments which are seen here as having constrained and shaped the evolution of the Native women's movement can be classified as occurring in three separate areas: 1) government, 2) the Pan-Indian movement, 3) the Canadian women's movement.

Theodorson and Theodorson provide a concise working definition of a social movement as:

An important form of collective behaviour in which large numbers of people are organized or alerted to support and bring about or to resist social change. . . . Participation in a social movement is for most people only informal or indirect.(5)

Support or identification with a social movement, then, does not of necessity imply joining any formal organization. But a convenient method of analysis, and one which I will adopt here, is that of examining the formal organizations associated

with these movements. The discussion in this paper will therefore focus on two national Native women's organizations, the Native Women's Association of Canada and Indian Rights for Indian Women, their emergence over the past decade and their relationships with the federal government, the Native brotherhoods and the non-Native Canadian women's organizations. In so doing the paper attempts to locate and explore patterns and changes in social behaviour which will clarify and delineate the distinctive nature of the Native women's movement. A general framework for the paper is drawn from theoretical perspectives on social movements. The purpose of this discussion is to arrive at a better understanding of the political development, and the priorities and aspirations of Native women which appear to them at least to be very different from those of non-Native Canadian women.(6)

The Evolution of the Native Women's Movement

The evolution in the past decade of the two national Native women's organizations, the Native Women's Association and Indian Rights for Indian Women, can be divided into three phases: 1) the formative years from 1968 to 1973; 2) a period of consolidation, steady growth and invisibility from 1973 to 1976; 3) the recent past since 1976 which is characterized by increasing public

political participation and confrontation and acceptance by outside groups.

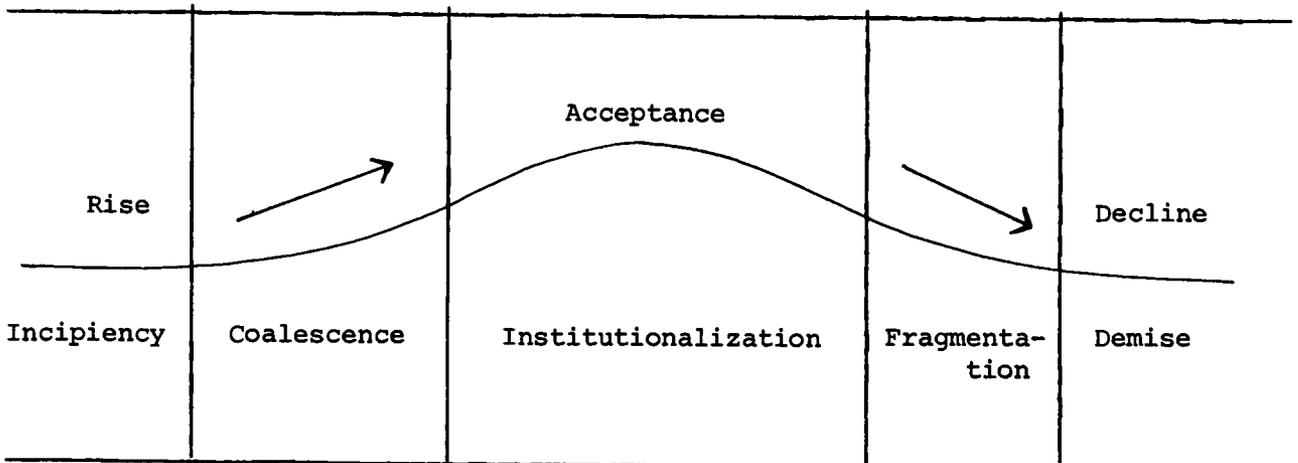
The emergence of the Native women's movement as reflected in these organizations seems to follow Mauss' model (see fig. 1) for the development of social movements fairly closely.(7) It is likely, however, that phase three here is more of a transitional state between phase two and phase three on the model. The movement has not yet peaked. It may, in fact never do so but it seems at present that it has generated a momentum which will be hard to stop. Both national groups have now developed a unifying ideology based on a perception of the political system as a structure which perpetuates

the extensive discrimination which they experience as Native women, and the belief that this must change. An editorial in a Native Women's Association Newsletter articulates this position in observing that the "politicizing" of government and Indian leaders had put Native women in a situation of multiple jeopardy and had,

. . . placed Native women across Canada in a five front pentagon in their fight against discrimination. They are women, they are Native, they face deaf, ineffective government, they face the politically motivated, male-dominated Native organizations and they face the problems of living off their reserves (8)

FIGURE 1

Normal Pattern for the Natural History of a Social Movement



Source: Mauss (1975:66)

Phase 1--The Formative Period

Prior to the appearance of the two national Native women's associations a predecessor with rather different objectives and with a membership limited to registered Indians existed on many Indian reserves. This predecessor, Indian Homemakers Clubs, was initiated in Saskatchewan in 1937 by the Department of Indian Affairs with its first stated objective: "To assist Indian women to acquire sound and approved practices for greater home efficiency." (9)

By 1952 Indian Homemakers Clubs had been set up in six other provinces supplanting other women's groups on the reserves. By 1970, however, they were being rejected by both Indian Affairs and Native women. An Indian Affairs departmental memo commented that there was,

. . . some evidence to suggest that Indian women consider that Homemakers Clubs do not really fulfill the particular and changing needs of present-day Indian communities. (10)

It also commented that newer organizations such as the Voice of Native Women of Alberta (VNWA) formed in 1967 had,

. . . a wider outlook and concern and had a membership which included Indian and Métis women as well as 'newly arrived immigrant women of various ethnic backgrounds.' (11)

In addition the memo noted a tendency,

particularly evident in the four western regions, for the women's organizations "to ally themselves with the Provincial Indian Associations now dominated by men." (12) Such an alliance could only be interpreted as evidence of a growing political awareness and the ensuing "Guidelines for Possible Policy Revision" in that memo are likely intended to curtail this development in recommending that "no support should be directed to organizations at the provincial or national level." (13) (Homemaker's associations had occasionally met annually at the provincial level.) And, despite the seeming approval for the more broadly based membership of the VNWA, it also recommended that "Departmental support for Indian Women's organizations should be confined to organizations formed and active at the band level," (14) that is open only to registered Indians. This emphasis could only serve to perpetuate if not create divisions and tensions between status and non-status Indian women in the VNWA and other groups and this was especially crucial since the Lavell case was then going through the courts.

There still exists a strong Indian Homemakers Association in B.C. but the Homemakers associations have been almost entirely supplanted by the locals of Native Women's Associations and Indian Rights for Indian Women which, in contrast to the Homemakers, are

more urban than reserve based and have a membership open to all Native women regardless of status.

Both the NWA and IRIW appear to have their genesis in the First Alberta Native Women's Conference which was organized by the Voice of Native Women of Alberta in 1968. If a single event can be pinpointed as launching the Native Women's Movement then this Conference is probably it. The year 1968 was International Year for Human Rights. The federal government with a new vision of the "Just Society," established the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) at the instigation of a number of prominent Canadian women representing women's associations across Canada. This commission was to provide Native women with a public forum for expressing their grievances and invited a newly-formed Quebec Native women's association, Equal Rights for Indian Women, led by an Iroquois Indian woman, Mary Two-Axe Earley, to present a brief to the commission. Nine briefs in all were presented by Native women who thus brought to the public notice for the first time the nature and extent of discrimination against Native women. (15)

It was in March of the same year that the first Alberta Native Women's Conference met in Edmonton. Delegates were mainly from Alberta but there were a few Native women from Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. The Report of this conference indicated

an interest in the establishment of the RCSW but there were some reservations concerning its objectives. This was apparent in the comments of the keynote speaker, a Native woman, who began by noting that a Royal Commission on the Status of Women had been established and by expressing her hope that the conference "should come up with some suggestions and resolutions that will benefit Indian woman and her everyday world." (16) She suggested that Indian women's primary concerns were different from those of non-Indian women which she outlined as being equal pay, job opportunities and changes in abortion and divorce laws.

The degree to which this viewpoint was representative of those of the other women at the conference is hard to gauge but according to the conference report these were not the concerns expressed. Problems mentioned by the women mainly reflected the poor housing and health conditions arising from the general poverty of Native people on and off reserves. Only two comments were made which were specifically related to women, one was concerned with women's right "to have an equal voice in all affairs" and the other with wife-beating. (17)

The keynote speaker, however, clearly saw the Indian woman in a seriously disadvantaged position and commented bitterly:

Of all the people in this vast country, no one has been more

downtrodden, has been more overlooked and bypassed, has been more maligned, than Indian woman who is continuously classed as an object of scorn by modern society, who is contemptuously referred to as 'squaw,' and who is considered 'easy to get' by white men.(18)

Anything that might be termed "action" was deliberately rejected by this speaker who, despite her awareness of the need for change, counselled that:

To blaze a trail of reform it is not necessary to shout and wave from the housetops. . . we must encourage handicrafts and teach them to the younger people. . . we must use our wiles and our femininity to get what we desire.(19)

She emphasized as well the role of the Indian woman as mother: "There is no greater or nobler calling on earth than the one of becoming a mother," she said, and suggested as a broad goal for Native women the improvement of the physical and mental health of the whole community.(20)

Nevertheless the women present at this conference demonstrated that for them motherhood did not preclude organizing to demand change. The very fact that they had for the first time managed to meet together was exhilarating and a first taste of the power in numbers. They decided to take immediate action--political action--and to march to the legislature and lobby Premier Manning into sending a telegram on their be-

half to Prime Minister Pearson protesting proposals to transfer federal responsibility for Indian health to the provinces. Manning complied immediately with their request. He sent the telegram to the Prime Minister, though the transfer of responsibility for health care continued. The women's action, however, was an important step in a new direction.

The women at this first provincial conference then, appear to have seen their problems as being primarily based on poverty rooted in racial discrimination; though they did not see their condition as being in essence different from that of Native men, they did define it as being somewhat more severe.

In the same year, 1968, the National Indian Brotherhood was created from the ashes of a weak national Native group to coordinate political dialogue between government and Indians. The National Indian Brotherhood, however, was unlike its predecessor in that it was set up to represent only registered Indians and no-one, least of all the federal government, questioned whether women were represented by the brotherhoods who were the bodies which the NIB represented. It is important to remember here that only Indian men (not women) had the right to a political voice in band council until 1951 and also that both male and female registered Indians had only recently received the federal franchise in

1960. The question of the political powerlessness, or lack of representation, of women was in such a context not even an issue and indeed it is only in the past year that this point is becoming clear to government.(21)

Indian women, however, seemed to believe that justice in the "just society" was available for both sexes. In 1970, as Indian and women's consciousness rapidly expanded and the new pride in Indian identity took hold, Jeannette Lavell, decided to contest section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act which declares women to be non-Indians when they "marry out" on the grounds that it discriminated against Indian women on the basis of race and sex and thus contravened the Canadian Bill of Rights.(22)

Until this time an Indian woman who married a non-Indian was generally thought to have not simply "married-out" but "married-up" and this belief was reflected in Judge Grossberg's dismissal of Lavell's appeal in the lower court. In Jeannette Lavell's own words:

. . . he believed I was better off marrying a white man. In fact according to his readings this was the thinking of all intelligent native people.(23)

Indeed, the importance placed by Indians on the retention of their cultural identity was at this time still incomprehensible to most other Canadians. The appalling conditions

on reserves documented in the Hawthorn Report of 1967 and widely publicized did nothing to diminish this view.(24)

Between 1970 and the Supreme Court decision in 1973 against Lavell and Yvonne Bedard, whose case was heard at the same time, the political power of Native organizations increased. The oil crisis loomed and in turn the pressure to recognize Native claims increased. The concept of "Citizens Plus," that Native people were not only entitled to all the advantages of Canadian citizens but also were entitled to additional privileges by virtue of aboriginal status, began to have some meaning.

In 1971 when the first National Native Women's Conference was held in Edmonton these stirrings were only just beginning to be felt. Women came from every province and the Territories. Government attitudes toward Native women appeared to be undergoing change; there was a telegram of good wishes from Prime Minister Trudeau and an opening address from Robert Stanbury, the Minister for Citizenship and Immigration (and Indian Affairs) who felt it necessary to reassure his audience both at the beginning and end of his address that:

Native Canadians are citizens; women are citizens, with human rights and responsibilities of citizens. . . The Branch. . . has long been accustomed to the ideas, new to some Canadians, that women

are in every respect of citizenship the equals of men.(25)

This surprising statement was untrue and demonstrated the total blindness of the Minister and his staff to the unequal situation of all women with men under the Citizenship Act and the unequal situation of Indian women with Indian men under the Indian Act.(26)

From the Report of the proceedings it is evident that, despite some regional differences, a strong feeling of Pan-Indian identity already existed. Combined with this, however, there was another new element--a strong perception and pride among the delegates of themselves as women. "We must make our children proud that we were the first Canadians, and today we are the First Ladies of the Land who are gathered here," said one delegate.(27) Another delegate said greater organizational strength was required so that "we as women will not be pushed around any longer as we have been in the past."(28) All were concerned with women's loss of rights on "marrying-out" and this was mentioned by all groups in small group discussions.

Following a plenary session on Indian women's rights, a request for a recommendation that an Indian woman should be allowed to retain her status on marriage to a non-Indian was postponed until the following day when a special committee was set up to deal with the question. Though no decision was made

at the meeting on this issue there seemed to be unanimous support for the recommendation, except from Alberta. Despite what appears to have been the beginnings of a schism in the women's ranks, a steering committee for a National Native Women's Association was set up. Many of the delegates expressed their intention of pressing for the formation of a provincial Native Women's Association if there was no such organization in their province.

Whatever the women's ambitions or intentions, George Manuel, then president of the National Indian Brotherhood, made his position on the role of women quite plain in the course of a speech at a banquet ending the conference: "You as women, will have to support the other Indian organizations,"(29) he said, clearly indicating that the women should regard themselves as auxiliaries of the brotherhoods.

In the two years following this conference the issue of Indian women's loss of status through marriage to a non-Indian became an increasingly divisive one for all Native people. The crux of the issue as it was presented in 1972 and 1973 by Indian leaders such as Harold Cardinal and by the Attorney General for the federal government was not that of discrimination against Indian women; instead, it was argued that if Lavell won on the basis of the Can-

adian Bill of Rights that bill could subsequently be used to invalidate the whole Indian Act.(30) Most Indians were and are very ambivalent about the Indian Act. It is a long and complex document, the accretion of more than a hundred years of legislation, (supplemented by innumerable regulations) and is very imperfectly understood by most Indians. Treaty rights are often held to be synonymous with or embodied in the Indian Act. The Indian Act, however, was in place before all the treaties in the West were negotiated and was never intended to be more than an administrative device reflecting succeeding government policy which had one unifying thread--the goal of eventually phasing out Indian status by assimilation.

Many Indian organizations, then, were also somewhat suspicious of the Indian Act and hesitated in taking a stand against Lavell. Nevertheless most of the male-oriented organizations eventually did so. They were supported in this stand morally and financially by the federal government. And, despite the fact that some women who had lost their status through marriage to a non-Indian were on the executive committee, the Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society (VANW) also came out against Lavell. Most of the non-status Indian women thereupon split away from the VANW and established a separate organization to support Lavell which they called Indian Rights for Indian

Women. They were joined by those few women who felt independent enough to take a stand against what had eventually become a joint enterprise of the Indian brotherhoods and the federal government. Indian women were not surprised, therefore, when the Supreme Court decided five to four against Lavell and Bedard.(31)

Phase II: Consolidation

The emerging Native women's movement had suffered a severe setback but though the women were temporarily silenced and still somewhat disorganized they remained apparently unconvinced by the powerful hegemony of government, Brotherhoods and Supreme Court. The need for women to build a power base was clearly evident to many Native women. In 1972 Jeannette Lavell was herself a founding member of the Native Women's Association of Ontario (ONWA). By 1976 ONWA had 34 'locals' (clubs) across Ontario. In other provinces and the Yukon where no provincial Native women's associations existed they were quickly formed between 1972 and 1975. Membership was, unlike the male organizations, drawn from status Indians, non-status Indians and Métis and had close ties to Native communities. The split between the VANW and Indian Rights for Indian Women remained. IRIW continued to attract the more politically aware Native women and expand on a National basis so that what it lacked in membership it tended to compensate for in

motivation and assertiveness.

The Lavell case had indeed not only served as a catalyst for disparate male Indian groups and created a temporary bond with government but it had a not wholly unexpected consequence: it profoundly affected the perception of all concerned with the relationship between Indian men and women.

Phase III: Confrontation

It became clear to most Native women for the first time that there was a connection between their personal situation and the structure of power and privilege from which they had been systematically excluded, first by Europeans and now unexpectedly by many Native men. Max Weber has observed that this awareness of the exclusionary structure is necessary for the emergence of political action among disprivileged groups. He suggested that what he calls the "degree of the transparency" of the exploiting group or groups is a prerequisite to reaction "not only through acts of an intermittent and irrational protest but in the form of rational association."(32)

The members of IRIW had come to understand the changing structure of oppression through personal experience. Until the Lavell case other Native women did not. IRIW had, in the meantime, maintained an unremitting and unwelcome pressure on the Federal Government

and continued the contact with human rights and non-Native women's groups that had been initiated during the Lavell case. All the Native women's organizations concentrated on gathering strength and set out to consolidate their position by concentrating on providing services at the community level as had the Homemakers. They also concentrated on developing leadership and became increasingly issue-oriented as well as concerned with problems specific to women.

A natural outcome of the latter, and a reflection of the generally higher migration rate of women than men from reserves, (33) has been the emergence of Native Women's Centres. The oldest of these, Anduhyuan in Toronto, was initially sponsored by the YMCA and funded by the Department of Indian Affairs. Its stated purpose is "to develop in Native girls between the ages of 16 and 26 a feeling of self-worth, dignity, identity and responsibility."(34) The centre runs a hostel and an alcohol and drug counselling programme.

The seven other Native Women's Centres which have developed in the past six years in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario all have similar objectives but have varying degrees of success in their implementation. Funding problems are endemic. In at least one case this appears to be due to an inability to deal with the documentation necessary to obtain funding. A

1977 Secretary of State report noted somewhat ingenuously, "their reluctance to do the necessary paper work is peculiar."(35) But such problems with funding run deeper as will be discussed further on.

In the meantime International Women's Year arrived. It served to raise the consciousness of Canadian women (if not of Canadian men) but did not achieve much for Native women. Mary Two-Axe Earley attended the International Women's Year Conference at Mexico City representing IRIW. While in Mexico, she, along with some 60 other women, was served with an eviction notice by the band council of Caughnawaga reserve. She is still fighting her eviction in the courts. Other women, however, continue to be evicted from reserves.(36)

In 1976 the representatives of the Native Women's Association and Indian Rights for Indian Women came together and make a joint presentation to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Margaret Thomson, the President of NWA, made an eloquent introductory presentation:

We come here today united in the interest of all Native women. Mr. Chairman. . . the struggle for equality among Canada's native women has been to date a futile effort. . . we have found ourselves neglected, unheard and put down on all fronts. But we come here optimistic that this meeting will be

the turning point in our relations with the government.(37)

She presented recommendations on what had by then become the fundamental issues for Native women: the abolition of the enfranchisement sections of the Indian Act, the immediate suspension of all deletions and additions to the list of registered Indians and the retroactive reinstatement of Indian status to all Native women and their descendants who had lost their status as a consequence of section 12(1) (b) of the Indian Act. She asked that Indian women be consulted on changes to the Indian Act: that Native women be allowed to have representatives on the joint NIB-Cabinet Committee set up in 1975 to revise the Indian Act; that Native women's rights be protected in legislation and that they not be excluded from the proposed federal Human Rights legislation then being drafted. Finally, she asked for a Royal Commission to look into the present status of Indian matters. The other Native women emphasized the same points with equal eloquence. The Standing Committee listened politely and then apparently felt its duty was done. Nothing changed.

Both Native women's associations, however, continued to press on all these fronts, united in their objectives if not in strategy. By December 1977 the joint NIB-Cabinet meetings on the Indian Act which had been in action since 1975 and on which both national

Native women's associations had asked to be represented were in trouble. The government chose this time to support the Native women's requests to be included in the joint negotiating process but the NIB at an executive meeting denied the request. Except for the President, Noel Starblanket, they were unanimous in so doing.(38)

When the federal Human Rights Act came into force on March 1st of this year excluding the Indian Act from its jurisdiction, Indian women discriminated against under the Indian Act were left with no legal recourse.(39) It seemed that the Native women were further than ever away from their goals. Both symbolically as well as materially their demand for equality was being rejected. In April there was a total breakdown of the joint NIB-Cabinet negotiations which had provided the rationale for the exclusion of the Indian Act from the reach of the Human Rights Act. The rationale was then exposed as the political expediency that it was from its inception.(40)

In 1978, Native women denied any legal recourse in Canada, began to make embarrassing representations to the United Nations concerning discrimination under the Indian Act.(41) The admission by Noel Starblanket that the NIB does not represent women's groups has also confused the government which has always insisted that it did despite Native Women's Association's assertions to the contrary.(42)

In June 1978, rather indecently soon after the breakdown of the joint NIB-Cabinet revision process, the Minister of Indian Affairs announced proposals for revisions to the Indian Act which were to be presented to Parliament by late 1978. These proposals suggest the elimination of loss of status through marriage but do not contemplate the reinstatement of those women and their children who lost their status in the past. In other words no retroactivity is envisaged. This means the creation of a permanent group of Native people who will continue to have specific claims against the government. At the same time this legislation represents a major breakthrough for Native women who still have Indian status. It seems unlikely, however, that the revisions will be brought before this parliament. It is also unlikely that the IRIW will allow this matter to rest for long. Moreover, Native women cannot continue to be excluded from policy formation. Indeed in August of 1978, a Native woman was appointed to represent Native Women's Associations on the policy committee of Indian Affairs and also to a new tripartite Federal-Provincial-Indian Advisory Committee which had not contemplated including women.(43)

Analysis of Relationships with "Significant Others"

Despite the recent proliferation of studies on women and other disadvantaged groups in Canadian society there

has been a remarkable absence of interest in the collection or analysis of data on the contemporary situation of Native women. Even those government agencies which are charged with the collection of data on income, employment and educational attainment have omitted to obtain such data on Native women. The general lack of interest may be in part a reflection of the very low level of Canadian public awareness of Native concerns noted in two recent studies.(44) Yet, there are many indications that Native women occupy a particularly oppressed position in Canadian society.

Of course, Native women have for some time clearly perceived themselves as occupying a position in the "vertical mosaic" inferior to both Native men and other Canadian women. They, themselves, have begun to take the initiative in documenting their position. They have at the same time become aware that, though this is essential to argue the case for social change, it does not resolve the problem of lack of interest on the part of the Canadian public or resistance from some Native men. Therefore, in the past two years Native women have developed fairly effective strategies to advance their cause at the public level. The Native women's movement is now a political movement actively seeking change with a grass-roots support that the brotherhoods as well as the non-Native women's movement might well envy.

Issues discussed in 1978 by Native women's organizations have focused on the Indian Act, health, education, human rights, funding problems, land claims, urban immigration, battered wives and children's rights.(45) There seems to be little interest in the major planks of the non-Native women's movement--jobs and control over reproduction. Though interest in labour force participation appears to be growing, concern over the much higher rate of infant and maternal mortality among Indians and problems of child abuse apparently are not seen as a function of job availability and family size. Studies suggest that control by women over reproduction is, in industrialized societies, a necessary condition for entry into the labour force. It is therefore likely that concern in this area will increase as the urban migration of Native women causes them to become interested in further education and labour force participation.(46)

A recent Department of Employment and Immigration discussion paper on the employment situation of Native people contains two paragraphs on Native women.(47) It noted that the National Native Women's Association was one of six national native organizations participating in an advisory task force whose findings and conclusions formed the basis for the discussion paper. In addition interest is expressed in the fact that the national Native Women's Association (NWAC) had passed several

resolutions in 1976 asking for opportunities for Native women to train for skilled occupations. It comments non-committally that "the concerns of Native women are well founded and will be supported."(48) There is no plan of action suggested. The government paper also estimates a Native women's labour force participation rate of 23% but does not say how this figure was arrived at. Since no unemployment statistics are kept for Indians on reserves it is very difficult to verify statistics on Native women.(49)

Generally speaking, the women's associations' objectives are very similar to those of the brotherhoods. There is an emphasis on the doctrine of "Citizens Plus" and a desire for a fairer share of the power, rewards and privileges in Canadian society. But while the brotherhoods have concentrated their efforts on interaction with government on the Indian Act, the Constitution on land claims the women's associations have built up strength at the community level and are now also preparing for intervention in the other more high profile issues with a thorough documentation of community wishes on these other matters. It might be thought that in this they are "complementing" the work of the brotherhoods but such grassroots involvement does not appear to have been of concern or to be very welcome to male Indian leaders.(50)

As is true of almost all Native organi-

zations, the Native women's associations are dependent on government bodies for survival. It could fairly be claimed that the Native women's movement, depending as it does on government grants for bringing together Native women from across the country, would not exist without government aid. This dependence gives the government wide potential for diverting, controlling and curtailing political activity. It is not surprising that IRIW, doubtless because of its overtly political stance and confrontational approach on Indian women's rights, has encountered greater government animosity than other Native women's groups.(51)

Until late 1977 IRIW was a thorn-in-the-flesh to the federal government. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development refused to have any contact with IRIW and absolved itself of funding responsibility since the members of IRIW were almost entirely women who had lost their Indian status. DIAND, in 1978, apparently changed its position and is now funding special workshops by IRIW on the Indian Act. This new direction is dictated by pragmatic considerations--primarily the pressure of external events such as repercussions from the federal Human Rights legislation and the break-down of the NIB-Cabinet negotiations. In addition, the personal determination of the Minister (Hugh Faulkner) to effect radical changes to the Indian Act during his term of

office has played a crucial part in effecting this reversal in policy. It is also possible that through funding DIAND seeks to channel and control IRIW--an accolade to their success as dissidents which they might be better without. Negotiation is necessary for the accomplishment of goals but co-optation of leadership is a familiar strategy for eliminating dissent. The federal government at times also has aggravated divisions between associations through the use of funding criteria and procedures which compel incompatible groups to combine to obtain funding.(52)

An in-house Secretary of State report on the Native Women's Centres found that the competition to obtain necessary funding resulted in conflict between the Native women's centres and the Native friendship centres which are meant to serve the whole Native community.(53) These predicaments have had serious implications for the stability of Native women's groups which rely on funding for specific projects to keep going and do not receive operational funding as do the major male-oriented groups. And, although all but Quebec and the Maritime associations received some provincial funding, the federal government is the primary source.

A recent evaluation by an outside consultant of Secretary of State's funding policies for Native women identified the major weakness as being the programme's inability to provide opera-

tional funding to women's groups which would give associations a stable administrative base.(54) Out of fifteen provincial women's associations eight reported to the Secretary of State that they were totally dependent on federal funding.

The stated objectives of these associations as much as the criteria for membership tend to be affected by governmental requirements; it is no surprise that in a table listing the five objectives of these associations only four out of the fifteen are listed as having 'status of women' as an objective. These were the two associations in Quebec, the Yukon Indian Women's Association and IRIW. It is possible that the description 'status of women' was rejected for terminological reasons but more probable that it was rejected because it could be labelled a political objective; its omission as an objective by so many of the associations may represent a fear of alienating the grant givers.(55)

Where To Now?

The Native women's movement is a great step forward. (Native Women's Conference, 1971) (56)

There can be no doubt in 1978 that most Native women are united by a sense of shared oppression. They are organized in every province across Canada in a widespread movement pressing with increasing insistence for social change. The main objectives of this movement

are to improve the position of Native women within and without Native society, and to improve social and economic conditions in Native communities. Native women see these goals as requiring legislative change but they do not appear to have consciously evolved long-term strategies for achieving structural change. However, in their endeavour to obtain greater control over their own destinies as Native women, they have come to realize that this control can only be obtained through active participation in the public domain and that their efforts to obtain access to power are being obstructed by Native men as well as government.

In the early stages of the Native women's movement, discrimination on the basis of sex was not perceived as being separate from that based on racial or cultural differences and thus not different in kind from that encountered by Native men. Now most Native women see themselves as a minority within a minority subject to multiple discrimination on the basis of race, sex, marital status, cultural differences and social class.

Though the Native women's organizations have developed parallel to the male-oriented organizations, they have not enjoyed the same government commitment to financial support or recognition as negotiating bodies. Neither have they received support from male Native organizations. This obstruction, to

some extent has forced Native women's organizations to go underground, a development which has led to greater unity and militancy. As a consequence, they are now being listened to by the federal government with at least a modicum of respect.

In discussing the "career" or "natural history" of the Native women's movement in its historical context, I have attempted to demonstrate that the movement has developed autonomously and apart from the North American women's movement and the Indian movement. The existence of both of these, however, generated the climate of rising expectations and structural conduciveness which gave impetus to the Native women's movement. It remains to be seen whether these developments represent an irreversible process of politicization of Native women or whether the removal of the gender-based discrimination in the Indian Act, which seems imminent, will result in the women's organizations losing their momentum and distinctive focus.

Closer contacts with non-Native women's organizations does not seem likely from the evidence available at present. Native women ally with Native men rather than non-Native women on the basis of shared oppression. When they do associate with the latter they tend to do so in order to gain access to resources and skills which they temporarily require in order to achieve specific ends.

It is difficult to find a parallel for the position of Native women in Canada today. It seems most closely analogous not with the situation of other women in Canada or Black women in the U.S. but with women in a colonized third world country struggling for autonomy. Sheila Rowbotham, using the "colonial" model has described such women as "a colony within a colony." (57) And indeed Canadian Native women are caught in the bitter dilemma of the doubly colonized. In struggling to achieve their own independence as women they are limited in their effectiveness by the fear that their demands will cause internal dissension and that they will jeopardize the outcome of the battle with the outside colonizer.

Native women, however, do not live in the third world. Their fate is linked not only to that of Native men but, however tenuously, to that of all other women in Canada. Indian women's

present situation under the Indian Act is, in part, a relic of legislation that affected all Canadian women. Although legislative and other improvements in the position of Canadian women have barely touched Native women, their endeavours to improve their position clearly depend on the seriousness with which government and society deal with all women's demands for equality.

Native women, as a distinctly neglected minority, require the assistance of others to force change and their long term strategy must surely include generating public support. Inasmuch as the fate of Native women is tied to that of all other women in Canada, as well as to that of Native men, it does not appear that their situation will improve much in the immediate future. Indeed, in retrospect, it now appears that International Women's Year was the final fling of the "Just Society."

NOTES

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1. Indian Act, R.S.C., 1970.
2. For background on legislation relating to Indian women see Kathleen Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus (Ottawa: Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1978).
3. Harold Cardinal, The Rebirth of Canada's Indians (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1977), pp. 109-111.
4. See for example D.E. Sanders, The Bill of Rights and Indian Status, U.B.C. Law Review, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 104. Also John D. Whyte, "The Lavell Case and Equality in Canada," Queen's Quarterly, vol. XXXI no. 1, p. 30.
5. George A. Theodorson and Achilles G. Theodorson, Modern Dictionary of Sociology (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969).
6. A variety of unpublished documents and reports made available by the Department of Secretary of State and Indian Rights for Indian Women are the main sources for this paper. These data are very fragmentary and are supplemented by observations made while associated with Native and other Canadian women's associations from 1974 to 1978. The paper is exploratory and analysis is somewhat limited since there is virtually a complete absence of data on the present socio-economic situation of Native women, though data now being collected by Native women's associations will probably permit a more systematic approach when they are available. This data is presently being gathered by Native Women's Associations in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta.

7. Armand L. Mauss, Social Problems as Social Movements (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1975).
8. Ontario Native Women's Association, Newsletter, vol. 2, no. 2-3, June-August, 1978.
9. Government of Canada, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Indian Affairs Branch, Constitution and Regulations of Indian Homemakers Associations (Ottawa: Queen's Printer: 1952), p. 5.
10. Copy of undated memorandum, Secretary of State, Native Citizens Programme.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. The subsequent recommendations are to be found in: Royal Commission on the Status of Women, Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970), pp. 237-38.
16. First Alberta Native Women's Conference, Report: Past, Present and Future (Edmonton, 1968), p. 4.
17. Ibid., p. 4.
18. Ibid., p. 36.
19. Ibid., p. 7.
20. Ibid., p. 7.
21. For example in December 1977 the federal government asked the NIB to allow representation from Native women's organizations in the joint NIB-government negotiating process which existed from 1975 till April 1978. (The NIB refused). Since then the government has made some efforts to obtain input from Native women's organizations on revisions to the membership section of the Indian Act.
22. Attorney General for Canada v. Jeannette Vivian Corbière Lavell, Factum of the Respondent, 3.4 N.B. Lavell here argues that she has "been denied her right to equality before the law and the protection of the law without discrimination by reason of race and sex contrary to the Canadian Bill of Rights," (1973). (The emphasis is added since only the claim of sex discrimination is mentioned in analyses of this case and the issue of race is crucial.)
23. Government of Canada, Secretary of State, Speaking Together: Canada's Native Women (Ottawa, 1975), p. 94.
24. H.B. Hawthorn, ed., A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada, 2 vol. (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1966/67).
25. Two examples will suffice here:
 - 1) until the Citizenship Act, R.S.C. 33 (1977) only male not female Canadian citizens who had been immigrants could apply for citizenship for their foreign-born children.
 - 2) Canadian women who married a citizen of a foreign country prior to 1947 lost their Canadian citizenship (whereas Canadian men did not) and could not regain it until the Citizenship Act of 1977.
26. Section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act was then being challenged as contrary to the Canadian Bill of Rights in the courts by Lavell.
27. First National Native Women's Conference, Report (Edmonton, 1971), p. 15.
28. Ibid., p. 13.
29. Ibid., p. iii.
30. See Harold Cardinal, The Rebirth of Canada's Indians (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1977) for a full explication of this position and the initial reluctance to take a stand against Lavell and Bedard.
31. Attorney General v. Lavell, Supreme Court Judgement (Ottawa: August, 1973).
32. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber (London, 1948), p. 684, cited in Frank Parkin, Class, Inequality and Political Order (St. Albans: Granada Publishing, 1972), p. 161.
33. Linda M. Gerber, Trends in Out-Migration from Indian Communities Across Canada (Canada, Department of Secretary of State, 1977), p. 9.
34. Canada, Secretary of State, Report on the Native Women's Centres (Ottawa: 1977) p. 27.
35. Ibid., p. 12.
36. See Kathleen Jamieson, op. cit., p. 12.
37. Canada, House of Commons, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development, May 25, 1976, 53.4.
38. Information obtained in interviews with government officials.
39. Canadian Human Rights Act, S.63(2), 1976-77.
40. The rationale for excluding the Indian Act from the reach of the Human Rights Act was an undertaking made by the federal government to the NIB that it would not change any section of the Indian Act while these discussions were in progress. See Cardinal, The Rebirth of Canada's Indians, for an elucidation of the basis of the negotiations.
41. In April 1978, Sandra Lovelace from the Tobique Reserve in New Brunswick made a formal complaint to the United Nations. In December 1978, the U.N. informed Lovelace that a reply from the Canadian government was awaited and overdue.
42. Panel Discussion at ONWA annual meeting, Toronto, August 3, 1978.
43. Personal communication.
44. 1) Native Council of Canada, Pilot Study of Canadian Public Perceptions and Attitudes Concerning Aboriginal Rights and Land 2) Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Canadians' Opinions and Attitudes Towards Indians and Indian Issues: Findings of a National Study, by Roger Gibbins and J. Rick Ponting (Ottawa: 1978).
45. This information was inferred from Newsletters and discussions with organization members.
46. Linda M. Gerber, op. cit.
47. Government of Canada, Employment and Immigration Canada, The Development of an Employment Policy for Indian, Inuit and Métis People (Ottawa, 1978) p. 24.
48. Ibid., p. 24.

49. Ibid., p. 2. Unemployment on reserves has been estimated as anywhere from 48% to 95%.
50. See for example, Harold Cardinal, The Rebirth of Canada's Indians, op. cit.
51. This statement is based on personal observation while engaged in research for ACSW and IRIW.
52. For example, although the Department of Indian Affairs has refused until this year to fund any project relating to non-registered Indians, the Department of the Secretary of State has insisted that a group must be composed of both registered and non-registered Indians before it can qualify for funding from its Native Citizens Programme. IRIW and the VANW who took opposite sides in the Lavell case were shortly afterwards forced into applying for joint funding by Secretary of State and much acrimonious dispute resulted. Canada, Secretary of State, Evaluation of Native Women's Programme (Ottawa: 1976), p. 78.
53. Report on Native Women's Centres, op. cit., p. 49.
54. Government of Canada, Secretary of State, Final Report Native Women's Programme Review, by Gordon R. Lee (Ottawa, 1978).
55. Ibid., Table A.
56. Comments of this kind are often made by Native women to the writer and appear to be a real barrier to effective communication between women.
57. Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).