Critical Events and the Funding of Indigenous Organizations

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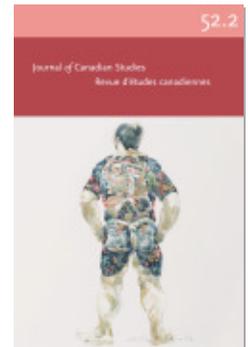
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HOWARD RAMOS AND JANELLE YOUNG

Abstract: Many Canadian advocacy organizations were founded with federal government funding. However, in recent years, with federal budget cuts that funding has come into question. In this article, we analyze the funding of Indigenous organizations in Nova Scotia between 1960 and 2014 in order to examine whether or not the province filled gaps created by a changing political and economic context at the federal level. We analyze how the amount of funding and number of organizations funded changed during this period and consider how national and provincial critical events, federal Supreme Court decisions, changes in governments, and the founding of key organizations affect those shifts. Overall, we find that the province did make up shortfalls in funding during the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, offering more funds and to a wider number of organizations, but at the same time we see less funding per organization over time and ultimately cutbacks at the provincial level mirroring broader national trends toward austerity and neo-liberalism.

Keywords: funding, NGOs, Indigenous, Aboriginal, social movements, Canada, Nova Scotia, austerity, organizations

Résumé : De nombreux organismes canadiens de défense des droits ont été fondés avec le financement du gouvernement fédéral. Par contre, au cours des dernières années, avec les coupes budgétaires fédérales, ce financement a été remis en question. Dans cet article, nous analysons le financement d'organismes autochtones en Nouvelle-Écosse entre 1960 et 2014 afin de voir si la province compensait ou non les lacunes laissées par le contexte politique et économique changeant au niveau fédéral. Nous analysons comment la quantité de financement et le nombre d'organismes financés ont changé au cours de cette période et considérons comment des événements importants provinciaux et fédéraux — des décisions de la Cour suprême, des changements de gouvernements et la fondation d'organismes clés — ont affecté ces mutations. En général, nous constatons que la province a compensé les lacunes en matière de financement au cours des années 1990 et de la première décennie du XXIe siècle, offrant plus de financement à un plus grand nombre d'organismes, mais, en même temps, nous observons moins de financement par organisation au fil du temps et, à la fin, des coupes au niveau provincial reflétant les tendances nationales générales vers l'austérité et le néolibéralisme.

Mots-clés : financement, ONG, Autochtone, mouvements sociaux, Canada, Nouvelle-Écosse, austérité, organismes

With the rise of Idle No More and the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, interest in Indigenous issues in Canada has increased. Yet, although there has been much focus on Indigenous political resistance and protest (e.g., Wood 2015; Wotherspoon and Hansen 2013), shifting relations among Indigenous and

settler peoples (e.g., Denis 2015; Krause and Ramos 2015), and attention to Indigenous legal issues and rights (e.g., McMillan 2014, 2011), far less attention has been offered to Indigenous organizations that sustain communities and the government funding they receive to do so.

Since at least the 1960s, the federal government of Canada has offered state funding to advocacy organizations (Clément 2008). In fact, many leading national organizations were founded through funds distributed by the Canadian secretary of state (cf. Pal 1993, 7) as well as other federal ministries (cf. Clément 2008; Rodgers and Knight 2011; Corrigall-Brown 2016). Such practices continued into the 1970s and were amplified with the promotion of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's vision of creating a "just society" (Axworthy and Trudeau 2000; Ramos 2006; Tennant 1990). This has meant that many Canadian social justice organizations have largely been dependent on resources and opportunities provided by the federal government (Pal 1993). In addition to providing core funding and project-based funding, Corrigall-Brown (2016) observes that the country has also offered tax relief for some organizations, which is another form of state support. The Canadian state has thus been an important source of funding for social justice organizations.

For Indigenous organizations, the role of state funding is tied to the federal government's ongoing colonization and this has led some to argue that it has created a situation of dependency (Gagné 1994). The *Indian Act* created an Indigenous cultural, organizational, and political deficit that ushered in state-created political institutions over traditional forms of governance as well as a number of organizations to support communities (Alfred 1999). After the 1951 amendment to the *Indian Act*, like other groups in Canada, Indigenous organizations increasingly relied on federal funds to operate.

In more recent years, however, neo-liberal policies by Conservative federal governments around benefits and funding for organizations have taken their toll on many organizations (Ramos and Rodgers 2015). Indeed, some have argued that austerity policies were an attempt to curb social activism and political dissent. The women's movement, for instance, was particularly hard hit by such policy shifts, losing its national umbrella organization and facing serious struggles to stay afloat (Rodgers and Knight 2011). Indigenous organizations have likewise faced struggles as a result of neo-liberal cuts and defunding. An analysis by the Assembly of First Nations, for example, found that Indigenous organizations were subjected to almost $60 million dollars in funding cuts between 2012 and 2015 (Barrera 2015). Clearly, federal government cutbacks put organizations into precarious positions.

Focus on the national scale, however, misses more quotidian processes and conceals the potential role sub-national political spaces and governments play (Castells 2004; Stoddart and Ramos 2013). As Boudreau (2003) notes, in most countries, there is a considerable amount of power and governance operating at the sub-national level, a phenomenon that has largely been neglected by many activists, politicians, and researchers.

Examining that scale may offer insight on whether sub-national governments, such as provinces, insulate organizations from austerity at the national level and act as potential buffers for organizations in neo-liberal times.

This is something Dominique Masson (2009, 2006) has pursued in her analysis of the Quebec women's organizations. She finds that when national-level funding was cut and programs for women were abandoned at that national level in Canada, organizations in that province were insulated because of continued funding at the provincial level. This may be tied to the province's nationalist movement, which seeks to build a vibrant independent Quebec society. What remains unclear is the role of provincial funding in other Canadian provinces and the role it might play for organizations representing other interests and communities.

For these reasons, in this article we examine the political economy of Nova Scotia provincial funding for Indigenous organizations. There are at least four reasons that make this a compelling area of analysis. First, the province was colonized long before Confederation and its treaties pre-date the *Royal Proclamation of 1763* which was used as a guide for the colonization and treaties for most of the rest of the country. This has meant that Indigenous politics in Atlantic Canada has received comparably less attention than other regions of the country, particularly Ontario, Quebec, and Western Canada. Second, Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region have a recent history of contentious politics, as seen with the lobster crisis of the 1990s (Ramos 2007; Krause and Ramos 2015), which led to the significant 1999 Marshall Supreme Court decision on Aboriginal rights, or more recent activism in the region around anti-fracking in the 2010s (Howe and López 2015). The province has been a key site of Indigenous organizing, which has largely been underexamined. Third, given that the Canadian government has unique fiduciary obligations toward Indigenous peoples, much of the literature on Indigenous mobilization has focused on Indigenous-state relations at the federal level. Indigenous organizations are in a unique position compared to others because of their distinct relationship to the Canadian state. *The Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes that Indigenous peoples have treaties in section 25; they are 'Aboriginal' peoples in section 35; and section 91(24) tasks the federal government with a responsibility toward Indigenous peoples. This has led to a situation where the provinces and Canadian justice system have interpreted this as a "federal obligation" to finance programs and services for Indigenous peoples (Hawkes 1995, 22; Stevenson 2002). This has in turn obscured the role that provincial governments play in funding local- and provincial-level Indigenous organizations. Last, Indigenous organizations often play a vital role in service delivery to local communities, particularly in the absence of culturally appropriate programming within mainstream institutions (McMillan and Glode-Desrochers 2014).

In examining provincial funding of Indigenous organizations we take an *eventful* approach, focusing on how funding fluctuates over time in relation to *critical* events at

the federal and provincial level, Supreme Court decisions, regime changes at the federal and provincial level, and the founding of key Indigenous organizations in Nova Scotia. We take this approach to understand the interplay among provincial funding, federal and provincial politics, changing political opportunities, and historical context. In what follows we present our methodology in capturing Nova Scotia provincial funding, our eventful approach to understanding the context of Indigenous organizing in Nova Scotia during the 1960–2014 period, and then our analysis and discussion of trends.

Nova Scotia State Funding

To analyze Nova Scotia provincial funding of Indigenous organizations we look at all funding of organizations tracked in the provincial public accounts between 1960 and 2014. All provincial funding information is released annually in the Nova Scotia public accounts. These documents cite financial statements, agencies, and funds spent. The contents of volume 3, which contains additional reports on grants and contributions made by specific departments, were analyzed. Documents dated prior to 1996 were accessed in the Legislative Library while those dated 1996 to 2014 were collected from the province's Finance and Treasury Board (2016) website. The grants and contributions from before 1996 were documented using a digital camera. Digital tables in Excel were created using FileMaker Pro, which was used to process both the online records and those captured by camera. PDF records of the accounts are hosted at https://www.statefunding.ca/. Because we focus on Nova Scotia provincial records, we cannot comment on federal transfers or grants that are not captured in the provincial database or other funding received by organizations from other sources. This is a limitation; however, our goal in this article is to examine sub-national funding, and we present the first, to our knowledge, 55-year systematic analysis of funding of Indigenous organizations in the province.

Grants and contributions were coded to identify whether they were received by an Indigenous organization and the amount and name or organization was captured by year. Such organizations include those that represent or advocate on behalf of bands, community groups, economic development, education, elders, environment, health, housing, human resources, hunting and fishing, legal issues, political interests, powwows, recreation and sports, women, and youth. Indigenous was operationalized as explicitly mentioning Mi'kmaq, Mi'kmaw, Native, Indian, Aboriginal, or specific names of communities. The gathering of data on such organizations allowed us to examine how many grants were given in a year, the number of organizations that received them, and the total amount of each grant. We aggregated grants by year and later decade for our analysis. We also converted all dollar amounts to 2014 dollars using the Bank of Canada (2016) Inflation Calculator. This allows for comparability across time periods and allowed us to adjust for inflation. The data gathered from the public accounts is presented in graphical and tabular form.

We interpret data with an eventful approach, which looks at historical context through a lens of ebbs and flows, recognizing that some events have a bigger impact on societies and their political economy than others (Sewell 2005, 1996; Wood et al. 2017). Some events are transformational, changing institutions and their practices as well as disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions and power relations (Wood et al. 2017). An eventful approach is a view of history and mobilization that focuses on *critical events*, which according to Staggenborg (1993, 320) are ones that "… alter expectations and perceptions of threats, focusing or distracting the attention of movement constituents and other important actors on or away from movement issues." As a result, an eventful analysis is underpinned by the study of critical events, which we conceptualize as disruptive. They reorder institutions, social relations, and power, which in turn offers opportunity for change (Ramos 2008).

More specifically, in the case of state funding, we see them as opportunities to transform policies that may lead to either increasing sub-national funding or decreasing it to understand the role provinces play during times of broader national austerity. We recognize that such an analysis prizes some events over others, and we recognize that it doesn't offer a chronological account of history or the political economy of the province and Indigenous organizations. Despite this limitation, we present a comparative analysis of key moments to see how they relate to trends in funding. Critical events at the national level were chosen by looking at key works on Indigenous mobilization and politics in Canada (e.g., Ramos 2006, 2008; Wilkes 2004, 2006) and the same was done for Nova Scotia by looking at critical events affecting Mi'kmaq mobilization in the province (e.g. McMillan 2011, 2014; Krause and Ramos 2015; Ramos 2007; Coates 2000). In addition to considering critical events, we also look at important federal Supreme Court decisions, changes in federal and provincial governments, and the founding of key Mi'kmaq organizations.

Critical Events, Supreme Court Decisions, Regime Changes, and Key Organizations Founded

Before analyzing trends in provincial funding of Indigenous organizations, let us offer some context on critical events, Supreme Court decisions, and changes in government that shaped the political economy of Indigenous-settler politics and the funding of Indigenous organizations in what is now Nova Scotia.

Critical Events

With respect to the contemporary era of Indigenous politics in what is now Canada, four national critical events altered Indigenous-settler relations and potentially government funding of Indigenous organizations. The first was the 1969 White Paper on Indian policy, which was a federal policy brief proposing the elimination of Indian status and

the assimilation of the Indigenous population into dominant Canadian society (Cairns 2000, 163). The release of the White Paper presented a significant political opportunity and was a critical event marking the birth of contemporary Indigenous mobilization in Canada (Long 1992, 121; Wilkes 2004; Ramos 2008; Staggenborg and Ramos 2015). While widespread Indigenous protest against it led to its ultimate defeat, mobilization also contributed to the founding of new national Indigenous organizations and new litigation leading to major Supreme Court decisions (Ramos 2006). For this reason it may have had an impact on funding of Indigenous organizations.

Another event that reshaped Indigenous and settler relations, the second national critical event we examine, was the federal government's decision to patriate the Constitution. The *Constitution Act*, 1982 formally recognized Indigenous peoples, and their Aboriginal and treaty rights, in sections 25 and 35. Section 35 in particular enshrined new rights to Métis peoples and Indigenous women and the Constitution still plays a significant role in Indigenous politics today. Again, this could impact funding of organizations by creating competition over resources with the rise of new organizations and rights.

After patriation of the Constitution, the federal government held a series of meetings to adjust and amend it between 1983 and 1987. At the final meeting the Meech Lake Accord was drafted, to incorporate Quebec into the Constitution, and it was set to be ratified by each province by June of 1990. Elijah Harper, an Oji-Cree chief and member of the Manitoba provincial legislature, withheld his vote "'on the grounds that procedural rules were not being followed'" (Dickason 2002, 402), which effectively blocked the accord, as the date for ratification was not met because of his and others actions. Less than a month after the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord, Mohawks in Kanesatake, Quebec, faced off against provincial police (the Sûreté du Québec or SQ) in a violent standoff, dubbed the "Oka Crisis," which resulted in a 78-day armed standoff. The period was branded the "Indian Summer" because Indigenous peoples in communities across the country protested in support of the Mohawks. We treat this as the third national-level critical event. This led to unprecedented levels of political protest (Ramos 2006, 2008; Wilkes 2004, 2006) and sparked the imagination of a new generation of Indigenous activists and leaders (Rice 2010; Barker 2015).

The fourth national critical event we examine happened during the winter of 2012–13, when a new generation of Indigenous peoples mobilized in reaction against two pieces of legislation, Bills C-38 and C-45 (the *Jobs, Growth, and Long-Term Prosperity Act* and *Jobs and Growth Act*). Couched within the legislation were infringements on Indigenous land rights, water rights, and treaties with little to no consultation. Indigenous peoples saw the bills as a form of ongoing colonization and social exclusion (McMillan, Young, and Peters 2013, 430; Wotherspoon and Hansen 2013). Four women from Saskatchewan (Jessica Gordon, Sheelah McLean, Sylvia McAdam, and Nina Wilson) held teach-ins and initiated the #IdleNoMore hashtag, which sparked widespread protest and political action. Social media played a key role in the movement's rapid diffusion (Wood 2015), as did the amplification of the

movement's actions by Chief Theresa Spence's six-week long hunger strike that gained national media attention. The movement sparked renewed interest in Indigenous politics and attention to the Truth and Reconciliation process and report as well as the demands for an inquiry into the situation of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

In addition to national-level critical events, we also consider four provincial critical events that shaped Mi'kmaq-settler relations. One of the most important figures in terms of Mi'kmaq activism, politics, justice, and critical events is Donald Marshall Jr. After spending 11 years incarcerated for a murder he did not commit, Marshall was released from prison in 1982. His wrongful conviction sparked a Royal Commission into his wrongful conviction, referred to as the Marshall inquiry and report of the same name in 1989. Both mobilized the Mi'kmaq, inviting them to envision a justice system based on their own practices and ways of knowing (McMillan 2014). This contributed to Mi'kmaq leaders advocating for control over justice in their communities through the creation of an independent justice system in the early 1990s. It also created impetus to create new institutions and organizations.

The second provincial critical event we examine is the institutionalization of the Tripartite Forum in 1991, despite its informal existence since the 1970s. The institutionalized forum initially focused on justice issues and in 1997 became entrenched with a formal memorandum of understanding. The Tripartite Forum was created in response to recommendation 22 of the Marshall report, which called for a forum "to mediate and resolve outstanding issues between the Micmac and government" (Royal Commission on the Donald Marshal, Jr., Prosecution 1989, 28). The Tripartite Forum includes representation from the Mi'kmaq chiefs, key Indigenous organizations, and provincial and federal government representatives. Central to the forum's mandate is collaboration between the Mi'kmaq, the province of Nova Scotia, and the Government of Canada (Tripartite Forum 2014). The parties work together to address issues facing Mi'kmaq people in Nova Scotia and this may have had an impact on the funding of Indigenous organizations in the region.

In 1998, 9 of 13 Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia gained control over education through the *Mi'kmaq Education Act*, which we examine as a third provincial-level critical event. The act gave participating communities jurisdiction over primary, elementary, and secondary education (*Mi'kmaq Education Act* 1998). The adoption of the act was a historical moment in the move toward increased community control of education for Indigenous peoples across Canada (Battiste 2002). The passage of the act occurred alongside the creation of Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (MK), an administrative body designed to oversee and deliver education within participating communities (McCarthy 2001). MK is funded primarily by the federal government and is based on enrolment numbers (McCarthy 2001). However, a memorandum of understanding between MK and the province also provides for provincial funds to enhance services offered by the MK (Nova Scotia 2014). This too likely impacted funding of Indigenous organizations.

After a review of the Tripartite Forum in 2000, a report was issued that advocated for removal of issues related to title and treaty implementation from the forum and to focus its work "on deliverable services at the community level" (Tripartite Forum 2001, 3). A year later the Mi'kmaq chiefs, the minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and the minister for Aboriginal Affairs Nova Scotia agreed to begin a negotiation process that would focus on Mi'kmaq title and treaty rights. This negotiation process would come to be known as the Made in Nova Scotia Process, the last provincial-level critical event we examine. The process ultimately gave space for pursuing rights that were not secured in the Peace and Friendship Treaties and that could manage issues around unceded land and consultation. In recent years, however, the process has been questioned by activists who see it as overly aligned with economic development over traditional concerns and fear it exacerbates political divisions among communities (McMillan, Young, and Peters 2013). Even so, the Made in Nova Scotia Process is a significant shift in Indigenous and settler relations in the province and may be linked to provincial funding of Indigenous organizations in Nova Scotia.

Supreme Court Decisions

Indigenous politics is also shaped by Supreme Court decisions, which over the years have impacted Aboriginal and treaty rights as well as interpretations of the constitutional definition of "Aboriginal." We argue that four decisions had major impacts on Indigenous politics and organizations across Canada and in Nova Scotia—*Calder*, *Sparrow*, *Delgamuukw*, and *Marshall*. The 1973 *Calder* decision is important because, although the Nisga'a lost the case, it "recognized that Aboriginal people have an ownership interests in the lands that they and their ancestors have traditionally occupied and they have interests in the resources that they have traditionally used" (Anderson et al. 2004, 639). It also established precedent that rights cannot be extinguished unless specifically and knowingly surrendered (639), and this led to a change in course in federal policy toward Indigenous peoples and rights. The decision has been used in countless land claims. In Nova Scotia the decision can be used as basis of contesting whether the region's 1725 to 1760–61 Peace and Friendship Treaties ceded land and rights to it.

Two decades later, the 1990 *Sparrow* decision resulted in another important precedent, recognizing that Indigenous peoples have the right to harvest fish for traditional, cultural, ceremonial, and food purposes within their communities. For Nova Scotia this meant that Mi'kmaq fishers could fish without Department of Fisheries and Oceans issued licenses (Krause and Ramos 2015). This created tensions between Indigenous and settler fishers and set the ground work for the Marshall decision, explained below.

It is worth noting that the 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision reinforced *Calder* and found that any group that can prove its sovereign and exclusive use or control of land prior to colonization or the founding of the Dominion of Canada, is entitled to compensation

or control over the land they lost. For Indigenous peoples across Canada who had not surrendered land or signed treaties, the decision empowered their claims. Like the *Calder* decision, for Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia the *Delgamuukw* decision had implications for potentially renegotiating treaties.

Perhaps the most important Supreme Court decision for Indigenous peoples in Nova Scotia, if not the Maritimes, was the *Marshall* decision. The 1999 Supreme Court of Canada decision acquitted Donald Marshall of charges of fishing and selling eel illegally based on a 1760–61 treaty which guarantees Mi'kmaq and Maliseet peoples' right to hunt and fish in order to maintain a moderate livelihood. Immediately following the *Marshall* decision, the Mi'kmaq took to the water, seeing it as an opportunity for economic independence in their communities (Coates 2000; Ramos 2007). Settler fishers reacted by demanding compensation, protesting, and engaging in violent confrontations with Indigenous peoples (Ramos 2007, 271). In an effort to halt the escalating violence, the government pushed for Mi'kmaq communities to stop their fishing until the implementation of the *Marshall* decision could be formalized and regulated. Ultimately the Supreme Court offered a clarification to the *Marshall* decision which affirmed that it was subject to government regulation and that it only applied to fishing. Although limited by the clarification, the decision remains a significant turning point for Mi'kmaq in the region and an affirmation of the validity of the Peace and Friendship Treaties. The decision also has put some of the traditional fishery affirmed by the *Sparrow* decision into question and has offered a bigger place for Mi'kmaq fishers in the commercial industry.

Regime Changes

The critical events and Supreme Court decisions occurred in a context of different federal and provincial governments. For this reason we consider the impact of regime changes. Federally, the late 1960s through to the mid-1980s was dominated by Liberal governments headed by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. His politics largely promoted a liberal notion of society, valuing equity, and he also worked to patriate the Constitution. Although his government was defeated briefly for less than a year in 1979, his governments dominated federal politics from 1968 through 1984. The next major regime shift occurred with the rise of the Progressive Conservatives under the leadership of Brian Mulroney. His government set the seeds for neo-liberal economic policies through his promotion of free trade. He also continued the constitutional project by working unsuccessfully to incorporate Quebec into it. After almost a decade in power, his government was historically wiped out by being reduced to just two seats under the leadership of Prime Minister Kim Campbell. From 1993 to 2006 the Liberals again dominated federal politics through the Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin governments. Both prime ministers continued to promote neo-liberal policies and furthered austerity in Canadian politics with a focus on program cuts and balanced budgets. At the end of Paul Martin's regime he set Indigenous issues to

the front and centre of his mandate and negotiated the Kelowna Accord which was a historic series of agreements among federal, provincial, and territorial governments and Indigenous leaders and organizations to improve education, employment, living conditions, and health care through government funding and new programs. The accord was never implemented because the government fell, and the newly elected Conservative regime, led by Stephen Harper abandoned it. His government remained in power until 2015 and promoted aggressive austerity policies and made cuts to the funding of NGOs and civil society. With respect to Indigenous issues, the Harper government had a mixed record, offering a formal apology for residential schools in Parliament and launching a Truth and Reconciliation commission, but also cutting funds to First Nations and Indigenous organizations, infringing on treaty rights through omnibus legislation, and demanding more auditing of bands. As a whole, federal governments increasingly moved toward neo-liberal politics, moving away from nation-building and support of organizations to cuts to programs and funding.

At the provincial level during most of the 1960s Nova Scotia was governed by Progressive Conservative (PC) governments under Premier Robert Stanfield who moved to federal politics in 1967. The PCs remained in power until 1970 when Premier Gerald Regan, a Liberal, came to power until 1978. From then until 1993 the PCs regained power under the leadership of John Buchanan for all but three years of that period. During the 1980s the region's politics were characterized by social rather than fiscal conservativism as well as increasing debt and economic hardship. Provincial governments in this period turned to growing deficits and economic development projects. During the 1990s the province experienced political volatility with five different PC and Liberal premiers. Instability continued into the first decade of the twenty-first century with minority governments elected under the leadership of John Hamm and Rodney McDonald—both PCs. Despite such instability the province largely adopted deficit financing to offer services and this may have been a source of support for organizations. In 2009 Darrell Dexter was elected as the province's first New Democratic Premier (NDP), representing a traditionally a left-of-centre party. He was, however, elected on an austerity and balanced-budget platform. Like the federal sphere there was a move toward neo-liberal politics; however, in Nova Scotia this occurred much later.

Key Mi'kmaq Organizations Founded

While national- and provincial-level critical events, court decisions, and changes in federal and provincial government are important in shaping the political economy of Indigenous-settler relations in Nova Scotia, it is also important to consider the founding of key Indigenous organizations. Such organizations are both recipients of state funding and advocates for issues that might increase support for communities and potentially other organizations. The first major organization founded was the Union of Nova Scotia

Indians in 1969, when it held its first meeting and ratified its constitution (UNSI 2016). As the organization's website notes: "The organization came into existence to provide a unified political voice for the Mi'kmaq people of the province in the face of a proposed federal government policy to assimilate Canada's First Nations people into mainstream society. The 1969 White Paper was widely viewed by the First Nations' leadership as the government's deliberate attempt to introduce a policy of cultural and political genocide" (UNSI 2016). As can be seen, its founding is linked to the first critical event noted above—the White Paper.

As an organization representing Mi'kmaq people in the province it remained relatively unrivaled until the founding of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. The confederacy was incorporated in 1986 with a mandate to "proactively promote and assist Mi'kmaw communities' initiatives toward self-determination and enhancement of community" (Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq 2016) and is a tribal council. Unlike the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, it represents only seven of the communities on the mainland of what is now the province of Nova Scotia. As Mi'kmaq elder Daniel Paul notes, the CMM "was founded on their desire to have access to an organization that would have the capacity to research and promote the settlement of their land claims and other legal issues, plus have the capacity to provide administrative and financial advice, etc. to their Bands. These were services that they felt they were not getting from the existing provincial organization, UNSI, or Indian Affairs" (Paul 2016).

The last key organization we consider is the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat (APC), which was incorporated in 1995 and acts as "a policy research and advocacy Secretariat for 30 Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy and Innu Chiefs, Nations and Communities" (APCFNC 2018). Unlike the union or the confederacy, APC is pan-Indigenous, representing communities and nations across Atlantic Canada.

Together these three organizations represent the political and policy interests of Mi'kmaq communities in the region in dealings with the federal and provincial governments. Their founding affected Indigenous-settler relations and affected the political economy of Indigenous politics. With critical events, Supreme Court decisions, and key organizations outlined, in the next section we will explore how trends in funding Indigenous organizations shifted in this broader context.

Funding of Indigenous Organizations in Nova Scotia 1960–2014

We begin by first examining the number of grants received by Indigenous organizations in Nova Scotia between 1960 and 2014 in Figure 1. As can be seen in the figure, there was no provincial funding for Indigenous organizations in the early 1960s. The first, and only, organization funded that decade was Chapel Island or the Potlotek First Nation in 1967. This is not surprising for a number of reasons. The first is that it was a period of

low mobilization for Indigenous peoples in Canada (Ramos 2006). The second is that the federal government engaged in a "centralization" policy in the 1940s that ultimately failed in the 1950s (Poliandri 2011). It was a period that reflected an organizational weakness among Indigenous communities that had experienced aggressive policies to assimilate them into the dominant colonial society. Despite those attempts, communities resisted and that contributed to the failure of the policy. Third, Chapel Island is in the heart of a number of communities and considered to be a spiritual centre for Mi'kmaq peoples (Robinson, Cummins and Steckley 2005; Poliandri 2011). Just two years later the Union of Nova Scotia Indians was founded in response to the White Paper. It would appear that critical event may have been linked to the rise of the organization and funding of it by the province. It was the only critical event we examine in the 1960s. There were no key Supreme Court decisions during the decade; with respect to regime changes, we see the election of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and the Liberals federally, but no change in regimes provincially.

During the 1970s we did not identify any critical events; however, the Supreme Court issued the *Calder* decision, which is the first time the court recognized Indigenous title. Figure 1 shows an increase in the total number of grants received by Indigenous organizations that decade, from only one in the 1960s to 28 in the 1970s. Federally there was one brief regime change, with a minority Conservative government that lasted only nine months. Instead, it was the heyday of Prime Minister Trudeau's nation-building and "just society" era. Provincially the government was also Liberal, under the leadership of Gerald Regan for most of the decade. The PCs came to power in 1978, ushering in the John Buchanan era. No key Mi'kmaq organizations were founded in the decade. Given that the White Paper was issued in 1969, its influence may have interacted with the *Calder* decision in the 1970s. Both occurred at the federal level and are linked to more grants being issued afterwards. Regime changes do not seem to matter as much.

The 1980s saw two critical events, one at the beginning of the decade at the national level and the other at the end at the provincial level. In 1982 Canada patriated its Constitution. As noted above, this recognized Aboriginal treaties and peoples. At the end of the decade, the Marshall inquiry issued its report. The report made a number of recommendations in terms of allowing Mi'kmaq communities to deliver their own services. Figure 1 shows that during the decade the total number of grants again increased, to 47 from 28 a decade earlier. The decade did not have any key Supreme Court decisions. In terms of regime changes, Prime Minister Mulroney's Conservative government won the 1984 election and began to introduce neo-liberal politics to the country. Provincially the Buchanan government remained in power and there were no regime changes. Mid-decade the Confederation of Mainland Mi'kmaq was founded to promote Mi'kmaq self-determination and enhance communities. It would appear critical events at both levels and the founding of a new organization are linked to more grants during the decade.

During the 1990s, Figure 1 shows a further increase in the total number of grants issued, from 47 a decade earlier to 161. During the decade there was a significant national-level critical event through the 1990 Indian summer, which saw defeat of a Constitutional amendment and unprecedented numbers of Indigenous protests across the country. It was also an important decade for provincial critical events, with the formalization of the Tripartite Forum in 1991 and expansion of its mandate in 1997, as well as the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* in 1998. These critical events seem to be correlated with increases in the number of grants issued. The decade also saw three key Supreme Court decisions issued. The *Sparrow* decision came in 1990, which affirmed treaty rights of Aboriginal peoples outlined in section 35 of the Constitution. The *Delgamuukw* decision was issued in 1997, affirming the earlier *Calder* decision. Another important decision was the 1999 *Marshall* decision, which recognized the ongoing legitimacy of Mi'kmaq treaties and rights and was linked to protests by both Indigenous and settler fishers throughout Atlantic Canada. The decade saw the election of the Liberals and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien federally and a series of short-term governments provincially. Regimes do not appear to be clearly linked to the increase in the number of grants issued in Nova Scotia. The APC was also founded as a key Mi'kmaq organization promoting research across communities and policy recommendations. Again there is evidence of critical events, court decisions, and key organizations correlating with an increase in the number of grants issued.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century there were no national critical events, but in 2002 Nova Scotia saw the creation of the Made in Nova Scotia Process as a key moment ushering in a change in the negotiation of Mi'kmaq title and treaty rights. There were no key Supreme Court decisions, and there were regime changes federally and provincially. Federally the Harper Conservatives gained power in 2006, further
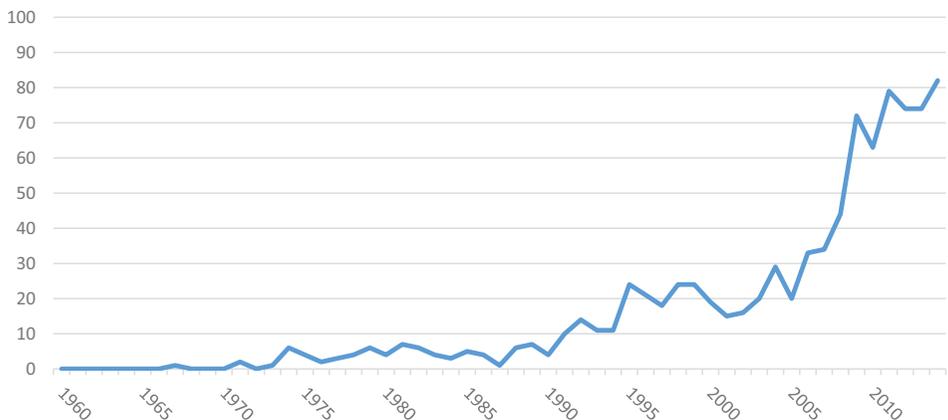

Fig. 1. Number of grants received by Indigenous organizations in Nova Scotia.

entrenching neo-liberal policies, and provincially the first NDP government in the province was elected under Premier Darrel Dexter. Despite its orientation as a progressive party, it too adopted austerity measures after decades of deficit financing in the province. No key Indigenous organizations were founded in the decade. Despite this, as Figure 1 shows, the total number of grants issued increased to 302 from 161 a decade earlier. There is no clear link between the huge increase in the number of grants issued and critical events during the decade nor the number of grants and court decisions, regime changes. No key organizations were founded that decade either.

During the 2010s, we examine only part of the decade, to 2014. Even so, Figure 1 shows the trend of increasing numbers of grants issued. There was only one national critical event, the actions of the Idle No More movement in the winter of 2012–13, none provincially, no key Supreme Court decisions, no change in federal governments, and a later shift from NDP to a Liberal government. Federally and provincially governments adopted austerity measures. Despite this orientation, the number of grants issued continued to increase. It does not appear that regime shifts are related to trends in grants issued.

We explore trends further in Figure 2, this time looking at the total amount of funds distributed. When this is done, we see somewhat similar trends of increasing funds until the mid-1980s. This again follows critical events and Supreme Court decisions in those years. However, after that period, trends look different, with a large increase of funds in 1998, which corresponds to provincial-level critical events and a Supreme Court decision that affected the region. Recall, in 1997 the mandate of Tripartite Forum broadened and in 1998 the *Mi'kmaq Education Act* was passed. A year later the *Marshall* decision was issued, and we see large increase in the amount of funds distributed to Indigenous organizations by Nova Scotia. Interestingly, after that period, although the number of grants issued
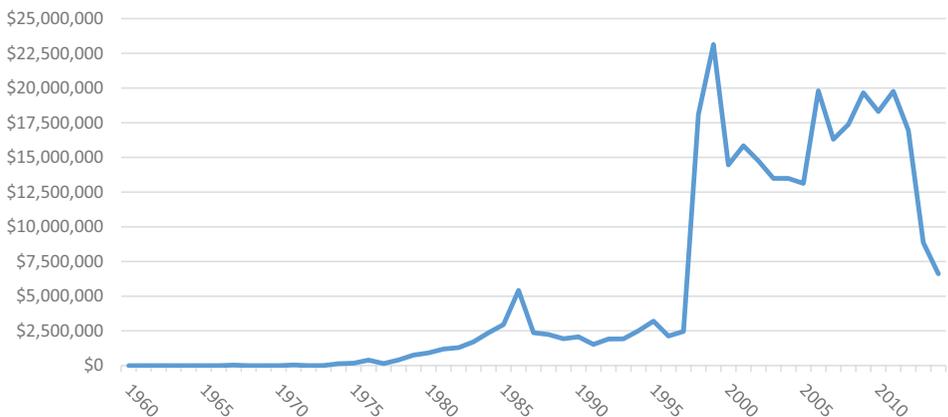

Fig. 2. Amount received by Indigenous organizations (2014 dollars).

continued to increase, the amount of funding plateaued or decreased until 2006, which corresponds to the year the Harper Conservatives were elected to the federal government. There was no provincial regime change until 2009 with the election of the NDP. Between those years the amount of funding fluctuated but was above levels of earlier decades. That is, until 2012, when funding decreased rapidly. This happens a year after the Idle No More Movement was active across Canada and is the only time a critical event is linked to a decrease in funding. It also appears that the province did not insulate the funding of Indigenous organizations in the peak of austerity measures by the federal government and that, although regime changes are not related to increases in funding, the Harper regime nationally and the Dexter government provincially were linked to decreases in the amount of funding offered to Indigenous organizations. Regimes do seem to be linked to decreases in the amount of funds.

To explore this further, in Table 1 we drill down to see what type of organization received funds from the Nova Scotian government. We do this to see whether or not some types of organizations fare better than others. Given the jurisdiction of provinces, one might expect service-oriented organizations to have more stable funding than other types of organizations. When this is examined, we see that during the 1960s just one

Table 1. Type of Organizations Funded by Decade

	1960–2014	1960–69	1970–79	1980–89	1990–99	2000–09	2010–14
Band	15		5	5	5	6	7
Community	17	1	3	2	6	12	15
Culture	11		2	1	2	7	5
Development	14				4	5	8
Education	14			1	7	7	7
Elders	3					1	2
Environment	5					4	3
Health	10				1	6	4
Housing	3		1	1	2	3	3
Human resources	3					3	
Hunting/Fishing	6		2		4	2	1
Legal	7				3	5	2
Other	5		1	1	1		2
Political	7		1	1	3	3	2
Powwow	4					2	2
Rec./Sports	9		3	2	2	2	1
Women	3				1		1
Youth	9			1	3	7	1
n =	145	1	18	15	44	75	66

organization is funded. As noted above, it was a community organization in Potlotek. Interestingly, the table shows that at its inception the Union of Nova Scotia Indians did not receive funds from the province. During the 1970s, two more communities received funds, as did five bands and a political organization. We also see that sports and recreation were funded during this period. The 1980s looks very similar, though we see the introduction of a grant to an educational organization and the loss of funding to hunting/fishing groups. It should be no surprise that in the 1990s we see the introduction of funding legal organizations and the beginning of funding a wider range of types of organizations. Recall, this is after the Marshall report was issued and significant Supreme Court decisions were reached. It is also a period of a number of provincial critical events including the formalization of the Tripartite Forum and later broadening of scope and the passing of the *Mi'kmaq Education Act*.

Interestingly, and perhaps related, during this period we also see expansion to funding organizations working on housing and health, as well as more generally, a wider set of organizations getting funds. After the *Marshall* decision in 1999, we see a continuation of the expansion of the types of organizations funded in the first decade of the twenty-first century and the overall increase of the number of organizations receiving grants. We also see expansion to funding organizations for elders, human resource development, and the environment. The same trend continues between 2010 and 2014. A notable absence of funding is seen for women's organizations. It appears that the provincial critical events in the 1990s led to a broadening of types of organizations funded in the decades to follow. It is also linked with less funding per grant as shown in Figure 2. There is no clear link between types of organizations and regime changes, but key Indigenous organizations founded seem to occur before a period of wider organizational support and might suggest more competition for funding as the sector grew and funding was dispersed more widely.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, we set out to explore the political economy of Indigenous organization by looking at state funding in Nova Scotia. We compared provincial funding to critical events, Supreme Court decisions, and the founding of key organizations between 1960 and 2014. We did this in order to see how each is related to shifts in funding and to see if those political opportunities are linked to how the province funds Indigenous organizations. We aimed to see what role sub-national governments play in terms of funding organizations and potentially offering support in times of national austerity.

Overall, it appears that critical events are linked to shifts in Nova Scotia's funding of Indigenous organizations. All critical events, national and provincial, were related to an

increase in the number of grants issued until the end of the 1990s. The lone exception was Idle No More, nationally, after which the province offered less funding to organizations. During the 1990s it appears that provincial critical events were tied to a broadening of funding to a wider set of organizations which continued on into the first decade of the twenty-first century and the 2010s. Supreme Court decisions also seem to be related to increases in the number of grants offered and an increase in the amount of funding offered until the 1990s. Regime changes have a less clear-cut association with increases in the number of grants and amount of funding but do appear to be linked with decreases in amounts of funding. The founding of key organizations occur before periods of more grants being issued and increases in funding. They are also tied to a broadening of funding and may be linked to an increase in competition for funds, though this is a trend emerging in only the later years of our analysis. Generally, Nova Scotia appears to have played an important role in funding Indigenous organizations.

In this regard it seems that trends that Masson (2009, 2006) observed in Quebec with respect to the women's movement are also seen in Nova Scotia with Indigenous organizations until the 2010s. Our data offer evidence of the province stepping in to fill the needs of Indigenous organizations when federal governments moved to neo-liberal and austerity measures in the 1980s. Clearly, it is important to consider the role of subnational governments in understanding Indigenous and settler relations and not just focus on the federal level.

Although Nova Scotia played an active role in funding Indigenous organizations, and until the 1990s it both increased the number of grants offered and the amount of funding offered, after the 1990s, more grants and organizations were funded but at a lesser amount. In the 2010s, the number of grants issued increased but funding amounts decreased sharply. It is unclear if this is because of increased competition among organizations seeking funding or the adoption of austerity policies by the province. What remains to be seen is how that will affect Mi'kmaq and settler relations in the years to come.

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