old, because it speaks a bitter truth about Canada—it has failed to tapping into the deep sense of unfairness and the political abandondeliver on human rights and equal opportunity for Aboriginal peoples. nated with many others, including men, and generations young and ment of their voice felt by educated Aboriginal women. It has reso-Idle No More arose with scant planning-using social media and

ment regime designed to be effective or responsive to the needs of hasn't it changed or transitioned into a more meaningful governquickly put to rest when constitutional reform politics was shut down. ported them, would have represented a new path forward, but it was to support that transition. Those provisions, and the protocols that supexisting inherent right of self-government, as well as a fiscal arrangement negotiated settlement but clearly recognized a legally enforceable and the Indian Act to a new arrangement that preferred an obligation for a tailed constitutional renewal process that followed the conclusion of the First Nations citizens, especially those in crisis? I reflect back on the Charlottetown Accord. This accord offered a transition process out of This brings us back to the key point about the Indian Act. Why

in meaningful government services or policies to make caregiving and raising children easier than it was then. right to be worried. Twenty years later there is still no improvement ances about their treatment at the hands of band leadership. They were issues such as caregiving support and equality, or redress their grievthe discussion table. They worried self-government might not address the Native Women's Association of Canada was not represented at Charlottetown Accord at the time and felt they were mistreated when Some First Nations women had deep suspicions about the

and pragmatic discussion in an appropriate political forum. viability of First Nations communities and economies require a broad of political will at the national level. Crucial issues about the scale and tions have merit and deserve thoughtful consideration, but it too has tion approach with a negotiated process for change. Its recommenda on Aboriginal Peoples recommended a nonconstitutional reconciliadiscussions ended because of the unworkable amending formula and a been ignored, either because of the scope of change required or a lack lack of public appetite for them. The Report of the Royal Commission I'm not advocating a new constitutional round. The constitutional

> no one can make a deal without the support of the people. now characterizes the relationship between Aboriginal leaders and opinion from Idle No More and other protests. But not even the most peace. The failed policy of the Indian Act era has run its çourse, and the system that maintained it can no longer be counted on to keep the their grassroots. We are in uncertain terrain and a state of stasis, and Machiavellian of strategists can be sanguine about the uncertainty that ment do not appear to have suffered any major setback in popular So where does that leave us? The Prime Minister and his govern-

no substance or will soon subside. Aboriginal politics will never be think the drumming and celebratory atmosphere of Idle No More has solutions lie in forging relationships that respect the rights of all and the same. they are prepared to make noise. Canadians would be unwise to many of our most vulnerable. With Idle No More, they have shown that address the social and economic issues that blight the lives of so The glimmer of hope lies with the women. They understand that

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IDLE NO MORE:

Wanda Nanibush Strong Hearts of Indigenous Women's Leadership

ing the spirit of the water. We were attempting to heal her from the Act under Bill C-45 that legalized resource development's precedence and the fight against the changes to the Navigational Waters Protection was called together to bring attention to the Idle No More movement pollution choking her life force, which in turn chokes our own. over environmental protection. We weren't protesting—we were speak ing a part of lake Ontario in my hands. This water walk and ceremony women in front of hundreds of marchers. As a water carrier, I was hold street beside grandmother Pauline Shirt and a number of Indigenous On January 26, 2012, I found myself marching down a busy Toronto

of the round dances is the heart of the mother earth, the women main spirit, and emotions are engaged together. Like the drum at the centre ment exhibits a post-Cartesian Indigenous ethos where the mind, body, a movement led largely by grassroots Indigenous women. The moveother massive international Indigenous-led movement in history. It is peaceful and ceremonial in nature, thus markedly different from any vulnerability at the centre of life and a desire to protect it. a political action and want to hug every stranger around you, to feel tain the heart at the centre of the movement. It's a rare feeling to go to The actions under the Idle No More banner have largely been

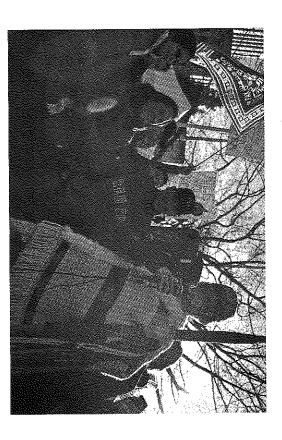
ered at the skirts of our grandmothers have also required a different spaces where pre-contact cultural values around the roles of women until 1952. Many have forged their leadership skills in ceremonial When the relationship is not defined from thought alone but also inunderstanding how we are to work together now and in the future. was birthed has been the centre of the movement, it has also required education about the Nation-to-Nation relationship that exists between set of principles for working cross-culturally. While a return to and have allowed us significant influence and power. The teachings gathlevel, having historically been shut out of Indian Act-based leadership speak of these Nation to Nation relationships being based on peace Wampum belts hold the history of our treaties with other Nations and cludes the spirit and the heart the work takes on a different character Canada and the many Indigenous nations on whose soil this country and assessed but a contract of spirit and heart to be lived together. and friendship with the values of trust, integrity, honesty, and truth as the basis for interaction. This is not a written contract to be analyzed Indigenous women's leadership has always been at the grassroots

on by colonialism and racism—bring a considerable knowledge base disparities and have counteracted cultural discontinuity—all brought munities from historical trauma, who deal with large socio-economic to deep mistrust and misunderstanding between Indigenous and Non-More. Canadians have been denied access to an education, which leads Canada come to the fore in an Indigenous-led movement like Idle No to the movement. Cross-cultural conflicts that are quite common in Indigenous participants in a struggle to protect the earth and water Women who have worked at the ground level healing their com-

> ity and dignity of fellow humans close. before judging, it means letting go of negativity and holding the fragilmeans true humility that listens before speaking, and that understands concepts of the human that are non-ego based become important. It envy, dislikes, and old grudges. It means not having an ego. Indigenous the-back talk against each other. It means putting aside petty jealousies, movement to work we must remain unified. This means no behind-Unity has been stressed and yet unity in difference is the goal. For this

the community, ceremony, children, and creativity, a strength derived from the attempted silencing in their closeness to rule has not quieted the voices of Indigenous women leaders. There is must ultimately protect it. The focus on male leadership under colonial of creation because it relies on all of creation to exist—that is why they of a woman living in a good way. Humanity is the weakest link in all focus on our children's children's etc. future is part of what is expected is at the heart of women's work. The creativity of the actions and the humanity. Creation is also an act of futural imagining which is what earth and women that are essential to the sustenance of our world and that there are specific knowledges within the acts of creation for both foregrounded for our identity. This does not mean that women cannot choose men's roles or have sexual relations with women. It does mean teachings that they bring to the movement and affect how it operates. to obey ancient laws of respect. These tenets, if you will, are women's ers. I choose to take the heat. I choose peaceful disobedience, I choose strangers. I choose to set aside my own desires for the larger picture. The earth, for us, is considered a mother; mothering and creation is I choose to step forward and share my knowledge and skills for othderstanding, to deliberate before forming opinion. I choose to care for fering towards understanding. I choose to ask questions and seek unthe person, without anger or passive aggression as a form of peace of the main question. If I disagree I choose to disagree openly in front of It does not mean that we will all agree but the way we disagree is

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crowd during the January 11 Day of Action, 2013. (STEPHEN HUI) Khelisilem Rivers, an Idle No More Vancouver organizer, cracks up the

PART TWO WE ARE FREE HUMAN BEINGS.

Lori M. Mainville

"We do this for our future generations" are words describing legacies. gests action. These words are sounds of life, of choice, of freedom. It suggests presence and, depending on the tone and inflection, it sug-

we carry in sound. lence near water or trees to understand the deep sense of connection us, but so did the spaces between the words. One need only sit in sisound of the land. Our words not only sound like the world around had this built right within it, it was co-relational to the vibration of spoke of such things as the power of sound. Our original language I was privileged to listen to the late elder Peter O'Chiese, who

we must keep trying to communicate. We can close that gap of understanding with action. the world, and the universe. Sometimes we speak different words, but to maintain our social connections with living beings from all over can interact with another nation. Language connects us, it teaches us tening, and witnessing as a group. It also demonstrates how a nation demonstrates that to us, it is a relational reciprocity of speaking, lis-Our voices are sacred binds with one another. The oral tradition

governance resided with clans, societies, and collectivities, not a few. trol energy and harness it under a couple sets of fingers. Our original concerns around "copyrighting" the movement. It's impossible to coninvolving so many key issues. Another might have been some of the tough to negotiate and communicate widely. It may have been the chalbeen by the leaderless nature of the movement, which made it at times opportunity. The past months have been challenging. This may have lenging nature of bringing so many nations into a complex discussion Part of this is found in Idle No More, an awakening of this very

ture generations. It is my prediction that in the coming months we will: think of what will happen next to ensure that we do this for our fuand explain these to others. They must understand too. It is time to It is now that we have opportunities to make sounds of our own,

Reflect and discover the lessons learned from the movement.