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„Mi'kmaw Women and Environmental Justice“

verfasst von / submitted by

Louise Marie Vandekerckhove

angestrebter akademischer Grad / academic degree aspired

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Betreut von / Supervisor:

ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Martina Kaller



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Abstract

*Indigene Aktivist*innen und Basisbewegungen haben das Bewusstsein für Umwelt Rechtsverletzungen geschärft sowie ihre Befürchtungen über Gesundheits- und Gewaltrisiken zum Ausdruck gebracht, verursacht durch invasive und extraktive Unternehmen auf indigenem Land. In dieser Masterarbeit wird untersucht, wie und warum indigene Frauen unverhältnismäßig stark von Umwelt Rechtsverletzungen betroffen sind. Dabei wird ein geschlechtsspezifischer Ansatz angewendet und das Thema in den historischen Kontext des Siedlerkolonialismus in Kanada gestellt. Die Mi'kmaq First Nation war eine der ersten indigenen Gemeinschaften, die mit europäischen Siedlern in Berührung kamen. Die Mi'kmaw-Frauen waren von der Umweltungerechtigkeit in Nova Scotia besonders betroffen, haben aber auch dagegen angekämpft. Die sich überschneidenden Erfahrungen indigener Frauen in Kanada werden anhand von Berichten, Dokumenten und Büchern über und von Mi'kmaw-Frauen sowie anderen indigenen Gemeinschaften Kanadas untersucht, um die Auswirkungen von Umweltrassismus und Gewalt aufzuzeigen, aber auch, um das Bewusstsein dafür zu schärfen, wie diese Frauen in Basisbewegungen, Projekten, Kunstinstallationen, Protesten usw. zusammenkommen, um gegen Umwelt Ungerechtigkeit zu kämpfen.*

Indigenous female activists and grassroots movements have been raising awareness on environmental injustices and voicing their concerns about issues of health and violence as a result of invasive and extractive industries operating on Indigenous lands. This thesis explores how and why Indigenous women are disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices, through a gendered approach and through situating the issue in the historical context of settler colonialism in Canada. Because of their location in Canada, next to the Atlantic Ocean, the Mi'kmaq First Nation were one of the first Indigenous communities to encounter European settlers, which is why I have chosen Mi'kmaw women as a point of focus. Mi'kmaw women have been affected by but have also been fighting against environmental injustice in Nova Scotia. The intersectional experience of Indigenous women in Canada is explored through reports, documents, and books on and by Mi'kmaw women and broader Indigenous communities, in order to map the effects of environmental racism and violence, but also to raise awareness on how these women have been coming together in grassroots movements, projects, art installations, protests, and so on to fight against environmental injustices.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research question

Indigenous women are at the forefront of the fight against environmental injustice, they are bearing the brunt of the struggle, but their voices are often silenced. Indigenous female activists are trying to raise awareness of environmental racism in Nova Scotia, a complex issue that affects First Nations in multiple ways. This complexity lies in the intersectionality of the impacts of environmental racism, which can be social, economic, political, and health related. Race, gender, class, disability, and more, all shape the effects of environmental racism. It is thus important to understand that different social groups shape different experiences of environmental violence and injustices.

This thesis seeks to investigate the historical and contemporary experience of Mi'kmaw¹ women, in the context of environmental injustice, from the beginning of settler colonialism until today. This experience can only be understood through an intersectional framework, one of gender and race. Their intersectional identities shape their experiences of environmental violence and the impact of continuing settler colonialism, by which I am referring to the systems, mindsets, and violences that are embedded in society that center and prioritize Euro-centric ideals as superior to Indigenous based ways of knowing and living (Whitebear 2020). Ingrid R. G. Waldron, Canadian social scientist writes: "It is not a coincidence, then, that Indigenous and Black women in Canada, who are impacted by the interlinked systems of colonialism, criminalization, environmental degradation, poverty, inequality, and family separation, have been at the forefront of social and environmental justice movements" (Waldron 2018c). I have chosen Mi'kmaw women as a point of focus, as the Mi'kma'ki territory was one of the first areas to be settled (due to its location) and thus makes the Mi'kmaq one of the earliest First Nations to be affected by environmental injustice, in an attempt to raise awareness on the disproportionate effects and harms of environmental injustices against Indigenous women.

In global studies, the connection between race, space, and the environment forms the global space in which Indigenous women experience the past and the present. Due to the importance

¹ The Mi'kmaq: refers to the First Nation, the People of Mi'kmaq. Mi'kmaw: adjective that refers to the Mi'kmaq.

of land and environment to Indigenous survival, the pollution and appropriation of this space by extractive industries forms an attack on their livelihood. This thesis seeks to support the notion that Indigenous women are disproportionately harmed by environmental injustice due to their position and identity in Canadian society – one rooted in settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy – and that Indigenous women are also the ones leading the fight for environmental and social justice for their communities and families.

The questions here are how First Nation women are impacted by environmental injustice, how this issue is a gendered issue, and how women act on this. It will thus carry out a gendered analysis of environmental injustice in the Mi'kmaq First Nation, in order to create a gendered understanding of environmental issues among the Indigenous population in Canada. Indigenous land rights and issues of land use of Indigenous territories not only affect the climate, but also the livelihood of First Nations in multiple ways. Environmental injustice encompasses injustices of land use and rights (environmental racism), and violence against Indigenous bodies (environmental violence). These injustices are all interconnected in the Indigenous experience. Land and water, which are inherent to the First Nations' livelihoods, are rendered infertile and undrinkable because of invasive and extractive industries. The threat to Indigenous lives because of environmental racism is known as slow violence, but real violence also increases due to so-called industry man camps, and disordered social structures in communities (from rather egalitarian relationships of genders and human-nature, to heteropatriarchal male-dominated industrial societies (Strang 2014)), which in turn threatens the lives of Indigenous women.

Political and social issues and injustices can never be fully understood without the female experience taken into account (Shelter 2015). This is no different in the case of First Nations and environmental injustice. Environmental racism and environmental violence impact Indigenous women disproportionately. Due to the continuation of colonial practices of land appropriation and patriarchal gender relations, due to their social identity in the community, due to the proximity of their livelihood to the land. Indigenous women's racial and gender identity create a greater sensitivity and vulnerability to environmental violence and all harmful effects that stem from environmental injustice (Strang 2014; Waldron 2018b). The issues that Black and Indigenous women, in this study Mi'kmaw women more specifically, face at the intersection of their racial and gender identities are complex and multiple. The continuation of colonial oppression, which is a double oppression for Black and Indigenous women due to the

patriarchal nature of colonization, is the first and overarching one (Oyewumi 1997). Various impacts on health also ensue as a result of environmental racism, because of women's social position in their community which relies heavily on land for survival and livelihood (Waldron 2018b). Another issue Indigenous women face because of their social positions is the disruption of the social fabric, which in turn also shifts the gender dynamics of the communities (Waldron 2018b). Increased violence against female Indigenous bodies is an outcome of all of these (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016; Morin 2020).

As the female Indigenous voice is important in the understanding of the issue of environmental injustice against Indigenous communities, this thesis includes a chapter on female Indigenous (environmental) activism, and how Indigenous women create a response and resistance against these injustices, namely Chapter 5. The sections of this chapter discuss the following groups and issues: The Mi'kmaw Grassroot Grandmothers, or Water Protectors, who are organizing protests and demonstrations against the Alton Gas Project and for MMIWG (Page and Daniels 2019; Vandevoorde 2019; I. R. G. Waldron 2018c). Since MMIWG is such an impactful issue for Indigenous women in Canada, the activism and projects to raise awareness is also discussed. Ingrid R. G. Waldron's ENRICH project (Waldron 2020), which seeks to amplify Black and Indigenous women's voices on the issue of environmental racism, in order for them to no longer be ignored by authorities, is also looked into. And finally, *The Violence on the land, Violence on our Bodies* Report published by Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network, which is the outcome of a project that wanted to document the ways in which Indigenous women and young people in North America are affected by environmental violence, namely the impact on their security and health. This documentation consists of not only the impacts but also the different ways Indigenous Peoples are coping and healing. This information was then bundled in this report to form an "Indigenous Response to Environmental Violence" (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016). Indigenous feminist activism, as part of the Indigenous female experience, is the overlapping factor of this chapter. Indigenous feminist activism is an integral part of the fight for environmental injustice, as it seeks to decolonize Canadian society by dismantling systems of oppression, and to go back to matriarchal systems in an attempt to rebuild and reconnect with life in Indigenous communities.

It is also important to note why I write Indigenous with a capital I. In this work, I capitalize Indigenous, Black, White, and any other noun or adjective referring to racial and ethnic groups. This is a sign of respect, and used in the same way as English, French, and Spanish etc. are

capitalized. For example, ‘black’ is a color, and not a person. I also base myself on the APA style rules which dictate that racial and ethnic groups are capitalized, as they are designated by proper nouns (American Psychological Association 2020; Indigenous Peoples terminology guidelines for usage 2016).

1.2. Knowledge interest

In the course of my master’s program, I would have studied at Dalhousie University during an exchange semester in the winter semester of 2020. Due to the global Covid pandemic, which reached one of its peaks during that time, this exchange was moved to the summer semester but then unfortunately cancelled only a few months before. In the preparation of a thesis topic, I was taking into account that I would be in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, where Dalhousie University is located, and that I could do research there, perhaps even field research and interviews for data collection. I thus had to change my idea of this thesis, as empirical research was no longer possible. Nonetheless, I decided to stay with the topic, as I had become interested and engaged with the issues and still wanted to help shed light on environmental injustices, which include environmental racism and violence, and how Indigenous female voices are important in this issue.

Through this thesis, I am not speaking in name of Indigenous communities nor am I seeking to tell the story of their experiences through my voice. I chose the subject of environmental injustice as it lies in my academic interests, but also my personal concerns. As a researcher, I am aware of my white privilege, and do not wish to put my voice in a story to which it does not belong. I also want to point to my most apparent bias, because as a white woman writing about Indigenous women, my ability to fully understand their experiences is limited as my perspective is influenced by this bias. Therefore, I rather raise awareness on the disproportionate affects that environmental injustice has Indigenous communities, more specifically Indigenous women. Environmental injustice has been researched since the 1980s, predominantly in North and South America, and extensively on the specifics of environmental discrimination against minority groups. However, the link to colonial practices or with Indigenous communities, has often been overlooked in the popular theories. Even though environmental injustice and related research has been studied in abundance, especially due to the increasing interest in climate issues, it has hardly translated in the acknowledgment of what it means for Indigenous peoples and for Indigenous women. The position of Indigenous

communities is very important in order to understand the full picture of environmental injustice in Canada today (Boffa 2019; Gilio-Whitaker 2019).

1.3. Review of literature

1.3.1. Environmental Justice Studies and the Environmental Justice Movement

Environmental justice and injustice, including its history, policies, and social movements, have already been academically discussed in various disciplines. The concept of environmental injustice, and environmental racism more specifically, became a highly researched subject from the 1980's on. When, in 1982, civil rights activists protested the dumping of contaminated soil in a North Carolina-county with the highest proportion of African Americans, this social issue came to light and onto the political and academic agenda. Mainstream middle-class white environmentalists had always overlooked the fact that Black and poor communities are unequally exposed to environmental risks and pollution (Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009). After the protest, researchers started documenting the inequality in environmental risks in social and racial groups, and an extensive body of literature detailing environmental injustices, especially in the U.S., emerged. This was the materialization of the interdisciplinary knowledge of Environmental Justice Studies (Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009). "Today, hundreds of studies conclude that, in general, ethnic minorities, Indigenous persons, people of color, and low-income communities confront a higher burden of environmental exposure from air, water, and soil pollution from industrialization, militarization, and consumer practices." (Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009, 406). On the U.S. national political level, the issue incentivized local and national studies on waste sites, including the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) study on African American communities in the south of the United States (US. Gen. Account. Off. 1983), and the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice groundbreaking study entitled *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* (Chavis 1987). Both studies concluded that race was the most significant factor in the unequal distribution of these waste sites, and the latter even proved that polluting facilities are being sited in communities of color, disproving the "minority move-in" hypothesis (Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009).

Two of the most important authors in Environmental Justice Studies are Benjamin Chavis and Richard Bullard. Chavis, who was executive director of the United Church of Christ when the

study *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* was published, defined environmental racism as:

“the racial discrimination in environmental policy making, the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the ecology movements” (Chavis 1994).

Meanwhile, Bullard attempted to counter this and define a solution, as he wrote about environmental justice as “the principle that all people and communities are entitled to equal protection of environmental and public health laws and regulations” (Bullard 1990). He has also said about the Environmental Justice (EJ) Movement that it has redefined environmentalism, as he commented that “it basically says that the environment is everything: where we live, work, play, go to school, as well as the physical and natural world. And so, we can’t separate the physical environment from the cultural environment. We have to talk about making sure that justice is integrated throughout all of the stuff that we do.” (Bullard 1996, as cited in Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009).

In his book *What is Critical Environmental Justice?* (2017), the American Environmental academic and author David Naguib Pellow delves into the U.S. EJ movement and the beginning of Environmental Justice Studies (EJS), while also tackling the definition of justice and the role of state in EJ, in order to define what EJ studies’ gaps are and to build further on this body of knowledge. As his book serves as a critique on EJ studies, his thoughts on the discipline are significant to the state of the art of the field. He starts by contextualizing the U.S. EJ movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as the incentive for the bringing together of the discourses on public health, civil and human rights, anti-racism, social justice, and ecological sustainability. This movement aimed for the integration of social justice campaigns on these topics with the goal of ecological sustainability. The Environmental Justice Movement Pellow speaks of is “largely comprised of people from communities of color, Indigenous communities, and working-class communities who are focused on combating environmental injustice, racism, and gender and class inequalities that are most visibly manifested in the disproportionate burden of environmental harm facing these populations” (2017, 5) and for whom “the battle for global sustainability cannot be won without addressing the ecological

violence imposed on vulnerable human populations; thus social justice is inseparable from environmental protection” (2017, 6).

From the 1990s onwards, the body of literature in Environmental Justice Studies (EJS) multiplied as many scholars have researched various environmental risks on the basis of race and class. The start of this boom in attention towards environmental justice studies was the Conference on Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards, organized by the sociologists Bryant and Mohai at the University of Michigan, which gathered numbers of researchers to study racial and socioeconomic disparities in environmental risks and pollution (Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009). Next to the start of an extensive and significant body of works in EJS, the Michigan Conference also resulted in the creation of the Office of Environmental Equity (now named the Office of Environmental Justice) as part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), which published the report “Environmental Equity: Reducing Risks for All Communities” (US Environ. Prot. Agency (EPA) 1992). Mohai et al. emphasize the importance of this report as it “gave further weight and increased public attention to environmental justice concerns as it represented the first official acknowledgment by the federal government of the existence of environmental inequalities and the importance of addressing them.” (2009, 410).

EJS have, according to Pellow (2017), contributed to the contemporary knowledge and understanding of the link between social inequalities in race and class, and environmental inequalities in levels of pollution, the effects of climate change, and the exclusion from decision making. While the field boomed in the 1990s and focused mainly on racial and socioeconomic differences, more recently, a growing group of scholars is exploring more forms of social inequality, such as gender, sexuality, citizenship, and indigeneity, and their connection to the environment (Adamson 2011; Bell 2013; Bell and Braun 2010; Brown and Ferguson 1995; Buckingham and Kulcur 2010; Gaard 2004; Holifield, Porter, and Walker 2010; Krakoff 2002; Krauss n.d.; Park and Pellow 2011; Andrea Smith 2005; Stein 2004; D. E. Taylor 1997). The newness of EJS cannot be confused with newness of the phenomenon of environmental inequality, as European colonization produced a number of environmental injustices through the exploitation of land and peoples for the benefit of the colonizers (DuBois 1977; LaDuke 1999; Pellow and Park 2002; Andrea Smith 2005). Evidence of the struggles against environmental inequality are thus also not new or stemming from the 1980’s movement, which is why scholars speak of the “long Environmental Justice movement” – inspired by the “long

Civil Rights movement of Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (2005) (Hurley 1995; Pellow 2002; Pellow and Park 2002; D. E. Taylor 2009; Washington 2003). The reason why the phenomenon, together with EJS, has come to the forefront of academia and politics is twofold, according to Pellow (2017). The global industrial and technological production has recently intensified, and the global human migration patterns have heightened within and across national borders, which, combined, draws the phenomenon into the present and extends its consequences globally.

EJS can be divided into two phases, the first and second generation. The “first generation” EJ-scholars were engaged in documenting environmental injustices in the USA, and later on, specific regions in the Global South. As the EJ movement in the Global South grew more critical of mainstream environmentalism, scholars started to devote more attention to “varieties of environmentalism” (Álvarez and Coolsaet 2020; Guha and Martinez-Alier 2013), which also led to the creation of new terminology, such as “subaltern environmentalism”, “environmentalism of the poor”, “post-colonial environmental justice”, “third world environmental justice”, “empty-belly environmentalism”, and “environmental justice 2.0” (Álvarez and Coolsaet 2020; Guha and Martinez-Alier 2013). This “second generation” of EJS thus took on broader methodology, theory, and interdisciplinarity. However, a more critical EJ body of literature has also grown, questioning the early vision, principles, and claims of EJS, in an attempt to widen its conceptual grounds and include race in the global South, gender, sexuality, rurality, and social transformations.

According to Mohai, Pellow and Timmons Roberts (2009), claims made by environmental justice are of contested nature, as they list three reasons. Firstly, the mainstream environmental movement has from its beginnings neglected to incorporate social justice and equality issues into its campaigns, and critics argue that it still doesn’t. Underlying social inequalities remain largely unaddressed, as many environmentalists debate on whether broadening their environmentalists is a good idea, or whether they should continue with issues that are more influenceable. Secondly, documenting the existence of inequality in environmental risk is “not a simple issue” (407), as skeptical studies have gained attention as well. Thirdly, the difficult nature of addressing environmental injustice creates controversy around environmental justice studies, as some solutions can in turn be socially and economically disruptive as well. Many authors have questioned the effectivity and equity of EJS, which is how Critical Environmental Justice Studies was created, in an effort to build on and expand the work of the first and second

generation EJ scholars (Álvarez and Coolsaet 2020; Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009; Pellow 2017).

1.3.2. *Critical Environmental Justice Studies*

Writer David Naguib Pellow defined Critical Environmental Justice Studies as “the scholarship that builds on research in EJS by questioning assumptions and gaps in earlier work in the field, by embracing greater interdisciplinarity, and moving toward methodologies and epistemologies including and beyond the social sciences” (Pellow 2017, 3). His understanding of EJS, discussed above, creates the necessity of Critical Environmental Justice Studies (CEJS), as he defines what Environmental Justice Studies lacks and how it needs to evolve. He writes: “After all, what scholarly and practical staying power does an academic field of study hold if we cannot extend its reach into spaces and topics well beyond what were previously believed to be its boundaries?” (2017, 149). In his book, *What is Critical Environmental Justice?* (2017), Pellow reaches into the topics of Black Lives Matter, the U.S. prison-industrial complex, and the Israel/Palestine conflicts, none of these topics are directly associated with environmental justice.

Pellow defines four pillars of Critical Environmental Justice Studies, which serve as questions and critique on EJS, but mainly serve as points for the framework of CEJS. The first pillar concerns intersectionality, as it asks to which degree scholars should consider social categories to define unequal distribution of environmental risks. Pellow argues that EJS has the tendency to only analyze one or two social categories at a time, and most often those are race and class. The role of social inequality in gender or sexuality, and even speciesism, has been neglected by EJ scholars, which Pellow rightly criticizes, as the experience of environmental injustice is characterized by different forms of inequality and should thus be analyzed from various and intersectional perspectives.

“The fields of critical race theory, critical race feminism, gender and sexuality studies, queer theory, ecological feminism, disability studies, and critical animal studies all speak to the ways in which various social categories of difference work to place particular bodies at risk of exclusion, marginalization, erasure, discrimination, violence, destruction, and othering” (2017, 19).

With this quote, Pellow emphasizes the importance of intersectionality in Critical Environmental Justice Studies and in the understanding of intra-human and human-nonhuman

inequality and oppression. While the experience of the different groups are not the same, “the logic of domination and othering as practiced by more powerful groups against them provides a thread of intersectionality through each of their oppressions” (2017, 19). CEJS thus defines various forms of inequality (racism, heteropatriarchy, classism, nativism, ableism, ageism, speciesism) as forms of domination and control, which mutually reinforce one another as they tend to act together to maintain the systems in place that favor individual and collective power, privilege, and subordination (Pellow, 2017).

The second pillar concerns scale, as it questions the single-scale analyses of EJS. Pellow argues for a multi-scalar approach of environmental justice struggles, not only in the study of its causes and consequences, but also in to quest for possible resolutions. CEJS’s second pillar thus focuses on the relationship between the local and the global, in order to understand how objects, bodies, and beings, both in the spatial and temporal dimension, are linked to environmental risks. Pellow claims that this method can aid in the analysis of “the multiple scales at which environmental injustice functions, from the cells in the bodies of individual humans and more-than-humans affected by those forms of violence, to how the damage crosses populations and generations (Pellow, 2017, 21-22). Moreover, CEJS argues for a redefinition of ‘the environment’ to include not only nature and so-called wild places, but also “the environment of human bodies, especially in racialized communities” (Sze 2016, 792 as cited in Pellow, 2017).

The third pillar concerns the role of the state and state power in environmental justice. CEJS argues that various forms of social inequality and power are deeply embedded in society and should be confronted in the struggle for environmental justice, instead of embraced. Furthermore, CEJS claims that social inequalities are reinforced by state power and that social and environmental justice is being hindered by the current social system. Pellow explains that this is the biggest divide between EJS and CEJS as the EJ scholars and activists do not look further beyond the state in their search for environmentally just and resilient communities, which Pellow compares to the ‘classic progressive-Left platform’, while CEJS questions the whole social and state system in a more radical and transformative way (Pellow 2017). CEJS argues that the state cannot simultaneously be the source of state control over populations, ecosystems, and territory, and the source of environmental just solutions, because, according to CEJS scholars, the modern nation state is fundamentally racially exclusionary and ecologically unsustainable (David Theo Goldberg 2002; Pellow 2017; M. Smith 2011).

Therefore, CEJS is critical of the EJ movement for looking to the state and its legal systems to provide environmental justice, a system that was never meant to deliver justice to marginalized peoples and nonhumane nature (Robert Benford, as cited in Pellow 2017). Critical Environmental Justice Studies can thus be viewed as highly critical of the nation state, and suggests that the EJ movement should move toward a more transformative character. However, Pellow admits that nation states are here to stay for the foreseeable future, and therefore argues that social movement alike should strive towards practices, relationships, and institutions that deepen direct democracy, which Pellow calls a “twenty-first-century framework that is nuanced and non-fundamentalist, that is always wary of state power but concedes that there are moments and spaces where states can be pushed to do work that is supportive of social and environmental justice” (Pellow 2017, 24).

The fourth and final pillar concerns the indispensability of human and nonhuman populations. CEJS looks to Critical Race and Ethnic Studies for this concept, as it defines “racial expendability” – a term coined by scholar John Márquez – to explain how Black and Brown bodies are “in the eyes of the state and its constituent legal system, generally viewed as criminal, deficient, threatening, and deserving of violent discipline and even obliteration” (Márquez 2014, as cited in Pellow, 2017, 26). CEJS builds on this term and turns it around into “indispensability”, as it argues that excluded, marginalized, and othered populations and beings are indispensable for our collective futures, rather than being expendable in our current state system. Racial indispensability is a term that CEJS uses to counter and challenge the idea of racial expendability and put forward the idea that “institutions, policies, and practices that support and perpetrate racism suffer from the illogical assumption that the future of people of color is delinked from the future of white communities” (Pellow, 2017, 26). Similarly, socioecological indispensability is the idea that all communities are interconnected, interdependent, but also sovereign and requiring solidarity of others. This means that what happens to one community affects all others, like Martin Luther King Jr. once said: “Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere” (1963). Pellow embellishes this argument by the example of climate change. “While the findings and conclusions of climate scientists are remarkably clear that anthropogenic climate change is occurring at a dramatic pace and with increasing intensity, this is also happening unevenly, with people of color, the poor, Indigenous peoples, people of the global south, and women suffering the most” (2017, 28). A clear case of environmental racism, as the global north hesitates to act on or even ignores and denies the climate emergency, because it is currently not directly affecting white and rich communities.

However, the problem of climate change will affect our globe in catastrophic ways, and will turn into the self-defeat of the self-interested, and therefore reveals the meaning of racial and socioecological indispensability (Pellow, 2017).

Pellow can be seen as a reformist, as he believes that the role of the state should be acknowledged to push the boundaries of EJS. The role of the state is also how he links the different chapters and topics of his book, “the power of the state to define reality for humans and more-than-just-humans, and to manage, manipulate, and control those beings, bodies, and the ecosystems that support them” (2017, 149) is the connecting factor. His book is an effort to combine various CEJS paths into one direction with greater specificity, to build on earlier EJ scholarship but also expand where it shows gaps in its conceptual, theoretical, disciplinary, and methodological foundations (Pellow, 2017). As mentioned earlier, CEJS seek to be interdisciplinary in character and draws inspiration from important fields such as Critical Race Theory, Ethnic Studies, Critical Race Feminism, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Anti-Statist/Anarchist Theory, as these fields have already produced an extensive body of literature on how human beings’ lives are shaped by social inequality, oppression, privilege, hierarchy, and authoritarian institutions and practices (Pellow, 2017, 31).

Authors Lina Álvarez and Brendan Coolsaet (2020) argue, in a similarly critical manner as Pellow, for the decolonization of Environmental Justice Studies, although from a Latin American perspective. Their main claim is that, in EJS, the concepts of environment and justice are Western concepts, which makes EJS in essence inaccessible and inapplicable in non-Western contexts. It also assumes that the Western way of thinking is all-solving. Many scholars have argued that since the rise of EJS more than three decades ago, its studies have stayed rather limited to global north contexts, and more specifically the USA (Agyeman, Cole, and Haluza-DeLay 2010; Martinez-Alier 2002; Reed and George 2011; Temper, del Bene, and Martinez-Alier 2015). Which is why, a growing group of researchers – described as “second generation” EJ scholars – seek to broaden the boundaries of EJS, politically, geographically, and theoretically (Holifield, Porter, and Walker 2010; Martinez-Alier 2002; Schlosberg 2007). Álvarez and Coolsaet (2020) are as critical of these second generation-scholars as Pellow, as their argument is that the conceptual studies in the EJ field stay, as mentioned, within the Western way of thinking, while empirical EJ work is increasingly exported to the global South. They argue that this is the reasoning behind the emergence of Critical Environmental Justice Studies, to question the universality of EJ Studies, and the framings and concepts underpinning

it. Nonetheless, they pinpoint a gap, as they write: “Yet, despite the historic relation of EJ with racial issues, the academic pluralization of EJ and the increasing geographic focus on the global South, there has been surprisingly little engagement with decolonial theory” (2020, 2). In their article *Decolonizing Environmental Justice Studies: A Latin American Perspective* (2020), they argue that “using Western-centric concepts as the main organizing principles of non-Western EJ movements – at the expense of other, pre-existing conceptual formations – creates new processes of subjugation” (2020, 2), which they have defined as “coloniality of justice” (2020, 2). Not including an explicit decolonial analysis in EJ scholarship “not only risks undermining its emancipatory power but may also deepen some of the injustices it claims to address” (2020, 2).

Álvarez and Coolsaet propose a few principles for a decolonial environmental justice, which are: engagement with the colonial difference, development of a “victim-centered” justice, creation of heterogenous strategies tailor-made for individuals, communities, and ecosystems, and the exposure of the structures that reproduce coloniality in both the global North and South.

1.3.3. *Environmental racism*

Environmental racism is a term coined by Benjamin F. Jr. Chavis in 1994. He defined it in a US-context as, “[...] racial discrimination in environmental policy-making and enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the presence of life threatening poisons and pollutants for communities of color, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the environmental movement” (Chavis 1994, xi–xii). Robert D. Bullard (1994) noted that this definition of environmental racism emphasizes evidence of intentional discrimination. However, he argues that discriminatory intent (and proving it) should be irrelevant. This interpretation sees environmental racism as “any decision-making processes and distributive patterns that burden minority groups disproportionately” (Holifield 2001, 83).

Ingrid R. G. Waldron has brought together settler colonial theory and Critical Environmental Justice studies in her book *There’s Something in the Water* (2018b) to explain environmental racism in Nova Scotia, Canada. She defines it as “the condition, the problem, of disproportionate exposure of Indigenous communities, Black communities, other communities of color to environmental burdens, to pollutants and contaminants. But it’s also about the slow

response by government to address these issues. [...] In Canada your postal code determines your health” (Page and Daniels 2019, ’4-’5). She argues that “racist environmental policies, as well as other kinds of state policies, have enabled the cultural genocide of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized peoples” (2018b, 10). Waldron highlights the fact that environmental racism exists out of various layers. Not only do race and class play an important role, other social identities such as gender, sexuality and disability, and next to that power, are significant factors to take into account as well (Waldron 2018a). Similarly to Bullard, she argues that environmental racism occurs “when environmental policies and actions (intentionally or unintentionally) disproportionately disadvantage racialized individuals or communities” (Waldron 2018a, 396). She adds that “the lack of power Indigenous and racialized communities have to oppose the location of waste sites and other environmental hazards in their communities” (Waldron 2018a, 396) and “their exclusion from mainstream environmental groups and regulatory bodies” (Waldron 2018a, 396) are aspects which are equally important in defining environmental racism. Furthermore, Waldron argues that the Mi’kmaw communities face health inequities as outcomes of preexisting social and economic issues, “such as underemployment and unemployment, income insecurity and poverty, food insecurity, and poor quality housing” (Waldron 2018a, 396) as well as environmental racism, which “operates as a form of state-sanctioned racial violence” (Waldron 2018a, 396).

According to Waldron (2018c), these preexisting social and economic issues or as she calls them “cumulative intergenerational impacts of social, economic, political, and health inequalities”, “have their roots in white supremacy, colonialism, patriarchy, and racial capitalism” (Waldron 2018c, 251–52). This is important not only to understand the current socioeconomic and sociopolitical situation of Indigenous communities, but also to understand the contemporary human relationship to nature (one of power and subordination) and why environmental injustice exist, which is a bit overlooked in theories of EJS and CEJS. This point is further acknowledged by scholar Victoria Strang (2019), as according to her as well, the social disorder that disrupts Indigenous communities is an apparent consequence of sociopolitical change (here that would be colonialism and capitalism). She focuses on the human-environmental relationship with water to show that the sociopolitical change to male-dominated hierarchies of industrial societies transformed water from a collective good to an economic asset. This is in direct contradiction with Indigenous livelihood (with an egalitarian relationship to nature) and therefore threatens it. Strang argues that this has to do with power.

The example of water shows how industrial societies relates to nature, as a subordinate; just as the heteropatriarchal character of these societies put men above women (Strang 2019).

1.3.4. Environmental violence and violence against women (intersectionality of race and gender)

Environmental violence is thus a prominent manifestation of environmental racism (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016; Waldron 2018a). Environmental violence can be interpreted as the continued violation of Indigenous peoples' bodies by capitalist profit-seeking and development-oriented industries through occupation, extraction, and exploitation of Indigenous land and resources and by the inevitable contamination and destruction of the environment. Erin Marie Konsmo and A.M. Kahealani Pacheco (2016) write about environmental violence through a gendered approach in their report *Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies*, and define it as “the disproportionate and often devastating impacts that the conscious and deliberate proliferation of environmental toxins and industrial development (including extraction, production, export and release) have on Indigenous women, children and future generations, without regard from States or corporations for their severe and ongoing harm.” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 15). Environmental violence is a term that has not yet long been researched as separate from environmental racism. However, in recent years, the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) has been working to make the concept of gender-based environmental violence as common and well-accepted as the term environmental racism. The aspect of gender is crucial in the research of environmental violence, as it encompasses both biological and social impacts of extractive industries in Indigenous communities. Previous research focused entirely on biological health impacts and reproductive justice, or solely on sexual violence against Indigenous women, however, as Konsmo and Pacheco claim, both types of impacts should be taken into account and their connection to the land rights should be acknowledged (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016).

Waldron (2018c) has also argued that environmental violence cannot be understood from a single focus on ecological impacts but has to be understood from an intersectional perspective, taking into account the impacts of racial and gendered violence as well. In this equation, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Waldron argues that the issues stemming from environmental violence are more complex than solely resulting from environment-harming industries, as they are connected to, created by, and operating in partnership with other forms

of state-sanctioned racial and gendered violence stemming from continued colonial and patriarchal practices. For example, colonial, racist and patriarchal practices constitute violence towards Indigenous communities, “through the reservation system, housing segregation that restricts racialized peoples to neighborhoods with substandard housing, poorly resourced schools that limit access to higher education and postsecondary training, and, consequently, barriers to accessing better job opportunities.” (2018c, 253). Furthermore, similarly to Konsmo and Pacheco, she claims that Indigenous women are impacted disproportionately because of their intersectional experience of race, gender, and sexuality, and therefore argues that a gendered analysis of environmental violence can enable an even more complete understanding of its complexity (2018).

Gendered violence stems from misogyny. Combined with anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeness, the experience of Black and Indigenous women is intersectional, as they are confronted with discrimination and hatred not only for being a woman or being non-White but for being a non-White woman. “Misogynoir” is a term coined by Moya Bailey in 2008, which describes the anti-Black racist misogyny Black women experience and explains this intersection (Bailey and Trudy 2018). Gendered violence is a vital aspect of environmental violence against Indigenous women, as both intersect in the experience of Indigenous women, and both stem from the implementation of heteropatriarchal and racialized societal structures that comes with settler colonialism (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016). Feminist theories on violence against women center relationships of power and gendered social hierarchies, and how these gendered power relationships are structured in a male-dominated culture (a.k.a. patriarchy) that results in the oppression of women (Bograd 1988; Hunnicutt 2009; R. Taylor and Jasinski 2011; Zalewski 2000). Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) is an important example of this, as Indigenous women have been racialized and sexualized in the settler colonialist society of Canada, structured according to patriarchal and racial power, which has normalized and create cultural acceptance of violence against them. MMIWG also ties in with environmental injustice as many Indigenous communities voice concern surrounding “man camps” that accompany extractive industry projects. This issue is dealt with later on.

Environmental racism and environmental violence can serve as a conceptual framework for understanding the harms of social, economic, political, and health inequalities that Indigenous people face under settler governments, according to Waldron (2018c). She argues that these

inequalities, which “have their roots in white supremacy, colonialism, patriarchy, and racial capitalism,” impact the lands, communities, and bodies of Indigenous people in complex and intersectional ways (2018c, 252).

1.3.5. Who are the Mi'kmaq?

The Mi'kmaq are a First Nation who predominantly live on what is now known as the Canadian provinces Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Before the British and Canadian settlements, however, their territory in the Atlantic region of North America constituted of the provinces now known as Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland. Their land is called the Mi'kma'ki, and they speak Mi'kmaq, an Eastern Algonquian language, in which Mi'kmaq means ‘the people’ (Mcgee 2008; Poliandri 2011). Prior to the Canadian Indian Act enforced in 1876, the Mi'kma'ki was divided into seven districts, each with their own governments and councils of elders (Poliandri 2011). The Mi'kmaq First Nation is composed of 29 different communities, with 13 in Nova Scotia. These are Acadia First Nation, Annapolis Valley First Nation, Bear River First Nation, Potlotek First Nation, Eskasoni First Nation, Glooscap First Nation, Membertou First Nation, Millbrook First Nation, Paq'tnekek First Nation, Pictou Landing First Nation, Sipekne'katik First Nation, Wagmatcook First Nation, and We'koqma'q First Nation (Mi'kmaw Bands in Nova Scotia n.d.).

The Mi'kmaq First Nation are Indigenous communities of fisher- and lobstermen, who have sustainably maintained the land and waters of Nova Scotia, and have fished and caught lobster for their livelihood (Mcgee 2008; Poliandri 2011). Nowadays, they have to fish in a commercial fishing zone established by the Canadian government, where all fishers are permitted to fish, including commercial non-Indigenous fishers. In September of 2020, the Sipekne'katik First Nation, who belong to the Mi'kmaq and are the second largest Mi'kmaw group, launched a new kind of fishery, namely its own Mi'kmaq-regulated, Indigenous rights-based lobster fishery. These Indigenous fishers thus intended to step away from commercial fishery and start their own fishery. The announcement of the launch of this lobster fishery resulted in violent protests by commercial non-Indigenous fishers, as they claimed that the Mi'kmaw fishermen were illegally fishing outside of the fishing season, in their own waters nonetheless (Draus 2020; Renic and Quon 2020).

The acts of violence against First Nations fishers are acts of colonial violence, as discussed in this thesis. These acts form an attack on Indigenous self-governance and food sovereignty and undermine Mi'kmaw peoples' access to a moderate livelihood and basic human rights. 'Moderate livelihood', even though not exactly defined as such in the Treaty Rights, refers to the Indigenous and more specifically the Mi'kmaq's right to make a living from fishing. These rights were reaffirmed in the Donald Marshall case in September 1999, which ruled that the Friendship Treaties between the Mi'kmaq and the British Crown, signed in 1760-61, are still valid to this day (Butts 2009; Conn 2020; Doherty 2020; Wallace 2018). Due to the increased environmental violence these Mi'kmaw fishers had to endure, they are now claiming the right of self-determination and asking for the defining of 'Moderate Livelihood' through negotiation with and direct involvement of Mi'kmaq communities (Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs n.d.).

This study argues that environmental injustice came with colonialism. With the women of the Mi'kmaq, a First Nation in Nova Scotia central to this research, the scope remains in Canada. However, examples and theories from the United States prove useful too, as both countries originate in settler colonialism. The Mi'kma'ki territory was one of the first areas to be settled, because of its location in the Atlantic Ocean and proximity to the European continent, their history is intriguing. Subject to land and water appropriation, environmental racism, environmental violence, among other environmental injustices, their case explains how these practices hurt Indigenous communities disproportionately. My focus on Mi'kmaw women deepens the understanding of the complexity of environmental injustice against Indigenous peoples in Canada.

1.3.6. Indigenous activism for environmental justice

Numerous Indigenous movements, projects and acts to fight against colonial and neo-colonial, patriarchal, racial and environmental injustices, since the dawn of settler colonialism in the Americas. Ranging from national, regional, global, and local movements, environmental justice has been a topic that Indigenous communities have been struggling for, including, but not limited to climate change, pollution, clean drinking water, land rights, fishing rights, extractive practices, and more. A few examples will be dealt with here, among which broader but also local Mi'kmaq ones. The last chapter of the thesis will look deeper into specific examples on Indigenous environmental feminist activism.

Idle No More is an Indigenous-led social movement, which fights for Indigenous rights and the protection of land, water and sky in Canada (Idle No More n.d.). Similar to the Red Paper discussed earlier, Idle No More addresses Indigenous treaty rights and the way these rights have been dishonored by the Canadian government. Idle No More is a women-led movement, which started out as a protest against the dismantling of environmental protection laws by the Canadian government, and has now successfully connected the most remote First Nations to urbanized Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous population through popular education and new technologies, towards a peaceful revolution for Indigenous sovereignty (Idle No More, n.d.). The Land Back movement, which fights for land restitution from former colonists, has a long history and legacy of Indigenous communities pushing back against oppression. The current movement started as a protest at the site of Mount Rushmore, which symbolizes colonization and white supremacy, and the demand for its closure (Land Back n.d.; Pasternak and King 2019; Thompson 2020). As the movement has grown from the longstanding land-back idea and fights for the “dismantling of white supremacy and the harms of capitalism” (Thompson 2020), and to do that “we have to go back to the roots. Which, for us, is putting Indigenous Lands back in Indigenous hands” (Land Back n.d.). However, the movement goes further than that. It strives not only for Indigenous rights to land, but also the preservation of languages and traditions, the surety of food sovereignty, housing, and clean air and water (Thompson 2020).

Moderate Livelihood is a movement which gained strength after the Marshall case in Nova Scotia in 1999, which ruled that he had the right to fish as per the treaty his ancestors signed in 1761 with the British Crown, and that this treaty superseded federal legislation on fisheries. Moderate Livelihood aims for the right of the First Nations in the Maritimes to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood (Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaw Chiefs n.d.; Government of Canada n.d.). The Moderate Livelihood Fishery is a project, an act of the Mi’kmaq fisher- and lobstermen to ensure the implementation of the Indigenous fishers’ rights to Nova Scotian waters. Because of uncertainty and lack of clarity regarding the exact implementation by the Canadian government, they have decided to take matters into their own hands and start a Moderate Livelihood Fishery, which got met with a lot of backlash from commercial fishers (Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi’kmaw Chiefs n.d.; Draus 2020). This fishery is a clear act of resistance from the Indigenous community, who by taking matters into their own hands make claims for their rights to the waters and ‘moderate livelihood’, and fight against environmental injustices by Canadian water, fishing and environment policies.

Ingrid Waldron's book *There's Something in the Water* (2018c), which addresses environmental racism in Nova Scotia and formed the inspiration for the movie by the same title, directed by Elliott Page and Ian Daniels. It highlights several stories of Indigenous and Black communities that have been facing environmental racism because of governmental decisions to place hazardous sites in their neighborhoods (Quon 2020). One of these stories is about how Mi'kmaw Grassroot Grandmothers, or the "Water Protectors" (Vandevoorde 2019), have been protesting and fighting against a proposed project by Alton Gas, an energy giant, which would allow the storage of natural gas in an underground salt cavern near the Shubenacadie River (Hubley 2016). They are called "Water Protectors" because water is an essential part of their livelihood, because the Mi'kma'ki, the territory of the Mi'kmaq, is surrounded by the sea and has a lot of rivers, one of them the Shubenacadie River, as Anton Vandevoorde (2019) highlights in his Master Thesis on Radical Environmental Movements. Salt-cavern liquid natural gas projects are highly dangerous as they have huge failure rates because of the risks of explosions, leaks, and emissions of poisonous chemicals like methane, and the side-consequence would be the oversalting of the Shubenacadie River in which no fish could survive (Waldron 2018c). The Sipekne'katik, along with other local Mi'kmaq communities and the Millbrook First Nation, have been involved in activities and demonstrations in order to put a stop to further developments and ultimately the carrying-out of the project since 2014 (Waldron 2018c). They argue that their communities "were not adequately consulted, that they had never given consent for the project to resume, that they were not given enough time to review project proposals and environmental impact assessments and that they were provided with little-to-no notice about public meetings where they could express their concerns about the project before it resumed." (Waldron 2018, 10).

In the movie (Page and Daniels 2019), the Grassroot Grandmothers explain their demonstrations and activities since they started in 2016. They have set up a Treaty Truck House near the proposed site of Alton Gas' project, where the company started construction without consent three years ago. It is a site of Indigenous resistance, as it actively asserts their treaty rights and occupies the area, which is unceded Mi'kmaq territory. Next to that, these Mi'kmaw women have been actively confronting Nova Scotian politicians and the Ministry of Environment, demanding to Stop Alton Gas, as the government is ignoring environmental laws by allowing Alton Gas' project on their territory. They believe that as Indigenous women, they have the gift of being the carriers of sacred water, but also the responsibility over it, and therefore, find that it is time to embrace their ancestry as Mi'kmaq and fight for their rights.

They highlight the Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women, because the settler nation, the capitalist corporation Canada, as they call it, is trying to silence the Indigenous peoples and their rights in name of their own capitalist will and needs. Therefore, the Grassroot Grandmothers keep being loud and visible.

The organization Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada (MMIWG) has been recently picked up by the Canadian and international media, as it has been put forward by Amnesty International as a human rights crisis (Amnesty International 2004; Amnesty International Publications 2009). However, this issue has been highlighted by Indigenous communities and women's groups for years and the severity of it is being underestimated. In 2004, Amnesty International published a report on the increasingly high numbers of Indigenous women as victims of racialized and sexualized violence, named *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada* (Amnesty International 2004). The report highlights the marginalization of Indigenous women in Canada, both economically and socially, and that together with racism, poverty and a lack of police protection, Indigenous women's vulnerability to violence is extremely heightened (Brant 2017). Since the report, the numbers have only increased, which prompted Amnesty International to publish a report on why the violence against Indigenous women perpetuates. *No More Stolen Sisters: The Need for a Comprehensive Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* (Amnesty International Publications 2009) highlights five key issues that result in violence against Indigenous women in Canada. Structurally, racism and misogyny are the base for inequality in Indigenous women's rights, the historic and ongoing mass removal of Indigenous children, the high amount of Indigenous women in Canadian prisons, and the inadequacy of police responses to violence against Indigenous women (Amnesty International Publications 2009; Brant 2017).

Indigenous women in Canada have also taken action themselves against the disproportionate violence against them. The Native Women's Association of Canada, which was founded in the 70s and aims to "support the socio-economic, political and cultural well-being of Indigenous women in Canada" (Robinson 2017), have been researching and raising awareness about this issue through the 'Sisters in Spirit Initiative'. Through this initiative, Indigenous women of various First Nations have been trying to put pressure for policy changes with regards to the prevention of violence against Indigenous women (Robinson 2017).

1.4. Structure, Theory and Methods

Critical Environmental Justice Studies is one of the main theories discussed in the literature review, as I look to this body of work for theoretical considerations on the background of environmental justice and injustice. CEJS is not only a theoretical body of work, but it can also be seen as a method, an approach and critique of the previous body of work of Environmental Justice Studies. In my thesis, however, I use CEJS and Pellow's book *What Is Critical Environmental Justice?* (2017) to explain the issue of environmental injustice and the academic state of the art surrounding this concept in the literature review, but remain critical and take into account more gender and race theory considerations to compliment my topic of Indigenous women. This is where the concept of what I call gendered analysis comes in. CEJS is a method that seeks to break the disciplinary boundaries, but often neglects to take into account intersectionality. A gendered analysis, on top of the principles of CEJS, will guide this thesis in the investigation of environmental injustice and the disproportionate harm that Indigenous women face. The importance of intersectionality is explained in Chapter 2: *The Gendered Issue of Environmental Injustice*, next to why it is essential to not only look at gender and women's studies, feminist studies, and settler colonial studies separately, but combine them, in a way Indigenous feminisms and Native feminist theories do.

Following the literature review, in Chapter 2, I delve into the gendered aspect of environmental injustice. As I write about the disproportionate impacts of environmental injustice on Indigenous women, I find it important to analyze this phenomenon not only on the basis of race and gender as separate parts, but through a true gendered analysis, which is intersectional and inclusive of all aspects of the experience of Indigenous women. It thus does not look at race and gender as separate considerations of identity, but the intersection of the various social categories which work together in reinforcing injustices. This also means that the study of environmental injustice is not investigated solely on environmental concerns, as this thesis seeks to go beyond the mainstream environmental injustice considerations by taking into account the specific experiences of Indigenous women and the historical context of Indigenous communities in Canada. Therefore, Chapter 2 explains why a gendered and intersectional approach is needed to fully understand the experience of environmental injustice of Mi'kmaw women. This *Theory, Methods, and Structure* chapter briefly explains this method above, but Chapter 2 delves into what gendered analysis means according to me, and why I find it important to use for this subject.

In Chapter 3, the history of the Mi'kmaq, as well as the historical origin of environmental justice and injustice is dealt with. This chapter seeks to prove that environmental injustices are rooted in settler colonialism. The historical impacts and intersectional experiences of anti-Indigenous racism and heteropatriarchal sexism is vital to the understanding of how Indigenous women experience environmental injustice in Canada. For this section, I rely on Amnesty International Publications for information on historical treaties, and the study of injustices in the past; and on articles in The Canadian Encyclopedia, along with writings of scholars Michael Mascarenhas, Ingrid Waldron, Kyle Powys Whyte, Simone Poliandri, Sherry Pictou, and William Craig Wicken.

Chapter 4 explores the disproportionate effects environmental racism and environmental violence have on Indigenous women. It discusses how the continued historical practices, discussed in Chapter 3, link to the exploitation, destruction, and oppression of Indigenous bodies and resources, and specifically the disproportionate harm of Indigenous women. The chapter looks into sexual violence and Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, detrimental impacts on bodily health from toxic pollutants, and the social, political, and cultural welfare of Indigenous communities faced with environmental injustice. The *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies* (VLVB) report is an important source for this chapter, as well as publications of Amnesty International and the CRIAW (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women), and the writings of authors Ingrid Waldron and Michael Mascarenhas.

Combined, Indigenous women experience gender, racial, and environmental injustice. Indigenous women have and are trying to heal from this (ongoing) trauma through grassroots movements and activism, taking back leadership roles, to fight for environmental justice. Chapter 5 investigates Indigenous feminist activism through the examples of Mi'kmaw Grassroot Grandmothers, projects surrounding MMIWG, the ENRICH project, and the VLVB report, to show that Indigenous women are spearheading the fight for environmental and social justice for Indigenous communities.

Lastly, Chapter 6 provides concluding remarks on the study of Indigenous women and environmental injustice, and thoughts on further paths of research that could be possible on this topic or related issues.

2. Gender and Environmental Injustice in First Nations

By using a gendered analysis to investigate the issue of environmental injustice in First Nations in Canada, this thesis seeks to make visible the (often) invisible disproportionality of harm which Indigenous women have to confront. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, this thesis takes on a gendered approach in order to analyze the impact of environmental injustice and its practices on Indigenous women. Through a theoretical perspective and the documentation of the experience of Mi'kmaw women, this second chapter will delve into the specifics of the disproportionate danger of environmental injustices that Indigenous women face. This chapter will do so in different parts. Firstly, the theory behind a gendered analysis is dealt with, as it is important to explain why this thesis takes on this kind of approach. Gendered analysis was already briefly explained in the theory and methods part in the previous chapter, but here I want to delve deeper so the reader can also understand why a gendered approach is important for this subject and consequently also link it to the matter at hand, of Indigenous women and environmental injustice in the second part. And thirdly, this chapter will introduce the reference case of Mi'kmaw women, which will serve as a red thread throughout the next chapters, through an example of how their experience has to be viewed from a gendered approach.

2.1. Gendered analysis

To fully grasp the complexity of the experience of Indigenous women vis-à-vis environmental injustice, the different aspects to it needed to be broken down. In order to do that, this thesis takes on a gendered approach, and what that means to me is not that it looks at the difference in gender in this issue, but that it takes into account the intersectionality of this issue, when it comes to sexism and racism, but also the specifics of anti-Indigenous racism, capitalism and systemic racism, environmental racism, and the respective intersections with gender. A gendered analysis thus not only looks at gender, or only at gender and race, it seeks to make the (often) invisible visible. It tries to look deeper than the aspect of gender and race when analyzing the issue of environmental injustice, and it tries to look beyond generalizations as a gendered analysis seeks to make invisible aspects of an issue visible through different lenses and perspectives.

This way of thinking behind gendered analysis has been used before, but without much theorizing. I want to call it 'gendered analysis' because other existing types of analysis do not

fully explain what I try to explain and analyze in my thesis. I was introduced to this ‘gendered approach’ during a class on gender in African political history, in which I read the works of Oyeronke Oyewumi (see 1997, 2005), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (see 2009, 2013), Sylvia Tamale (see 2013), and so on. The class was designed to teach us about how gender is important in African political history, by learning about important and influencing women in the African political sphere in the 20th century, and how it can nuance the single story on African catastrophe we have been taught in Western schools and through Western media. But the texts taught me that looking to make visible what has been made invisible, can reveal more aspects to a story than only gender differences.

The most important take-away from Oyewumi’s, Tamale’s, and Adichie’s writings when it comes to studying women in history, is that gender, as an analytical tool, can enable us to write history in a more nuanced way. Academic studies, especially Global Studies, are often in need of nuance, as research subjects cannot be fully understood from only one perspective. Therefore, taking into account more than one perspective can greatly improve academic studies. Most of history are written from a male’s perspective, a male’s eye on what happened, a male’s experience of events, but it also means a Western perspective. A great analogy I found in Adichie’s TedTalk on *The Danger of the Single Story* (Adichie 2009) – in which she talks about the power of stories, and how a single story can never be representative of the full picture – as she says that only one story [of her life] would “flatten her experience and overlook so many other stories that formed her”. Analogously, when a phenomenon or injustice or experience of a phenomenon or injustice is reduced to only a single story, only one subpart of a complex issue, this greatly degrades the complexity of the issue and completely ignores other parts that make up its complexity. So when environmental injustice issues are only analyzed from a one-dimensional framework (such as class or race for that matter), it degrades the experience of other social categories, such as Indigenous women. People suffering an injustice have diverse identities and thus cannot be grouped into one social category, so if an injustice is only analyzed with one social category or through a one-dimensional approach, it cannot be understood in its entirety. When gender is part of the equation, a story becomes more nuanced, more complex, and at the same time more open to this complexity, and therefore more inclusive of different perspective than the dominant – male – one. I conclude from this that studying history from a gendered approach creates nuance and aids in understanding complexity, using this gendered approach for historical issues that continue to this day, has the same effect.

In essence, this gendered approach relies on the concept of intersectionality. Coined by scholar and lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality, at its start, was used to identify the unique experience of Black women at the intersection of race and gender. Crenshaw wrote about intersectionality as a Black feminist critique to the tendency of using gender and race as two separate categories of experience and analysis (1989, 2017). In her article *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, Crenshaw writes that this theoretical separation of categories of identity essentially erase the experiences of Black women, as dominant theories of discrimination are one-dimensional. However, as the quote by Audre Lorde goes, “There is no such thing as single-issue struggle, as we do not lead single-issue lives” (1982). Crenshaw argued along these lines as she writes that this one-dimensional framework of discrimination and subordination, which, according to her, only looks at the experience of otherwise-privileged inside the category, cannot effectively analyze the experience of Black women. In other words, her Black feminist criticism of feminism and anti-racism argues that the dominant theories of racism and sexism hold distorted analyses as it only takes into account one part of concepts that are more complex. “Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (Crenshaw 1989, 140). That last line is very important in this thesis, as it nearly summarizes what I intend to do with a gendered approach. The intersectionality that a gendered analysis draws into a work is especially important as I write about Indigenous women, and systemic and environmental racism.

The first use of Intersectionality was thus linked to the legal field and in academia to gender studies, but by now it has truly become multidisciplinary, as it is used by many more disciplines that deal with social inequalities and identities, such sociology, education, psychology, political sciences, and literary studies (Lutz 2015). Since its first use, but especially during the 2000s and 2010s, many scholars debated about what the term intersectionality means for academia and beyond, on what its meaning is exactly and how it should be applied (Davis 2008). Scholar Kathy Davis (2008) has written about intersectionality as a feminist theory and its potential downfalls and success – its ambiguity and open-endedness. I agree with Davis when she writes that it is exactly that which makes it a good feminist theory, because this ambiguity greatly embodies the “specific and fundamentally different logics of social divisions and inequalities as well as the different dynamics and outcomes of their intersections” (Davis 2008, 78). Other

scholars, like Katharina Walgenbach and Helma Lutz, tried to specify what intersectionality exactly is. Walgenbach (2010) regards intersectionality as a theoretical paradigm with its own set of terms, theoretical interventions, premises, problem definitions and suggested solutions. Lutz considers it a method, one that can detect the “overlapping and co-construction of visible and, at first sight invisible strands of inequality” (2015, 39).

2.2. Gendered analysis of Environmental Injustice

Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote about intersectionality to shed light on the erasure of the experiences of Black women in a one-dimensional framework of discrimination and the importance of intersectionality, similarly, this thesis investigates the often-invisible experience of Indigenous women in the specific phenomenon of environmental injustice.

Anti-Indigenous racism is rooted in colonialism, this will be further explained in Chapter 3: *The Historicity of Environmental Injustice*. Anti-Indigenous racism is a big part of the lived experience of Indigenous women in Canada today. Anti-Indigenous racism stems from prejudices and stereotypes that come from the us-them thinking that was established during settler colonial times (Loppie, Reading, and de Leeuw n.d.). Another aspect of the experience of Indigenous women in Canada is sexism, which, again, stems from colonial times, as the European settlers established a heteropatriarchal societal system to replace Indigenous societies (McNab 2006). This intersection of anti-Indigenous racism and sexism thus make up the experience of Indigenous women in Canada.

In pre-colonial Indigenous communities and cultures, women had various important roles, such as heads of households, teachers, leaders, advisors, and were valued and honored for their contributions as teachers and leaders. Grandmothers were often in a head position in their extended family and part of an informal women’s council, as they were seen as vital in families, as they understood family dynamics and therefore knew what was best for their extended family and the community (Stinson 2016). In contrast, in European society, which is a heteropatriarchal society, men were (and arguably still are) positioned above women. When European colonists introduced their societal practices and coerced Indigenous communities into patriarchal social rules, Indigenous women were pushed away from their leadership roles, as Europeans considered men to be head of a household, and believed that men dominate women in every aspect of life (Stinson 2016). Sexism and patriarchal roles, expectations, and

assumptions in Canada thus also stem from settler colonial times. This has been argued by many scholars in feminist and queer theory and Indigenous feminisms (see Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013; Morgensen 2012; A. Smith 2010). There are thus intrinsic connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy which put Indigenous women at a double and intersectional disadvantage in the new settler society, as it is both steeped in racial prejudice and gender inequality. Here, again, intersectionality is utterly important to understand the experience of Indigenous women. However, what many theories neglect to acknowledge is that Canada, to this day, is still a settler colonial society. This perspective and experience that is often overlooked in both settler colonial studies and feminist, women or gender studies (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013).

In their article *Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy* (2013), scholars Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill argue that gender and women's studies neglect this perspective and experience. Their criticism is that, when it comes to considerations of Indigenous women, settler colonialism is seen as a point in history, one from which Canada's contemporary society has progressed. Instead, it is imperative to acknowledge that settler colonialism is still part of today's societal structures and thus still impacts both Indigenous peoples and Neo-European Canadians, which they accomplish by addressing it through Native feminist theory. Similarly, gender and sexuality studies scholars Andrea Smith (2010) and Scott Lauria Morgensen (2021) respectively argue that settler colonial studies cannot be complete without taking into account gender and sexuality, as they are intrinsic parts of heteropatriarchal societies tailored for and by settler colonialism. Indigenous feminisms, as a theory and practice of feminism, weaves the two – settler colonial studies and gender, sexuality, and feminist studies – together, as it addresses how gender and sexuality and the intersection with race, age, ability, and social class, shape Indigenous people's lives in a society that operates on structures of sexism, racism, and colonialism (Barker 2015; Nickel and Snyder 2019).

Indigenous feminisms are an important part of the make-up of the gendered analysis in this thesis. I intend with this thesis to take on these criticisms of settler colonial studies and gender and feminist theories by using the gendered analysis that takes into account intersectionality and indigenous feminisms when analyzing and investigation the issue of environmental injustice and Indigenous women. Understanding that sexism and racism are part of the lived experience of Indigenous women in Canadian society, a settler colonial and heteropatriarchal

society, is important to be able to understand their experience enough to be able to study, analyze, and investigate the specific experience of environmental injustice, as environmental justice is also a product of settler colonialism (as will be discussed in chapter 3). Sexism and racism are thus both part of environmental injustice when it comes to the impact on Indigenous women. This is also what I think CEJS, explained in the literature review, lacks if it wants to investigate and fully understand the experience of Indigenous women.

2.3. *Mi'kmaw women*

As a result of environmental injustice and environmental racism, Indigenous women face risks such as health issues and violence against their bodies. Two issues that have reached the international media, concerning Mi'kmaw women, and Indigenous women in Canada in general too, are the crisis of MMIWG (Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls) and the protest against the Alton Gas project. Both issues are dealt with on a deeper level in Chapter 4 and 5 but are worth mentioning here to highlight the importance of a gendered analysis of these issues, the first looking at violence because of environmental injustice, and the second one at activism against environmental injustice.

MMIWG is a movement that raises awareness of the increasing number of missing and murdered women and girl in Canada and the United States (Morin 2022), a human rights crisis disproportionately affecting Indigenous women and girls with roots in colonial practices – “White male colonizers raped Native women at epidemic rates, and justified their actions because Indigenous peoples were labeled savages and less than human” (Morin 2020). The way Indigenous women are devalued and dehumanized because of their identity in a settler colonial and heteropatriarchal society makes them “prime targets for violence” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Canada) et al. 2019, 35). A natural gas project by Goldboro LNG that was proposed for Nova Scotia in 2021, right next to the Paq'tnkek First Nation, one of the 13 Mi'kmaq communities on Nova Scotia, would pose a threat to Indigenous women and girls, according to MMIWG advocates. The project would require work camp nearby of five thousand workers, also called a ‘man camp’. In the 2019 report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls, a link was drawn between these workers camps of resource extraction industries and violence against Indigenous women, and the report deemed it necessary for the industry to take into account the safety of Indigenous women when planning their projects (Meloney 2021; National Inquiry into Missing

and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Canada) et al. 2019). The specifics of this issue will be dealt with in later chapters, but the important take-away here is that Indigenous women do face a disproportionate risk of violence, stemming from environmental injustice, meaning that environmental injustice needs the perspective of a gendered analysis, because without it this experience would be overlooked or pushed aside as not related to extractive industry practices, intended for capitalist profit by means of territorial occupation and exploitation of Indigenous land and resources, with the result of the contamination and destruction of the environment (Waldron 2018c). The understanding of environmental injustice should go further than only its impact on ecology and the environment, a gendered analysis can make sure that it does.

The second example of activism, pertaining to the Mi'kmaq First Nation, is that of Alton Gas. Indigenous women of the Sipekne'katik, Millbrook, and other Mi'kmaq have been leading activist movements and campaigns against this project since the start of its development in 2014. The literature review chapter already briefly touched upon this subject. A Treaty Truck House – which refers to the Peace and Friendship Treaties that give Indigenous communities the right to establish such a Truck House, historically for trade foodstuffs, now strategically used to block the entrance to the river, so Alton Gas workers couldn't access it – was established in 2016 by “Water Protectors” (Vandevoorde 2019). Grassroots resistance activities against the Alton Gas project have been organized through this Truck House, led by “Grandmother” Dorene Bernard. She also set up a Facebook page for the Truck House, from which funds are raised for the cause, and from which educational activities are organized to inform the wider public of the issues and injustices related to the Alton project (Waldron 2018c).

Indigenous women are particularly taking the lead to fight against the environmental violence against their communities. A “web of inequalities” and makes them “more susceptible and vulnerable [to] violence on their bodies, lands, and communities” (Waldron 2018c, 251). The historical impacts, and intersectional experiences of anti-Indigenous racism and heteropatriarchal sexism is thus vital to the understanding of how Indigenous women experience environmental injustice in Canada.

3. The Historicity of Environmental Injustice

Various scholars, such as Michael Mascarenhas (2007), Ingrid R. G. Waldron (2018), Kyle Powys Whyte, and Patrick Wolfe (2006), have argued that environmental injustice is a result of settler colonialism occupying Indigenous land. This chapter firstly introduces the argument that environmental injustice is a result of colonialism and explains how the arrival of the Europeans and their settlements on Indigenous lands have manifested in environmental injustices against Indigenous communities. Secondly, it studies the relationship between settlers and First Nations, through the most important aspect, namely treaties, and how it has evolved since the first European settlement until now. Thirdly, this chapter looks into the specific practices of environmental injustice in the colonial era up until today.

3.1. A result of colonialism?

Anti-Indigenous racism in Canada takes various forms, as it manifests in everyday expressions of bigotry and micro-aggressions (see Essed 2008) such as stereotyping, stigmatization, and direct violence, but it also structurally operates within government policies, judicial systems, and healthcare. The history of racial discrimination is also important in the understanding of how environmental injustices, a specific form of structural racism, operate and are experienced by Indigenous people. Racist prejudices and discrimination in Canada today stem from European settlement in the 17th and 18th century. When the Europeans started to colonize the Americas, they started to categorize identity based on race, before that time, they mainly looked at identity through religion and language (Hannaford 1996; Reading n.d.). Out of this differentiation of races also came the ideology that some races are inferior to others, with “Caucasian or White” – themselves – at the top, with the goal to create, and afterwards maintain, discriminatory hierarchies in the colonies (Allen 1994; Reading n.d.; A. Smedley 1999; B. Smedley 2012).

These discriminatory social divisions are thus solely based on false assumptions on the relation between biology and social value, and were created to justify the inhumane treatment of certain groups – non-Whites – at the advantages of European settlers, who could then also justify and maintain their position of political, economic, and socio-cultural power (Heldke and O'Connor 2004; Loppie, Reading, and de Leeuw n.d.; Reading n.d.; Summit on Indigenous Peoples 2003). In contemporary Canadian society, a continued racialized social hierarchy, Indigenous people are othered and discriminated against to justify continued colonial acts (such as

environmental racism) that harm, disadvantage and oppress them (de Leeuw, Kobayashi, and Cameron 2011; Loppie, Reading, and de Leeuw n.d.).

In Global Studies, space, race, and the environment are linked together to create global space. This global space makes up the context in which Indigenous peoples experience past and present. Space, or land, are vital to Indigenous livelihood, as well as nature and the environment. Therefore, when Indigenous lands are polluted by extractive and invasive industries, or when Indigenous communities are forced to move onto reserves, this forms an attack on Indigenous livelihood. George Lipsitz (2007) speaks of the racialization of space and the spatialization of race, which, in other words, means that different racial groups are linked to different spaces through discrimination. Lipsitz makes his case for the United States, but it could also be applied to the Indigenous communities of Canada (cf e.g., the movie “There’s Something in the Water” by Daniels and Page). His theory is based on the link between race, space, and power. He argues that this linkage has a long history in North America, starting with practices and policies that led to the displacement of First Nations in the age of westward expansion, continuing with restrictive covenants in the industrial period, and more recently through urban restructuring. These practices go hand in hand with the idea of a “pure space” in White and rich communities – a concept which stems from the colonization of North America when the Europeans wanted to create a pure and homogenous space for themselves (i.e., a white space) – which led to exclusion and competition and result in the deterioration of racial spaces (2007). In essence, environmental racism, which lies at the spatial aspect of environmental injustice and will be discussed in a later chapter, is based on this theory. Often, Black and Indigenous communities are situated in lesser spaces, near an industrial site, with no health codes, no clean drinking water, no access to traditional resources, etc.

These ties between race, space and power have a history well into the settler-colonialism period, as Lipsitz has argued. First Nations were pushed off their traditional territories, into reserves, just as the Mi’kmaq nation was removed from Mi’kma’ki when the settler migrants claimed their land, in practice often referred to as “land appropriation”. These reserves consisted of smaller territories than the traditional lands of the Indigenous communities with less natural and no access to their traditional resources. The initial purpose of reserves was the so-called civilizing mission of colonizers and missionaries, which had the aim of imposing the sedentary lifestyle and Catholicism on the Indigenous peoples (Bartlett 1990; Mccue 2011b).

The author Kyle Powys Whyte (2018) explains how environmental injustice is rooted in settler colonialism through a study on how it psychologically works to undermine the human relationship of the Indigenous to nature. He argues that settler colonialism is a form of violence, as the ecological domination violently disrupts this relationship and undermines the Indigenous peoples' social resilience as self-determining collectives. The argument that settler colonialism is a disruptive violence has been made by various scholars and writers. Vanessa Watts has said that "the measure of colonial interaction with land has historically been one of violence, where land is to be accessed, not learned from or a part of" (2013, 26). Patrick Wolfe writes: "Land is life – or, at least, land is necessary for life. Thus contest for land can be – indeed, often are – contests for life" (2006, 387). Lee Maracle claims that "violence to earth and violence between humans are connected." (2015, 53). J.M. Bacon has also attributed "the disruption of Indigenous eco-social relations" to "colonial ecological violence" (2018, 1). The Women's Earth Alliance and The Native Youth Sexual Health Network have described the "devastating impacts of environmental violence" caused by "colonially supported extractive industries" in their report 'Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies' (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016). Environmental violence, in its various forms, is therefore a big part of environmental injustice against Indigenous land and peoples, and will thus be discussed in a later chapter. Whyte has defined environmental injustice as outcome of settler colonial domination on an ecological level as follows,

"At the surface level, environmental violence manifests as the imposition of environmental destruction and pollution. At another level, it is possible to look at environmental violence as undermining the qualities of relationships that are constitutive of any society's social resilience or collective continuance" (2018, 140).

Whyte (2018) argues that settler colonialism is a process of one society moving onto the space of one or more other societies permanently, and therewith realize their homeland onto the space of the Indigenous homelands. One aspect of this process is a social one, which relies on the concept of 'collective continuance', which Whyte defines as the social resilience of a people to survive with and in their ecology, or "Indigenous adaptive capacity" (2018, 137). The social process of settler colonialism would try to implement the settlers' ecology in favor of their collective continuance and at the expense of the Indigenous ecology and social resilience. The act of breaking down the Indigenous peoples' collective continuance is what Whyte calls, "one of the environmental injustice-making aspects of settler colonialism." Another aspect is the

unsustainability of settler colonialism which creates a myriad of environmental problems. Connected to Lipsitz's theory, these aspects are constituted by the environment oppressed populations (have to) live in under settler dominion, as these environments/spaces have more pollution and less capacity to connect with nature (Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009; Whyte 2018).

3.2. *Indigenous-European and Indigenous-Canadian relations*

3.2.1. Peace and Friendship Treaties

As environmental injustice continues colonial practices, this chapter delves into the relations between the First Nations and the colonizers/settlers. In this relationship, treaties form the constitutional basis of the ties between both. Indigenous treaties in Canada date back to the first European settlements in North America in the 17th century, when Europeans and First Nations set up elaborate diplomatic relations, known now as the Covenant Chain (Hall 2017). The Mi'kmaq, being a First Nation at the Atlantic Sea, were among the first to engage with European explorers, traders, and settlers. Through the colonial wars between France and Britain for North American land in the 17th and 18th century, the Mi'kmaq and their greater Indigenous alliance, the Wabanaki Confederacy, were largely allied with the French forces, but also signed various treaties with the British. These treaties were the start of a series, now commonly known as the Peace and Friendship Treaties (Mcgee 2008; Wallace 2018).

These treaties between the British and the First Nations living in the North American regions now known as the Canadian Maritimes Provinces, focused on promises of peace and friendship – hence their name (Wallace 2018). The first treaty, the Treaty of Boston, signed in 1725-26, ended the Dummer's War between the Wabanaki nations and the British, as the former promised to end hostilities and the latter to stop interfering in Indigenous practices of fishing, hunting, and gathering. However, the conflicts did not end there. The Mi'kmaq continued to protest and fight against the British military presence and settlements on Wabanaki lands, as it threatened their villages, territories, and fishing and hunting grounds (Wallace 2018). More treaties were signed and renegotiated during various attempts for peace between the Mi'kmaq and the British Crown, but as the treaties were understood in different ways by both parties, namely oral and textual respectively, the peace was often short-lived (Hall 2017; Wallace 2018). The most significant treaties are the 1752 Halifax Treaty, which ended the Anglo-Micmac War, and the treaty of 1760-61, which confirmed Britain's intention to protect

Indigenous land rights. The latter is still celebrated in Nova Scotia on October 1st as Treaty Day commemorating the signing of the Peace and Friendship Treaties and is especially important to the Mi'kmaq as they have used them to defend their Indigenous rights (Wallace 2018).

3.2.2. Circumstances in the 19th and 20th century

British Loyalist migrants started to settle in what are now known as the Maritime Provinces of Canada, which ultimately led to the creation of Upper and Lower Canada. During and mostly after the American Revolution, the relationship between the British Crown and the Mi'kmaq changed significantly. Due to a mass influx of migrants, the new settler governments were less inclined to respect the Peace and Friendship treaties and created reserves to push the First Nations off their land. These reserves were usually smaller than their territories and provided no access to traditional resources for survival. The settler governments served under the Royal Proclamation, which made no mention of Maritime colonies and therefore provided ammunition for the settlers to ignore Mi'kmaq and Wabanaki rights (Mcgee 2008; Wallace 2018).

British and later Canadian rule did not respect the Mi'kmaq nation. The settler governments continually attempted to alter the Mi'kmaq Indigenous lifestyle through assimilation practices. For example, the Mi'kmaq were pushed into agricultural labor, but most of these moves failed. As the economic governance privileged labor employment, the Mi'kmaq had to adopt other labor work such as crafts, coopering, road, rail and lumber work. These professions would integrate them in the 19th and 20th century economy, but also leave them socially isolated (Mcgee 2008). Next to economic dislocation, the Mi'kmaq were also subjected to residential schools leading to cultural and generational dislocation (Mcgee 2008). Moreover, reserves were not only a practice under British governance, as in the 1940s the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs displaced several Mi'kmaq communities of over 2,000 people in total to move onto reserves, for the sake of 'government administration streamlining' (Mcgee 2008).

3.2.3. Red Paper

In 1968-69, the Canadian Federal Liberal Government drafted a new Indian policy, then under leadership of Pierre Trudeau. It served as a response to the activism of Indigenous leaders (termed the "Indian problem" by the administration) and promised a break from oppressive and

discriminatory policies toward a just and equal society. However, the White Paper, as the new policy became known, did not honor the demands of the Indigenous leaders, who asked for integrity from Canadians by honoring treaty rights and through land restitution and self-determination. On the contrary, the White Paper prescribed political and legal assimilation into Canadian society, and thus did not signify a break from oppression and discrimination, but instead, more of the same (Pasternak and King 2019). The Red Paper was drafted as a response a year later, in 1970, by the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA). The Red Paper provided an alternative to the policy document of the Canadian government. It can thus be seen as political resistance against the assimilation proposed in the White Paper. Two key points stating the political assertion by the IAA, were made in the Red Paper. Firstly, it highlighted and reiterated the historical treaties and their continuing importance for the relationship between the First Nations and the federal government today. Secondly, it directly opposed the individual self-governance model laid out in the White Paper, and proposed a model based on collectiveness (Bear 2001; Meijer-Drees 2002).

However, this Red Paper and the IAA also received critique on their moral positions. Due to colonial practices of Christianization and residential schools, according to Harold Cardinal, “the old religion of the Indian’s forefathers slowly twisted” (as cited in Pasternak and King 2019, 6) and manifested the dismantling of the power of women, the removal of hunting ceremonies, and the rise of homophobia and direct violence in Indigenous communities. In 2018, a new Red Paper was published in the form of a report called ‘Land Back’, by the Yellowhead Institute. The report proposes Indigenous alternatives to current Canadian policies on land and resource management, based on self-determination and land restitution. In this way, it tries to follow the tradition of the 1970 Red Paper and, moreover, the tradition of Indigenous women who challenged the original Red Paper. “This report has been drafted with attention to those speaking back against the Western, masculine, and exclusionary politics and values that many in our communities have adopted and practice” (Pasternak and King 2019, 6). The report is needed because “tragically little has changed since 1968-1970” and “there are also emerging debates to reflect on and work through together” (Pasternak and King 2019, 6). In other words, the Land Back report deals with not only the continuing issues of rights, title and jurisdiction through federal and provincial bureaucracy and industry, but also with conversations about what Indigenous reclamation of land and water can look like for the Indigenous communities, by increasingly turning inwards (Pasternak and King 2019).

3.2.4. Canadian-Indigenous relations in the 21st century

In 2006-07, the Mi'kmaq nation, the province of Nova Scotia, and the Government of Canada signed a Framework Agreement for the Made in Nova Scotia Process, which is aimed at the promotion of “efficient, effective, orderly and timely negotiations towards a resolution of issues respecting Mi'kmaq rights and title” (Made-in-Nova Scotia Process: Framework Agreement 2007). Thus, the agreement states that the three parties will enter into negotiations about how to continue building on existing relationships and to reach consensus on the implementation of Indigenous rights and on division of responsibilities over issues of land, resources and governance (Government of Canada n.d.; Made-in-Nova Scotia Process: Framework Agreement 2007).

In February 2018, the Canadian Government stated its commitment to a renewal of Section 35 of the Constitution, the constitutional protection of Aboriginal and Treaty rights, through a new ‘Recognition and Implementation of Indigenous Rights Framework’ (Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada 2018). Through this framework, the Canadian Government declares to seek new policies and legislation, made in cooperation with the Mi'kmaq people and the ‘Made in Nova Scotia Process’, that will form the basis of all relations between Indigenous Peoples and the federal government (Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada 2018). However, similarly to the White Paper of 1969, this new legislative framework has been criticized by Mi'kmaq author Sherry Pictou for being a mere re-articulation of older assimilation and dispossession policies to look like narratives of self-determination and reconciliation, or in other words “colonial politics of recognition” (Pictou 2018; Coulthard, as cited in Pictou 2018). Moreover, Pictou argues that this framework is a new attempt at the neo-liberalization of Indigenous Treaty Rights for the mere sake of economic development through the commodification of nature, and therefore directly oppose most Indigenous worldviews which see land, water and humans as interdependent (Pictou 2018).

3.2.5. Broken promises?

Treaties between colonists and Indigenous peoples were almost never upheld, the main reasons for violation being self-serving and profit-oriented on the colonizers’ side and claims to right of self-determination and to land on the First Nations’ side. Disputes over treaties and the treaty relationship arise over understandings, as treaties have consistently had different meanings for the different sides. The oral agreements that went along with the signing of the treaties has

more importance (than its written text), according to First Nations. Arguments and disagreement over treaties is a continuing practice since the first treaty in 1725-26, and the source of historical misunderstandings over the 'text' and 'context' (Wicken 2002). However, the Peace and Friendship treaties still have historical and legal importance for Indigenous rights in Canada to this day (Hall 2017; Wicken 2002).

In the 1990s, a landmark ruling over Mi'kmaq fishing and hunting rights reconfirmed the treaty rights of First Nations, as signed in the 1760-61 Treaty with the British Crown. Donald Marshall Jr. was on trial for fishing and selling eel without a federal license. As a Mi'kmaq man, Marshall argued that he had the right to fish as per the treaty his ancestors signed in 1761 with the British Crown, and that this treaty superseded federal legislation on fisheries. The federal government decided that Marshall was subject to federal law, as his ancestors were subject to British law, a decision to which Mi'kmaq communities openly disagreed. The case went to the Canadian Supreme Court and became a historical case for First Nations hunting and fishing rights, as it affirmed the First Nations right to 'Moderate Livelihood', based on the rights established in the Peace and Friendship treaties of 1760-61 (Butts 2009; Wicken 2002).

Another example can be found in Boat Harbour Nova Scotia. The Mi'kmaq who live here are the Pictou Landing First Nation, they have been facing the disastrous environmental effects of a pulp-and-paper mill and resulting effluent since its opening in the 1965. A'se'k, as Boat Harbour and the shoreline of the bay was called before colonization, used to be an Indigenous refuge for the Pictou. Even though the Pictou leadership showed concern about the environmental impact, the mill company Northern Pulp and the Nova Scotia administration assured them, falsely, that the water and lands would not be affected, thus a compromise was reached based on these lies (Page and Daniels 2019). Boat Harbour is being polluted for over 50 years now by the effluent treatment facility of the mill and is causing serious health issues for the Pictou Landing communities due to the toxic effluent. Since 2014, after several effluent leaks, the Mi'kmaq have been protesting the treatment facility, and the provincial government has promised numerous of times to close the facility but has never come through with this promise. Several discussions with the government led to an agreement for the acknowledgement of the harm of the facility, but also a proposed closure date of the effluent facility. The Nova Scotia Government enforced a law to close the facility by January 31, 2020, a date the Pictou Landing were not okay with but compromised on. However, this law only refers to the effluent treatment facility, not the entire mill. The Northern Pulp company thus

planned to build a new treatment facility which would dump the toxic waste in the Northumberland Strait, instead of in Boat Harbour (J. Martin 2019; Page and Daniels 2019). “They’re proposing [...] a new treatment plant that just takes it from our backyard and puts it in our front yard.” (Page and Daniels 2019, ’43). This plan merely shifted the waste to other Pictou Landing waters and sparked public outrage as the waters are a site of Indigenous and commercial fishing.

3.3. Practices of environmental injustice

3.3.1. The Colonial Era

As argued in the sub-chapters above, environmental injustice against Indigenous peoples in Canada is rooted in settler colonial practices. The act of taking land and using land in an unsustainable way is harmful not only to the environment but also for the Indigenous communities and their health. This chapter aims to dissect the practices that constitute environmental injustice. Through land appropriation, the settlers have disrupted the relationship between nature and the Indigenous. Moreover, settler governments disconnected Indigenous peoples from their environment by putting them in reserves inadequate for their specific livelihood depended on natural resources. Assimilation practices, such as residential schools, further this disassociation even more.

Patrick Wolfe (2006) claims that the settler colonist destroys to replace, which often quite literally meant the elimination of the First Nations, but figuratively also results in the erasure of traditions and livelihoods of the Indigenous. For the sake of expansion of the colonial state and under the guise of discovery, European settlers would take land from the Indigenous peoples and blame the murderous character of the process on inevitability (Wolfe 2006). The oppressive relationship between settler colonists and the Indigenous peoples can be interpreted as the cause of environmental injustice against First Nation communities in Canada (Whyte 2018). Whyte explains as follows: “Settler colonialism can be interpreted as a form of environmental injustice that wrongfully interferes with and erases the socioecological contexts required for Indigenous populations to experience the world as a place infused with responsibilities to humans, nonhumans and ecosystems” (Whyte 2016, 179). In essence, Whyte (2016) claims that settler ecologies have to replace Indigenous ecologies, as the Indigenous ecologies and its societal, political and economic systems have nothing in common with the systems which the settlers seek to inscribe onto the land. “For settlers, Indigenous

socioecological contexts challenge their claims to have honorable and credible religious missions, universal property rights and exclusive political and cultural sovereignty.” (Whyte 2016, 191).

Canada’s colonial mercantile history is characterized by the exportation of raw resources from the colony to Britain. British trading companies were thus put in charge of the mapping of and early settlement on now Canadian land. For example, the Hudson’s Bay Company, a fur trading business chartered in 1670 and one of the oldest incorporated joint-stock merchandising company in the Anglosphere, was important in the history of the colonization of British North America and the development of Canada, as European demand for North American fur in the 17th century made it into a major economic enterprise (Ray 2009). These trading companies worked on behalf of the British Crown in order for it to secure easy access to resources and also survey the land for settlement (Preston 2013). “This history of corporate and government alliance, which ultimately functioned to strip Indigenous Nations of their land base, is still at work.” (Preston 2013, 48). Settlement on Indigenous land translated into displacement of Indigenous communities as the settler colonists appropriated their resource-rich land and pushed the communities onto reserves, which were often very low in resources necessary for viability of Indigenous livelihood (Preston 2013). Moreover, First Nations were subjected to policies of assimilation into the settler’s (capitalist) way of life, such as a sedentary lifestyle on reserves, education in missionary schools, etc. and to cultural erasure and destruction through prohibition of traditional Indigenous practices, such as ceremonies, dances, and singing (McCue 2011a).

These colonial practices of land appropriation and cultural assimilation are connected through, results of, and in function of the capitalist practices of the settlers. Combined, they form a threat to Indigenous livelihoods not only socially but also environmentally. Mercantilist and consequently capitalist thinking, colonial profit-seeking practices, and social and environmental injustices prove to be different sides of the same coin. Settler colonialism and the way it harms First Nations is definitely not only a historical phenomenon, as its practices and processes are operating to this day, but now rather concealed (or not) through a neoliberal framework (Preston 2013).

3.3.2. *Capitalist extractive and invasive industries; neoliberal reform in the 20th and 21st century*

Neoliberal reform in Canada in the 1990s introduced various new policies especially dangerous to First Nations, as it aggravated historical inequalities concerning their health and well-being. These neoliberal policies constituted a new form of environmental governance in Canada, which greatly impaired Indigenous opportunities to participate in said governance, even though it affects their health and welfare. In Michael Mascarenhas' words, "this new form of environmental governance is particularly harmful to marginalized groups, such as First Nations in Canada" (2007, 568). Neoliberal reform aims to roll back (environmental) laws and regulatory safeguards in order to enhance the efficiency of free markets, free trade, and the expansion of private property. However, neoliberalism is based on forms of extractive capitalist industries and unsustainable production which disproportionately impacts the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples (Harvey 2003). Mascarenhas calls this neoliberal environmental governance a "new style of ecological and economic colonialism", which carries a hostility towards First Nations as "it reduces their capacities to counter the complex and multiple environmental injustices that neo-liberalism produces" (2007, 565). Ingrid R. G. Waldron argues along the same lines in her article *Women on the Frontlines*, as she writes about the disproportionate impacts of environmental violence on Indigenous and Black women in Canada: "The most significant challenge Indigenous and Black women leading grass-roots movements face in addressing environmental violence is the absence of legal tools that acknowledge, respond to, and address entrenched colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy" (Waldron 2018d, 264).

The study of neo-imperialism by David Harvey (2003) sheds light on the practices of the neoliberal reform of Canadian environmental governance, as he takes Marx's dialectical method and description of primate accumulation in order to explain the practices of injustice. The dialectical method shows that (neo)liberalism in its essence will not produce a 'rising tide floats all boats' scenario as neoliberalist politicians claim, but on the contrary will produce even more social inequality. Harvey (2003) and Mascarenhas (2007) argue that neoliberalism is a phase of capitalist development, which is increasingly concerned with primitive accumulation, just as colonialism was, and therefore label it as neo-imperialism and ecological neo-colonialism respectively. Harvey underbuilds this argument through the various processes linked to accumulation Karl Marx had described, including, "the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; instating exclusive

private property rights; commodification of labor power and the suppression of alternative, Indigenous, forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets, including natural resources; ..." (2003, 74). The neoliberal reform in Canada thus introduced neo-colonial policies and practices that are still aimed at the expulsion and erasure of Indigenous communities of their land and from their traditional livelihoods.

Mascarenhas (2007) has written about how neoliberal reform has affected Indigenous communities in Canada, and how some specific policies, for example on water governance, have disproportionately affected these communities. His research, based in Ontario, shows that First Nations situated closely to water, with historical ties to water, and located near major industrial and agricultural land uses, have all been disproportionately harmed by neoliberal reform. Moreover, he argues that it has resulted in the exacerbation of "historical disparities in the health, environment and well-being of First Nations in southern Ontario." (Mascarenhas 2007, 568). As traditional fisher- and lobstermen, the Mi'kmaq have been affected by the Canadian neo-liberalization in Nova Scotia too, as the province's predominant industries comprise of land use activities, such as agriculture, mining, forestry, fishery, etc.

Whyte also discusses industrial activities of settler societies. He argues that the settler's social institutions and especially ecological systems are very unsustainable for Indigenous territories and land. Firstly, the means of 'settling' the settler's way of life on land, such as "deforestation, extraction, water and land pollution, commodity agriculture, urban sprawl, widespread automobile adoption, and so on" (Whyte 2016, 191–92), and secondly, the industrialization of the relationships between humans and nonhuman entities, such as "forests cleared for agriculture, mountainsides stripped for mining, and places of beauty separated from human non-recreational activities such as Indigenous traditions." (Whyte 2016, 192), are both settlers' phenomena which Whyte emphasizes as extremely unsustainable for the homelands. This is a result of the settlers knowing "little about the land that is new to them and [holding] cultural and economic values associated with their expectations for a certain way of life" (Whyte 2016, 192).

Next to its harmful environmental practices, neoliberalism also seeks to frame environmental governance debates in a way that gives little to no recognition to the collective cultural and spiritual values and local practices that link First Nations to their environment.

Uncoincidentally, it lies in Canada's colonial legacy to systematically disassociate Indigenous peoples from their traditional land and resources (Mascarenhas 2007, 572). In sum, neoliberal reform does not only harm the environment itself, on which First Nations rely for survival, it also greatly disrupts the relation between First Nations and nature. Indigenous people have to bear the biggest burden of the negative environmental impacts of neoliberalism, but they are also prevented from legitimately participating in the decision-making process of environmental governance. These aspects together constitute the deep-rooted and complex environmental injustices against First Nations in Canada (Mascarenhas 2007, 573–74). Continued settler colonialist practices and processes, under the veil of 'development', still operate within a contemporary neoliberal framework and can be difficult to identify, track and dismantle (Preston 2013). Under the guise of economic opportunities for all, resource extraction policies are legitimized through a capitalist and neoliberal frame. However, this merely "obscures and normalizes processes of environmental racism, Indigenous oppression and violence." (Preston 2013, 43).

4. Impact of Environmental Injustice on Indigenous women

For this chapter I base myself on studies by influential authors and institutions in the fields of environmental racism, gendered violence and Indigenous rights, such as Ingrid Waldron, Michael Mascarenhas, the CRIAW-ICREF (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women – Institut canadien de recherches sur les femmes), the Women’s Earth Alliance, and Amnesty International Canada. First, I want to repeat how environmental racism disproportionately affects Indigenous communities, as already explained in the literature review in Chapter 1. Environmental racism is the implementation of racist environmental policies (as a continuation of colonial legacy and settler colonial practices, which is discussed in Chapter 3), placing extractive industries and toxic facilities in communities of people of color, and excluding these communities from environmental decision-making (Bullard 1990; Chavis 1994; Waldron 2018b). It has a myriad of detrimental effects on Indigenous communities, including environmental violence. I argue that these effects cannot be investigated without taking on a gendered approach, as intersectionality and historical context are vital to the understanding of the experiences of these effects. Some of the writers and institutions I mention agree, but some also neglect to take into account the multidimensionality of environmental injustices.

Scholar Ingrid Waldron explains how environmental racism disproportionately affects Mi’kmaq and Black communities on Nova Scotia in an article about the ENRICH project (Waldron 2018a). This project named Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities, and Community Health, discussed further in Chapter 5, looks into the socioeconomic and health effects of environmental racism through an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological approach, and through a lens that takes into account the historical processes and ongoing colonial legacy of Canada. This project was set up to address the concerns voiced by Black and Mi’kmaq communities about the health effects of environmental racism. The detrimental effects that Indigenous communities experience from toxic facilities in their vicinity, such as landfills, industrial power generation stations, incinerators, sewage treatment plants, factories, refineries, pulp and paper mills, oil and gas extraction, and hazardous waste storage are disproportionate consequences of climate change, water contamination, waste disposition, toxins, and pollutions. The ENRICH project rightfully points out that “[Indigenous] communities are often located in close proximity to landfills [and other toxic facilities] because of the government’s removal of environmental protection requirements” (Waldron 2015, 3).

Environmental racism, the contamination and destruction of the territories and environments Indigenous communities live in the vicinity of, and rely on for their livelihood, by extractive industries and its need for continuous streams of resources for profit, are the practices that threaten the health and wellbeing of and exercise environmental violence against Indigenous people.

Another project, carried out by the Women's Earth Alliance and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, titled *Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies*, looks into the impact of extractive industries on the health and safety of Indigenous women and young people in North America. They link the health of the land and bodies of Indigenous communities in order to explain environmental violence, as extractive industries have contaminated and destroyed Indigenous land, but also, and especially, the bodies of Indigenous women and young people. Environmental violence stems from environmental racism but looks at the specific impacts on the bodies and well-being of the harmed, what these discriminatory practices mean for Indigenous people. This project has documented the ways in which environmental racism and violence impact Indigenous women, such as "sexual and domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, murders and disappearances, reproductive illnesses and toxic exposure, threats to culture and Indigenous lifeways, crime, and other social stressors" (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 2). Their report points out that Indigenous women are submitted to increased violence because of the intersection of "extractive industry, the violence that accompanies it" and "already [being] targets of systemic violence and generational trauma" (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 9). The report cites available research to show that in Canada, Indigenous women are almost three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to report a violent crime, and that the national homicide rate of Indigenous women is more than seven times higher than for non-Indigenous women (Amnesty International Canada 2014; and Horwitz 2014; as cited by Konsmo and Pacheco 2016).

4.1. Violence

The *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies* (VLVB) project highlights the severity of sexual violence and of the issue of MMIWG in Indigenous communities. The MMIWG (Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls) crisis is discussed throughout this thesis as it is an issue that impacts Indigenous women in disproportionate ways and is a consequence both of continuing colonial practices of racism and sexism, and of environmental racism. The

VLVB report points to “man camps” or “worker camps”, the housing for transient workforce – many of them men – that comes with extractive industry projects, as an explanation to the increase in rates of sexual violence in the Indigenous communities next to these projects (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016). The report draws a link between the presence of extractive industry projects, the violation of land and nature, and the increase in sexual violence and the rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirits. The report highlights the importance of including Two Spirits and members of the LGBTQ+ community, as this violence can also consist of homophobic and transphobic violence, which is often left out. “These are tragic links, whether it’s the disappearance of those community members from families that have been most outspoken against industry, or simply a result of the freedom with which the industry seems to operate within Indigenous territories” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 32).

Amnesty International has also reported on the MMIWG issue as a human rights crisis, as discussed before, and highlights five key issues, namely the role of racism and misogyny, the inequality in Indigenous women’s rights, the historic and ongoing mass removal of Indigenous children, the high amount of Indigenous women in Canadian prisons, and the inadequacy of police responses to violence against Indigenous women (Amnesty International 2004). In the past, the MMIWG crisis was largely ignored by the Canadian government. Indigenous women and The Native Women’s Association of Canada set up the Sisters in Spirit Initiative in 2004 to raise awareness about the issue, as they tried to set up a list of missing and murdered Indigenous women through testimonies of families and media reports. The Native Women’s Association of Canada’s effort came to fruition in 2015, when the federal government responded by launching the National Inquiry, which published its final report in 2019. Both the National Inquiry, as the Amnesty International report on MMIWG and Stolen Sisters, argue that the issue of violence against Indigenous women cannot be understood without taking into account the historical context of settler colonialism and the continuing legacy of racism and sexism, and the racialization and sexualization of Indigenous women in Canada today, which leads to an acceptance of violence against them (Amnesty International 2004; Brant 2017; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Canada) et al. 2019). What I want to add to the Amnesty International report is environmental injustice and environmental violence, as they clearly neglect to take this into account. Mi’kmaw women have spoken out about and protested this issue too, as industry projects have led to an increase of MMIWG in their communities too, as for example the proposed Goldboro Project, which

would introduce a big “man camp” next to their community, discussed earlier. It is important to acknowledge the role of environmental injustice in the MMIWG issue, as the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report has done too by, for example, urging existing and new industry projects to take this issue into account when planning (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Canada) et al. 2019). However, since the inquiry, the numbers of MMIWG in Mi’kmaq communities has not decreased, so community members have taken it onto themselves to survey concerns regarding the project and protest its implementation (Meloney 2021).

4.2. Health

Physical violence is not the only way that environmental violence impacts Indigenous women. Their reproductive and bodily health are affected by toxic contaminants, and these effects can often only be seen after years of unknown exposure. This leads to “high levels of toxins in breast milk, placenta cord blood, blood serum, and body fat, as well as infertility, miscarriages, premature births, premature menopause, reproductive system cancers” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 20), and more. These toxins are then inherited by the succeeding generations, from their mothers, which in turn leads to psychological, emotional, cultural, and economic damage to the entire community (Cook 2018; Konsmo and Pacheco 2016). Much of these toxic contaminants are also responsible for higher rates of cancer after long exposure (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016). Studies argue that even relatively low numbers of pollutants can increase the risk of cancer, respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, and for women increase the risk of birthing children with congenital malformations and heart diseases (Manning et al. 2018).

The *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies* report also highlights the increased problems with drug abuse and crime in Indigenous communities that are affected by extractive industries. The report points again to the influx of temporary workers that come with such industry projects. “Community members are introduced to these new addictions, which cause significant trauma within families, and these threats are only worsened by the increase of non-Indigenous people – mostly men – using and selling drugs while working for the industry” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 28). The increase in drug and alcohol abuse again leads to more domestic and systemic violence against Indigenous women. The report also highlights the drug use of community members as a result of the legacies of colonization, the disconnected from the land and from yourself. The increased numbers of drug abuse and crime are, however, not

accompanied with an increase in culturally safe harm reduction interventions and responses, as the report accounts. Therefore, the VLVB report argues that intervention is not enough when it comes to drug and alcohol use in and near Indigenous communities. Culturally safe harm reduction refers to the need to “reduce the harms of colonialism, imperialism, and environmental violence in a way that focuses on the self-determination of Indigenous bodies and Indigenous territories” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 30).

Contaminated water is one of the greatest issues that Indigenous communities face today. Companies behind extractive and polluting industries, and the Canadian government, know the risk that these industries put on the bodies of Indigenous communities, but this does not stop them from polluting the water as for them, water only has one use, profit. On reserves, it is a known fact that water is polluted (due to environmental racism (see White, Murphy, and Spence 2012)), as the government issues drinking water advisories, and on Indigenous territories, the government signs off on extractive industry projects that pollutes rivers, lakes, and the ocean (Mascarenhas 2007). In the Mi’kmaq First Nation, water is paramount for livelihood. Historically, the Mi’kmaq have relied on water surrounding and on their territory for fishing, but they also regard it as the “first medicine” (Mi’kmaq History n.d.), as it provides nourishment and protection (Mi’kmaq History Month website). In the documentary *There’s Something in the Water* (Page and Daniels 2019), created after the book with the same title by scholar Ingrid Waldron (2018b), a Mi’kmaw woman of the Pictou Landing First Nation explains that water is not just nature for them, but it acted “like a parent” because it “protected them, fed them when they were hungry, kept shelter” (Page and Daniels 2019, ’28). So when the Scott Paper pulp-and-paper mill was erected in 1965 – this project is discussed in Chapter 3.2.5, their protection, nourishment and shelter was under threat by a malicious project that had intently infiltrated the Pictou Landing’s land and water. Consequently, the water that the Pictou Landing communities relied on for their livelihood, such as fishing. Many community members have been lost to cancer and drug abuse as a consequence of the physical and psychological harm that came with the mill (Page and Daniels 2019, ’32-’38).

The *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies* report also documented harmful effects of pollutants and toxic contaminants dumped in water and on/in land, such as neurotoxicity, early onset of puberty in teenage girls and infertility, one particular example is mercury poisoning from a chemical and pulp mill, which happened in the 1960s, that is than inherited by children through birth and breastfeeding still to this day (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016). Living near or

downstream wastewater (as a product of extractive industry) create disproportionate risks to the environment and health, according to author Michael Mascarenhas (2007), and due to environmental racist practices, a lot of extractive industry projects are located in or nearby Indigenous communities.

4.3. Social, political, and cultural welfare

The *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies* report also investigates the social, political and cultural health of Indigenous nations, what the impacts of environmental violence are on self-determination and governance, and on families and communities. Similarly as to what I have argued in this thesis, the report argues that environmental injustices can only be fully understood when the role of heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and the history and continued legacy of settler colonialism of North America, are recognized and examined. This consequently also has an impact on the social, political, and cultural welfare of First Nations in Canada. The VLVB report argues that colonization, patriarchy and capitalism play a role in the “legalization and cultural acceptance of violence perpetrated against Native women” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 36), but also in the general struggle of Indigenous lands and bodies with “destructive and predatory industries” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 36).

The continued male-dominated systems of colonization completely disregard the leadership roles of women in Indigenous nations, and the neo-liberal agenda of governments displace women from their roles and positions in societies, which disrupts the social fabric and makes Indigenous women more vulnerable to marginalization and domestic, sexual, and systemic violence. The heteropatriarchal and neoliberal capitalist systems of today’s society – changing gender roles, increased economic and social instability and insecurity – form an attack on the traditional roles and status of Indigenous women within Nations. This in turn also threatens the sovereignty of the Nations as a whole, forming one of the most destructive ways in which extractive industries and environmental injustice erode Indigenous people’s ability to function as healthy communities (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016).

The socioeconomic situation of generational poverty in Indigenous communities is yet another way that environmental injustice undermines these communities’ efforts against extractive industries. Indigenous communities are one of the most impoverished in Canada, even though they live on resource-rich territories. The VLVB report explains that the way the government

and Canadian economic systems work is that Indigenous communities are held as economic hostages, as their socio-economic situation often disables them from choosing not to sign industry deals (territory lease, jobs, etc.), which creates a system lock-in. The economic system, supporting extractive industries and the government, becomes an environmental injustice as it keeps Indigenous communities poor and reliant on the industry that contaminates and destroys them and their territories (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016).

Socially, environmental violence also greatly disrupts the social fabric of Indigenous communities. Through the internalization of coloniality and the normalization of industrialization, divisiveness is created within Indigenous communities. So when, for example, Indigenous women work together in grassroots movements to fight against industry projects, this will get a lot of push back even from within their own communities. The social breakdown of these communities has created generational trauma, because of the reliance on industrial and governmental economic systems and the internalization of colonial practices, and hinders communities from coming together to stand up for their rights as it diminishes their collective power. The VLVB report argues that this can be solved through education and resistance efforts, to “wake up” and realize what is happening through learning, speaking and standing up, and resisting (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016). This is what many Indigenous women-led grassroots movements are trying to do, to raise awareness on environmental injustice and fight against it.

Loss of cultural practices are also an effect of environmental injustice worth looking into. Scholars have argued that extractive industries also lead to the loss of cultural/traditional practices (see Arruda and Krutkowski 2017; Baker and Westman 2018; Buckland and O’Gorman 2017; Nightingale et al. 2017), because cultural knowledge transfer is affected when community members are away from the community for extended periods of time to work for the industry, when certain practices (e.g. fishing) is no longer possible because of pollution, when Indigenous communities sense of place is disrupted due to destructive industry projects (Manning et al. 2018; Nightingale et al. 2017). The erosion of Indigenous culture has been ongoing since the start of settler colonialism in North America. One could thus argue that the deterioration of Indigenous cultural health due to environmental injustice is a continuation of the suppressing practices of settler colonialism, such as land appropriation, the creation of reserves, the “civilizing mission”, residential schools, and other assimilation practices.

Through the intersectional experience of Indigenous women, which is made up of their racial, gender, and class identity, environmental injustice poses a disproportionate harm (compared to White people, but also Indigenous men). The impact on entire Indigenous communities is also disproportionate (compared to White people in Canada), but it would be incomplete to say that there aren't different experiences within these communities, especially based on gender (and sexuality). The previous chapters have concluded that environmental injustice in Canada is rooted in its settler colonial history. First Nations experience generational traumas of being displaced, discriminated, oppressed, and exploited, due to the practices of settler colonialism, such as the creation of reserves, the pollution and destruction of water and land due to extractive industrial capitalism, and the disruption of human-nature relationships. On top of that, the VLVB report writes about and in reference to colonialization, assimilation practices, and erasure:

“As some of those who offered their testimonies shared, the end goal of colonization has always been the erasure of Indigenous peoples in order to gain access to their lands and territories. This is why women and young people – those who carry forward life and create the next generation – have been, and continue to be, those most heavily impacted by the processes of patriarchy, land dispossession and violence” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 58)

Indigenous women experience settler colonialism and its contemporary practices differently, as the heteropatriarchal and racialized society that emerged from it hurts them in an intersectional way, through gender and racial discrimination and oppression.

5. Indigenous Feminism and Women-led Activism

Some of the projects discussed in Chapter 4 not only documented the impacts of environmental racism and environmental violence, but these projects are also initiatives and efforts to fight back against the environmental injustice, such as the ENRICH project, which pulls together academia and grassroots movements, or the VLVB report, which serves as a response to government inaction and a tool kit for Indigenous communities for healing and resistance. This chapter talks about these, and more, projects and movements that are led by Indigenous women, Indigenous women's organization, or Indigenous women's advocates.

Indigenous feminism is an important aspect in the fight against environmental injustice. Indigenous women have been rallying together, protesting, and demonstrating for justice. Indigenous feminism can be loosely defined as “an intersectional theory and practice of feminism that focuses on decolonization, Indigenous sovereignty, and human rights for Indigenous women and their families” (Gearon 2021). Indigenous feminism in academia is an attempt to decolonize the sciences by confronting colonial, heteropatriarchal, and racist systems. In everyday life, it is an attempt to dismantle systems of oppression, and a call to return to matriarchy in Indigenous communities, to rebuild, reconnect with, and decolonize life in Indigenous communities (Dhillon 2020; Whitebear 2020). There are various movements and grassroots activist groups that practice Indigenous feminism, by trying to get Indigenous knowledge to the mainstream, or by building a shared knowledge and understanding of what effect patriarchy has on and within Indigenous communities, or by addressing issues that are unique to Indigenous women (such as MMIWG). Indigenous feminism stands the collective action and power by finding these key issues that are uniquely Indigenous, priorities like the responsibility to the lands and water but also the history of matriarchy, and key barriers such as the reality of continuing colonialization and heteropatriarchy (Gearon 2021). The following Indigenous activism projects are rooted or connected to Indigenous feminism.

5.1. Mi'kmaw Grassroot Grandmothers (“Water Protectors”)

The work of the “Water Protectors” has been discussed already in this thesis, but I want to highlight them again in this chapter, as they are Indigenous women that do the utmost to protect the safety and livelihood of their community. The Alton Gas project, by the energy giant by the same name, seeks to store natural gas in underground salt caverns near the Shubenacadie River, the River in which the Mi'kmaq communities of the Sipekne'katik and the Millbrook

First Nations fish. The process of storing natural gas in salt caverns is a highly dangerous one as it is prone to leaks, explosions, and emission of poisonous chemicals, but it also means the oversalting of the river, unlivable for fish. The Mi'kmaq communities have been demonstrating against the development of this project since its start in 2014. A group of "Water Protectors", or Grassroot Grandmothers, led by Elder Dorene Bernard, have set up a Treaty Truck House, a site of resistance that refers to their treaty rights and effectively occupies the entrance to the development site, through which resistance activities, fund-raising, and protests are organized (Hubley 2016; Page and Daniels 2019; Vandevoorde 2019; Waldron 2018c).

The main concern of the "Water Protectors" is water, which is deeply connected to the wellbeing of the Mi'kmaq, according to Elder Dorene Bernard (Martin and Andrade 2021). In the documentary *There's Something in the Water* by Page and Daniels (2019), one of the Grassroot Grandmothers explains that they believe that as Indigenous women, they have the gift of being the carriers of sacred water, but also the responsibility over it, and therefore, find that it is time to embrace their ancestry as Mi'kmaq and fight for their rights. The Grassroot Grandmothers advocate and demonstrate for more issues intersecting at this site. It also concerns land rights, involvement in decision-making, environmental laws, and violence against Indigenous women. The Treaty Truck House is important because it occupies the land on which the project was proposed, and this territory is unceded land. Unceded land refers to lands originally belonging to First Nations people that are not formally under treaty, which means that these lands have never been ceded or legally signed away by First Nations to the Crown or Canada (Indigenous Perspectives Education Guide n.d.; Wilson 2018). The Grassroot Grandmothers have therefore filed a title claim for the territory where the project was proposed.

The protestors also argue that their communities have not been involved in the decision-making process on this project from the start, as they "were not adequately consulted, that they had never given consent for the project to resume, that they were not given enough time to review project proposals and environmental impact assessments and that they were provided with little-to-no notice about public meetings where they could express their concerns about the project before it resumed." (Waldron 2018, 10). Therefore, the Mi'kmaq women have been actively confronting Nova Scotian politicians and the Ministry of Environment through protests and demonstrations, asking them to stop ignoring environmental laws to allow Alton Gas to continue their project on Mi'kmaq territory, only for the profit of this industry (Page and Daniels 2019).

In March 2020, a judge overruled the approval for the Alton Gas project given by the Ministry of Environment, claiming that the core issue of land titles and treaty rights were not engaged enough (Ritchie 2020). This was a small win for the Grassroot Grandmothers, as new consultations were ordered, but they kept fighting for the land rights. In the documentary *There's Something in the Water*, the Grassroot Grandmothers also highlight the importance of MMIWG at the Treaty Truck House, and why they are fighting against violence against Indigenous women. The Grandmothers believe it is their duty to keep being loud and making themselves visible in order to fight against the “capitalist corporation Canada”, as it is putting at risk the lives of Indigenous women for the sake of capitalist will and needs (Page and Daniels 2019). In October 2021, the company announced that it will be decommissioning the Alton Gas project, which was celebrated by the Mi'kmaw Grandmothers and Water Protectors: “May our resistance be a symbol of perseverance to all those who honor sacred lands and water, and are protecting water and lands for all life across Turtle Island and around the world” (McDonald 2021). Despite intimidation, coercion, and criminalization by the government and the company, the Mi'kmaq Grandmothers held strong to their believe in and fight for Indigenous and women's rights and environmental justice.

5.2. MMIWG

The organization Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls refers to a national crisis in Canada, of disproportionate risk of violence that Indigenous women face because of their racial and gender identity. This issue has been explained already in the thesis, through the reports by Amnesty International Canada and *Violence on the land, Violence on our Bodies*. It is important in this chapter as Indigenous women are at the forefront of fighting for justice in the crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

In 2004, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) launched the Sisters in Spirit Initiative to raise awareness about violence against Indigenous women. Since that year, every 4 October, the NWAC organizes vigils all over the country to continue to raise awareness for MMIWG. In 2005, the Canadian government gave this project funding, so research started to identify the root causes, circumstances, and trends of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and to document the issues of violence that have been pointed to by women, families, and communities (Brant 2017; NWAC 2010). This project, headed by Beverly Jacobs, the NWAC president at that time, culminated in a report published in 2010, titled *What Their*

Stories Tell Us: Research Findings from the Sisters in Spirit Initiative. This report combines demographic and statistical evidence with information from existing literature and from stories and experiences shared by families and communities of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Through situating the issue in the larger context of what causes the MMIWG crisis – “the intergenerational impact and resulting vulnerabilities of colonization and state policies” (NWAC 2010, i) – the NWAC brings forward key findings that emerge from the stories that it thinks should inform policy decisions, victim services, and action (NWAC 2010).

After the five-year funding for *What Their Stories Tell Us: Research Findings from the Sisters in Spirit Initiative*, the government did not allocate new funds to NWAC. However, the NWAC has become the lead advocacy group for Indigenous women in Canada (Robinson 2017), and despite their defunding in 2010, the Sisters in Spirit project lives on through inspired projects such as the vigils and walks, Sisters in Spirit Day (which was declared an official day in the Alberta province), and Families of Sisters in Spirit (NWAC n.d.; Sisters in Spirit Day n.d.)

On May 5th of each year, Red Dress Day, Indigenous women and community members rally together to raise awareness for Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. In 2021, survivors and family members of victims have hung red dresses at two Halifax government buildings. Not only to remember and honor the more than one thousand missing or murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people, but to call for justice and immediate systemic change as nothing has been done by the government since the report of the National Inquiry for Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which issued 231 calls for justice, has come out in 2019 (McSheffrey 2021). Red Dress Day was inspired by the REDress project by Jaime Black in 2010. The REDress project was an outdoor art installation at the National Museum of the American Indian, which displayed hundreds of empty red dresses in public spaces. The artist, Jaime Black, hopes that with the project the public is confronted with the issue of MMIWG and the shockingly high number of missing or murdered women, and that awareness can be raised to “the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women”, and “to evoke a presence through the marking of absence” (Black n.d.)

A female Mikmaw leader, Annie Bernard-Daisley from the We'koqma'q First Nation, helped get the discussion on MMIWG on the table after advocating for it at the First Nations Summit and fighting for justice through organizing rallies. This is also the same Mi'kmaq community that protested the Goldboro project, discussed earlier, as they see it as a threat to Indigenous

women. Especially since no real action has been taken to safeguard Indigenous women in Indigenous communities nearby man camps since the National Inquiry has come out over 2 years ago (Hampshire 2021).

5.3. The ENRICH project

The ENRICH project, led by Ingrid Waldron, is also worth mentioning, as this interdisciplinary and multi-methodological project seeks to address the concerns voiced by Indigenous and Black communities surrounding environmental racism and effects on their health in Nova Scotia. Waldron, the Indigenous feminism advocate, has voiced the concerns and highlighted the activism by Indigenous women through her academic work. The ENRICH project, headed by her, aims to combine grassroots movements' efforts and academic research to find the right methods to support the Black and Indigenous communities in Nova Scotia in addressing the health effects caused by environmental racism (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health 2017; I. R. G. Waldron 2018a).

As discussed before, the ENRICH project, which stands for Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities, and Community Health, looks into the socioeconomic and health effects of environmental racism through an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological approach, and through a lens that takes into account the historical processes and ongoing colonial legacy of Canada. In an article on the ENRICH project, Waldron explains that environmental racism, the contamination and destruction of the territories and environments Indigenous communities live in the vicinity of and rely on for their livelihood, by extractive industries and its need for continuous streams of resources for profit, are the practices that threaten the health and wellbeing of and exercise environmental violence against Indigenous people. She adds that “the lack of power Indigenous and racialized communities have to oppose the location of waste sites and other environmental hazards in their communities” (Waldron 2018a, 396) and “their exclusion from mainstream environmental groups and regulatory bodies” (Waldron 2018a, 396) are aspects which are equally important in defining environmental racism.

The ENRICH project thus advocates for Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities who, because of environmental racism, are exposed to health risks, and looks for methods to address these issues. “The ENRICH Project is activist-scholar inspired in its quest to bridge and blur the boundaries and borders between academic scholarship, theory, and analysis and

grassroots activism and other community-based activities” (The ENRICH project: Approach n.d.). Its goal is to support these communities in addressing the health effects through community-based participatory action research, among other methods. Next to that, the project “advises on policies and best practices that involve citizen engagement, environmental impact assessments, and uniform and non-discriminatory policies correlated to location, management, and evaluation of environmentally harmful activities” (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health 2017, 3).

The project is multi-disciplinary because the team working on it exists out of different members, namely community leaders and organizers, academic researchers, research staff, non-profit organizations, and students and volunteers, who each have different roles that complement each other. For example, the community leaders and organizers build relationships and bring the different communities together to organize initiatives, the academic researchers study the socio-economic effects and health risks of polluting industries in these communities, the non-profit groups work to raise awareness on the issue, and the students and volunteers are involved in the research and the organizing of workshops and events (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health 2017).

One of the main strategies to advocate for the issues that the Black and Indigenous communities in Nova Scotia face because of environmental racism, is the developing of alliances and working in collaboration. Mi’kmaw communities have voiced their concerns and protested against extractive industry projects for long, but according to the ENRICH projects, these issues can be addressed in a more effective and powerful way if alliances can be made between them and mainstream environmental groups and African Nova Scotian communities. By working together with environmental groups on outreach and environmental proposals, their voices could be multiplied. And by sharing experiences with the Black communities on settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, capitalist exploitation, and dispossession, a powerful alliance could be formed. The ENRICH project aims to build relationships between African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaw communities, environmental groups, and the government, in order to address and advocate against environmental racism.

5.4. *“Violence on the land, Violence against our bodies”*

The *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies* report, which was thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter on the impacts of environmental violence on Indigenous women it has documented, also devotes a chapter to healing and response, and includes a toolkit, in order to address and resist the impacts on Indigenous communities. This report centers the experiences, stories, and resistance efforts of Indigenous women to voice the risk and harm that they undergo, but also to create a foundation to build further the grassroot movements that already stand, “a foundation set by grandmothers, mothers, aunties, and sisters” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 10). The report reads “we offer this in honor of all who have been impacted by industry, and all who have worked tirelessly to ensure a safe and healthy for our grandchildren for seven generations to come” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 10).

The writers claim that the report is necessary because mainstream movements and government policies are not doing enough, but most of all not understanding the complexity of the issues at hand. They claim: “Mainstream anti-violence and sexual assault solutions do not address environmental violence. The only way that we will address violence on Indigenous lands and Indigenous peoples themselves is to support these two issues coming together and mobilizing responses” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 17). Thus, the VLVB report is a response to government inaction, which is why it bundled research and data on environmental violence, so that the government cannot dismiss the issue anymore due to lack of information. The VLVB report is also a toolkit, as it brings together the voices, experiences, and stories of resistance leaders, grassroot grandmothers, survivors, and so on, which provides a foundation to build on for Indigenous communities to grow their resistance.

The report argues that the voices of Indigenous women are vital to the coming together of communities to resist and fight against the injustices, and they quote the first International Indigenous Women’s Environmental and Reproductive Health Symposium (2010), which stated:

“We recognize that our fundamental, inherent and inalienable human rights as Indigenous Peoples are being violated, as are our spirits and life-giving capacity as Indigenous women. Colonization has eroded the traditional, spiritual, and cultural teachings passed down from our ancestors, our grandmothers about our sexual and reproductive health and the connection to the protection of the environment, our sacred

life-giving Mother Earth. But... many Indigenous women are reclaiming, practicing, and celebrating these teachings.” (As cited in Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 9).

About the women who are leading the grassroots resistance movements, the report says “They step forward as leaders, weaving the intersecting issues of Indigenous sovereignty, environmentalism, feminism, reproductive health, youth rights, and anti-colonialism. These brave leaders are determined to transform this violence into protection and healing for all. There is a shift growing in these communities, a spirit of resistance” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 9).

Healing is an important part of resistance. According to the report, it is the “absolute essential precursor to the process of defending one’s body and lands” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 47). When centering the voices of Indigenous women in discussion about environmental injustice, healing comes forward as a vital aspect, however, in mainstream media and most academic research about this topic, an emphasis on this need for healing is lacking. This leads to the conclusion that the mainstream narrative on environmental (in)justice is in need of a gendered approach, as it lacks the voice and experience of Indigenous women when it comes to responding to the injustices.

In the report, four methods of healing were bundled as guidance (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 48-49). The first one “Ground yourself in your people’s long-term cumulative resistance”, refers to the painful history of colonization but more importantly to the parallel history of First Nations’ resistance against it. Secondly, “Find strength in Spirit”, which refers to finding a higher perspective. The third one, “Honor the teachings of traditions”, considers the importance of the knowledge of nature and the land. And the fourth, “Practice ceremony”, will serve as a reminder of the sacredness of their bodies and serve as a doorway of teaching to the younger generations.

Next to healing, the report also emphasizes the importance of finding strategies and solutions that are community-based, inclusive, accessible, and reformative (non-circular). They criticize the justice system for only providing so-called “band-aid solutions”, rather than addressing the root cause of environmental violence, namely entrenched colonialism and heteropatriarchy. Next to that, criminal law does not recognize environmental violence, rather it sees environmental destruction as a cause of action, but does not link it to the violence against

Indigenous bodies. And even though there are laws in place to stop this violence, which the report calls “broad policies of criminalization” (55), the absence of the connection between the two makes it impossible to correctly address the intersecting crisis. Therefore, the report argues for communities to focus on culturally appropriate community-building strategies when planning their approach to respond to violence (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016).

The report argues for transformative resurgence, which means “efforts to create more options for justice – not simply the criminal justice system – through community-based organizing which supports Indigenous peoples directly impacted by colonial and state violence” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 52). It relies on original teachings, cultural knowledge, and peer-led initiatives in order to transform the way Indigenous communities respond to violence. “True transformation will happen when all communities begin honoring both the traditional and new leadership roles of Indigenous women and young people, who are often best positioned to identify and develop solutions to the issues they, and their families, face” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 55). This thus refers to the traditional social orders and teaching of the communities, but also the new ways Indigenous women are taking charge in resistance movements.

In addition to documenting, reporting, and highlighting the stories of Indigenous communities about environmental violence and ways of healing, the VLVB report also includes a “toolkit”, as a response to the needs expressed by the women and young people sharing their experiences. This toolkit aims to support grassroots communities in advocating for their concerns and for justice. It exists out of workshop activities, and their instructions, purpose and goals. The main aim of these workshops are: developing conversations about environmental violence through activities and community stories, and as a result creating a space where communities can talk about the impacts of environmental violence on their communities, but also discuss how to address them. The report adds about the work they have done and aim to do for the fight against environmental injustice and violence:

“The injustices that happen to Indigenous women often happen because they are women and Indigenous. Likewise, the trauma Indigenous women’s bodies experience because of environmental destruction happens because they are women, because they are Indigenous, because of the colonial legacies with which their communities live, and because the environment is considered an inexhaustible resource to be sold, purchased, and exploited. The intersections are endless, and so, if our work is to be effective, our

responsibility is to meet this trauma at these intersections. This is what resisting environmental violence looks like” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 60).

This adequately summarizes the message of the gendered analysis of this thesis. Environmental justice and all that it entails, needs to be addressed from a truly intersectional perspective, as environmental injustice is experienced in an intersectional manner.

6. Conclusion

This thesis sought to understand the complexity of the intersectional experience of Indigenous women facing environmental injustice in Canada. It argued that environmental injustices, such as environmental racism and environmental violence, stem from settler colonialism and continued colonial practices that started with the first European settlements in North America. The question why Indigenous women are disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices cannot be answered with a single response. Mainstream environmental justice and injustice studies theorize about race and class, but often neglect to consider other important social factors, such as gender. Therefore, this thesis maps and summarizes how Indigenous women are impacted by environmental racism and violence, and why accounting for gender in the environmental injustice debate is important for a full understanding of the issue.

In using a gendered analysis, this thesis found a method to include factors that are rendered invisible by mainstream academic studies on environmental injustice. Through looking at the gender-specific experience of Indigenous women and considering the historical context of North America since colonialism, it becomes apparent that the continued colonial practices of the Canadian government today and the continued legacy of male-dominated systems of colonialization, or the heteropatriarchy, form an attack on the livelihood of Indigenous communities and Indigenous women especially. Therefore, this thesis delved into the gendered aspect and historical context of environmental injustice, as these elements are vital in the investigation of the experience of Indigenous women in Canada and to create a history-informed and intersectional perspective of the issues at hand, as opposed to the frequently one-dimensional view of academics of race and class in Environmental Justice Studies. Such a gendered approach proved helpful in other studies of social or racial injustices as well, because it aids in adding more perspectives and historical context, in order to find deeper roots and linkages within social issues. I would therefore argue that such an approach should be considered in all studies of global studies.

The intrinsic link between land and body is important in Indigenous livelihood, and is highlighted through the investigation of environmental violence against Indigenous women. The invasive and extractive industries operating on Indigenous land perform violence against nature and the environment, and with it, also against the bodies, health, safety, and livelihood of Indigenous communities relying on the land and water tainted and polluted by those

industries. Then, Indigenous women in North America, who are already “targets of systemic violence and generational trauma” (Konsmo and Pacheco 2016, 9) in North America, are more susceptible to the consequences of environmental racism and environmental violence, such as sexual violence, severe and lasting health issues, and detrimental impacts on social, political, and cultural welfare.

Indigenous feminist activism is at the forefront of the struggle against environmental injustice. Indigenous female-led grassroots movements are taking considerable steps to put the issue of environmental violence against Indigenous women on the political agenda, but also to reclaim Indigenous territory in order to put a stop to extractive industries that hurt their livelihood. Some movements and projects, such as the *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies* report and the ENRICH project, have been working on documenting the impacts and effects of environmental racism and environmental violence, in order to respond to the inaction of the government and find sustainable and community-based solutions. Other movements have been active to raise awareness about safety and health issues, such as the MMIWG, and to actively protest and oppose dangerous industrial undertakings, such as the Treaty Truck House next to the Shubenacadie River, and the Grassroot Grandmothers, or Water Protectors, of the Sipekne’katik and Millbrook First Nations.

6.1. Further Research

As this thesis was written during the times of Covid-19 and lockdowns, it remained a rather theoretical report of environmental injustice against Indigenous women. Therefore, I believe that further research into this subject is important and necessary to create a full and complete understanding of the issues that Indigenous women face in Canada, and the rest of North America.

Further paths of research could include conducting field research and first hand interviews in Canada, more specifically Nova Scotia, in order to find the voice of Mi’kmaw women, about who I have been writing, but this can of course be done with other Indigenous communities in the Americas as well. Instead of relying on books and online resources, as was done in this thesis, field research and interviews would enable the research to go beyond theoretical considerations by academics and create a closer understanding of reality of the experience of Indigenous women. This type of research could be used to raise further awareness about

environmental injustice and the disproportionate effects on Indigenous women in Canada, but can also serve as documentation for policy proposals.

Next to that, I believe that more research into the Canadian federal government and their actions to address environmental injustices and the concerns that Indigenous communities have voiced, is also of importance, as in the past the government has been rather inactive or ineffective. Possible question could be: What action is the government taking? Are politicians and policy-makers doing something at all, or are they blissfully ignoring these issues and focusing on economic gains that come from the harmful extractive industries instead? What have they done in the past to change their environmental racist policies? If the government is trying to address environmental injustice, are they only looking at the environmental aspects of it or are they also investigating and addressing the root causes, such as underlying social oppressions and the historical context of settler colonialism which still pervades in governmental policies to this day? Are they actively working together with Indigenous communities to create sustainable solutions that honor the needs and visions of those communities?

Similar to the ENRICH project discussed in this thesis, which combines academic research with grassroot efforts to address the issue of environmental racism through action research, another path of research could be to work together with grassroot activist to investigate the issues on a local level and create community-based solutions and policy proposals. Through action research, which brings together research with taking action, this method would aim to find specific responses to the problems voiced by Indigenous communities, with the purpose of creating sustainable and transformative change toward environmental justice. Another option could be to join Ingrid Waldron and her ENRICH-team to work on the academic side of their efforts to address environmental racism in Nova Scotia.

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