

OPEN DOORS & LONG HALLWAYS: EXPLORING INDIGENOUS INCLUSION IN
ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES THROUGH STORIES AND
EXPERIENCES

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the
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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Abstract	vii
List of Abbreviations & Symbols Used	viii
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Study Purpose & Objectives	1
1.2 Learning for Governance (LfG) Initiative	5
1.3 Research Objectives	6
1.4 Thesis Structure	7
1.5 Acknowledgement and Positionality	9
CHAPTER 2 - STUDY AREA	10
2.1 An Introduction to Environmental Governance	10
2.2 Understanding Power: Western-Led Governance Grip on Inclusion	14
2.3 Multi-Scalar Interactions: Global to Local Environmental Governance	21
2.4 Indigenous Inclusion & Leadership in Environmental Governance Processes	30
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY	37
3.1 Theoretical Perspective	37
3.1.1 Conceptualizations of Power in Creating Equitable Spaces	37
3.2 Research Paradigms & Approaches	43
3.2.1 Relational Accountability	45
3.2.2 Ethical Spaces of Engagement	46
3.3 Methods	47
3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews	47
3.3.2 Recruitment and Sample	49
3.3.3 Data Verification & Validity	53
3.4 Analytical Methods	53
3.4.1 Coding & Thematic Analysis	53
CHAPTER 4 – EXCLUSIVELY INCLUSIVE: INDIGENOUS INCLUSION IN WESTERN HEGEMONIC ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE	59
4.1 Introduction	59
4.2 Background	61
4.2.1 Western Ontologies & Facilitating Inclusive Environmental Governance	61
4.2.2 Power as a Barrier to Inclusive Governance	64
4.2.3 Binary Answers to Complex Problems	68

4.3 Methods.....	69
4.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews	69
4.3.2 Analysis	70
4.4 Results & Discussion.....	70
4.4.1 Barriers to Substantive Inclusion in Multi-Scale Environmental Governance ...	71
4.4.2 Nominal Inclusion vs. Substantive Influence on Outcomes	82
4.5 Conclusion	87
CHAPTER 5 – STORIES FOR EQUITY: TOWARDS INDIGENOUS ACTION AND INFLUENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE	89
5.1 Introduction.....	89
5.2 Background	91
5.2.1 Two Ears & One Mouth: Listening to Stories and Experiences to Improve Governance.....	91
5.2.2 Indigenous Advocacy & Social Movements.....	94
5.3 Methodology	98
5.3.1 Research Approaches	98
5.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews	100
5.3.2 Analysis.....	101
5.4 Results & Discussion.....	101
5.4.1 Progress is a Long Road	101
5.4.2 Shifting Perspectives: Crafting Inclusive Narratives for Equity.....	108
5.4.3 The Power of Stories	112
5.6 Conclusion	115
CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION.....	118
6.1 Summary of Findings & Considerations	118
6.2 The Power Problem & the Strength of Stories.....	119
6.3 Considerations & Takeaways for Global Environmental Governance	121
6.4 The Learning for Governance (LfG) Online Portal & Network	125
6.4.1 Equity Seeking Practices & Sociality in the LfG	126
6.4.2 Considerations for the LfG Initiative.....	128
6.5 Research Strengths and Limitations	129
6.6 Future Directions	132
Bibliography	134
Appendix A: REB Letter Approval.....	153
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form.....	156

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide160

List of Tables

<i>Table 1.</i> Geographies of Participant Categories	49
<i>Table 2.</i> Interview Thematic Coding Framework.....	49

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1. Gaventa's Power Cube Diagram (2006)</i>	40 & 67
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Abstract

Implementing decision-making about the environment requires collaboration and agreement from local, national, and international governance scales to ensure the effective and equitable implementation of environmental governance (Brugnach et al., 2017). Increasing collaboration and decision-making power can increase equity and effectiveness in environmental governance processes and outcomes (Adeyeye et al., 2019). The knowledge, history, and environmental practices of many Indigenous Peoples have been associated with effective conservation measures and regions of biodiversity, which makes their influence on environmental governance processes necessary to navigate climate challenges (Garnett et al., 2018; Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017; Parks & Tsioumani, 2023; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). The purpose of this research is to explore diverse perspectives and stories of Indigenous Peoples regarding how diverse representations of governance can be substantively influential in environmental decision-making. The objectives of this study are to: (1) explore what inclusion and meaningful participation means to Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance actors through their stories, experiences, and perspectives to develop insights about the sharing of diverse expressions of governance; (2) identify how this research aligns with and can support the growth of the Learning for Governance (LfG) Network; (3) draw from the knowledge shared in perspectives and experiences to develop principles to inform current and future environmental governance models to operationalize knowledge-sharing, collaboration, learning, equity, and diversity. This qualitative research project included 20 semi-structured interviews with three broad categories of interviewees: five Indigenous Peoples; six non-Indigenous peoples working with/for Indigenous centered initiatives; and nine non-Indigenous participants with experiences across local, national, and/or international environmental governance processes.

Findings illustrate significant barriers impact the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, that stem from power dynamics, valuing Western epistemologies and worldviews, the complexity of working across various scales of governance, and being included versus having influence on a decision-making process. Other findings highlight the problem with the current Western-led facilitation of inclusive or participatory governance processes. Lastly, the experiences and stories of participants are necessary to strengthen the connection between social interactions and effective environmental governance processes.

List of Abbreviations & Symbols Used

CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity

CEESP – Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy

CIFOR – Center for International Forestry Research

CIPRED – Center for Indigenous Peoples Research & Development

COP – Conference of Parties

FPIC – Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

GBF – Global Biodiversity Framework

GBO – Global Biodiversity Outlook

ICCA – Territories of Life

IIED – International Institute for Environment & Development

IIFB – International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity

IPBES – Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

IPCA – Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IPO – Indigenous Peoples Organization

IUCN – International Union for the Conservation of Nature

KUA - Kua ‘āina Ulu Auamo

LfG – Learning for Governance

MOPAWI – Mosquitia Pawisa Apiska

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

PA – Protected Area

PCA – Protected and Conserved Area

TEK – Traditional Ecological Knowledge

TSRA – Torres Strait Regional Authority

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UN – United Nations

WCC – World Conservation Congress

WCMC – World Conservation Monitoring Centre

WPC – World Parks Congress

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I would like to begin by acknowledging the folks who agreed to participate in this research, and who were willing to offer their time, experiences, and knowledge to this project. I am grateful for the working relationships I have built during the interview and research process with the participants of this research. This thesis would not have been possible if it weren't for all 20 participants who took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me. I hope the reading that follows in this thesis aligns with your perspectives and experiences and does justice to your contribution to this project.

I would like to acknowledge the land, Kijipuktuk, which I spent the last two years living and working on. I am an uninvited settler on these lands. My appreciation for the place that I have been lucky enough to reside goes beyond words.

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr. Melanie Zurba, who spent considerable time and energy to ensure I was prepared to complete this thesis as well as I could. Dr. Zurba's ability to communicate, maintain and build relationships, and care for each individual student she supervised is inspiring. The thesis written below, and the individual person I have grown to be in the last two years is in large part attributable to the support Dr. Zurba offered. I would like to thank my committee member, Dr. Michael Petriello, for taking the time from his busy schedule to offer such thought, insight, detail, and knowledge throughout the process of this thesis. His welcoming nature and ongoing support for my well-being and success deserves sincere appreciation. I would also like to offer thanks to Dr. Matthew Schnurr, who agreed to be my external examiner, and took on the task of long reading in short timelines to ensure the quality of this research.

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Thank you all very much.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Purpose & Objectives

Finding effective, equitable, and sustainable ways to solve increasingly difficult social-environmental issues around the world has been an ongoing debate for the last 40 years (McLean et al., 2012). Figuring out how to interact with the environment across and between global, national, regional, and local levels is an additional challenge (Cash et al., 2006; Ostrom, 2008; Patterson, 2017). Global environmental governance forums are one mechanism that has and continues to be used to enact this kind of interaction (Ivanova, 2013). Multi-scale environmental governance forums are complex interconnected interventions which aim to change climate and environment incentives, knowledge, institutions' decision-making, and general behaviours (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006, p. 298). These forums can exist in several different forms, one example of a global environmental governance forum is the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which is a globally convened, state-centered process within the United Nations (UN) (Corson et al., 2014). Forums like the CBD play a crucial role in global efforts to address environmental challenges and promote sustainability (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Witter et al., 2015; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). International governance forums are platforms or institutions where representatives from various countries, international organizations, civil society groups and other stakeholders come together to discuss, negotiate, and make decisions on environmental issues and challenges (McLean et al., 2012). They also serve as arenas for multilateral cooperation, policymaking and collective action (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021).

The challenge of environmental governance and the decision-making within it increases when it aims to effectively engage with different scales of governance processes, diverse ways of

knowing, and to uphold the rights of various groups, such as Indigenous Peoples (Brugnach et al., 2017). Patterson (2017) reminds us that different governance actors have “differing perspectives, knowledge, interests, and values, leading to uncertainty, ambiguity, and disagreement about both problems and solutions” (p. 249) In this thesis, I refer to scale as the level or scope at which environmental policies, decisions and actions are made, implemented, and regulated (Brugnach et al., 2017). Despite the international influence that occurs within global governance, decisions about the environment are played out across various scales of governance and often require national and local level implementation to be effective (Leifsen et al., 2017; Parks & Schröder, 2018). In fact, there is a general agreement that the implementation of global environmental decision-making is unlikely to be successful without the agreement, inclusion, and collaboration of Indigenous Peoples, communities, organizations, and groups to act on them (Brugnach et al., 2017; Parks & Schröder, 2018). Yet, how this plays out on the ground is often different based on “the local specificity and situational aspects associated with their implementation” (Brugnach et al., 2017, p. 20). For example, Indigenous Peoples, communities, and organizations have “context-specific knowledge” and governance systems which have proven to be the most effective in promoting biodiversity, both of which can significantly impact the effectiveness of globally designed environmental goals (Brugnach et al., 2017, p. 20; Garnett et al., 2018). The disconnect between global goals and local implementation is well known, and illustrates ethical, strategic, and practical issues at the heart of current Western models of global environmental governance (Arney et al., 2023; Brugnach et al., 2017). Based on all the above grounds, the substantive influence of Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and communities is necessary in multiple scales of decision-making spaces and institutions

which lead to environmental policy and law (Aguilar-Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021; Brugnach et al., 2017; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021).

Increasingly, global governance forums claim to prioritize the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples; however, the role of Indigenous Peoples is often diminished and overlooked by non-Indigenous governance actors and member-states (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021; Belfer et al., 2019; Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022; Schang et al., 2020; Witter et al., 2015; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Global governance forums can be effective participatory mechanisms for a diverse group of actors to express aspirations and support dialogue about environmental issues (Merino, 2018). However, if this dialogue fails to translate into decision-making and action on the ground, then the governance system risks reproducing the very inequities that it was trying to address. As Merino argues, this can reproduce social conflicts that lead to some of the actors opting out of the “participatory game” altogether (2018, p. 82). The substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in environmental governance is heavily influenced by power dynamics and histories of colonialism that undermine the worldviews and knowledge of diverse governance actors (Carpenter, 2020; Shackleton et al., 2023). Power is a critical element of understanding environmental governance, and more importantly, understanding how and why certain voices and ways of knowing are more influential than others (Morrison et al., 2019). This will be a central perspective of Chapter 4 and will be elaborated upon throughout this thesis.

The inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in governance decision-making is required to address distributive injustices, empower disadvantaged groups, protect biodiversity, and address climate change (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021). Indigenous Peoples are the primary stewards of the environment, and the effectiveness of their methods of conserving biodiversity

are well documented (Artelle et al., 2019; Garnett et al., 2018; Reimerson, 2013; Schang et al., 2020; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Indigenous approaches to land management are not only effective in conserving biodiversity, but also actively support biodiversity and conservation by co-producing, sustaining, and protecting ecosystems, resources, and species around the world (Dawson et al., 2021; Garnett et al., 2018). This demonstrates that climate change and conservation outcomes should be grounded in Indigenous voices and knowledge. However, the extent to which the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and expertise is influencing environmental decision-making processes, and how Indigenous actors experience inclusivity remains less clear (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021; Kirchner et al., 2022; Nelson Chanza & Anton de Wit, 2016). It is this gap in knowledge that I hope to contribute to closing.

The purpose of this research is to gain a greater understanding of how diverse representations of governance can be substantively included in dialogues that lead to decision-making across local, national, and international scales of governance, by exploring the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous governance actors from a variety of contexts. I will offer space for participants to reflect on and promote diverse representations of governance through story sharing, perspectives, experiences, and opinions. Promoting experiences and collaborating on challenges and progress in multi-scalar governance is an objective of the Learning for Governance (LfG) Network, which is related to an outcome of this research, and I will elaborate on this in the following section. Offering space for participants in this research could help establish a better understanding of inclusion, non-Western processes of governance, and promote the human element of conservation collaboration to environmental governance frameworks. My hope is that this research can highlight how Indigenous Peoples

experience and perceive governance forums, what's working, what's missing, who's understanding of inclusion we currently value, how space can be made to value non-Western worldviews more concretely, and how inclusivity can exist in a meaningful and influential way.

1.2 Learning for Governance (LfG) Initiative

The Learning for Governance (LfG) initiative is a global network which supports and convenes diverse governance organizations and actors to promote knowledge sharing, storytelling, information, and collaboration related to multiple scales of environmental governance (Zurba & Campese, 2022). This network was created in part by my supervisor, Dr. Melanie Zurba within her role as Chair of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) Theme for Governance, Equity and Rights (TGER) and former Co-Chair of the IUCN Natural Resource Governance Framework (NRGF), Jessica Campese. The LfG initiative is also housed and supported within Dr. Melanie Zurba's Community Engaged Co-Lab at Dalhousie University. The network, and its relationship to this work will be more thoroughly outlined below. The LfG began in 2020 and has continued to grow since that time by continuing outreach, growing the story map online portal to share stories and diverse representations of governance, and planning meetings/webinars for partners or new members within the LfG initiative. Further information on the initiative, story map, or outreach can be found on the LfG website:

<https://www.learningforgovernance.org/>.

I would like to acknowledge the position that I hold as both the primary researcher, and as a student affiliated with the LfG initiative. This research began more heavily centered around the LfG initiative, and the perspectives of its partnership. However, further in this thesis I will elaborate on opportunities that arose to connect with a much wider array of Indigenous and non-

Indigenous governance actors in person, during a Working Group I was invited to be a part of. This shifted the scope of this research slightly, which lessened the role of the LfG alone, and gave me an opportunity to interview diverse governance actors separate from the LfG. As explained further, many interviews did not discuss the LfG initiative specifically. As a researcher and student affiliated with the LfG, I recognize the dual role that I occupy. I did my best to conduct research that amplified the voices of participants, contextualized their perspectives in an honest way, and separated my role as a researcher and as an affiliate of the LfG through my supervisor.

As outlined below in the thesis objectives, the LfG is a governance space which will hopefully find value in the outcomes of this research. The ways in which knowledge from this thesis can be mobilized through the LfG will be elaborated on in later chapters of this thesis.

1.3 Research Objectives

The broader purpose of this project will be fulfilled through the following three objectives:

1. Explore what inclusion and meaningful participation means to Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance actors through their stories, experiences, and perspectives to develop insights about the sharing of diverse expressions of governance.
2. Identify how this research aligns with and can support the growth of the Learning for Governance (LfG) Network.
3. Draw from the knowledge shared in perspectives and experiences to develop principles to inform current and future environmental governance models to operationalize knowledge-sharing, collaboration, learning, equity, and diversity.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters, excluding the reference list and appendices. The first chapter outlines the topic, the importance of the research, the project's objectives, and my positionality statement within this work as a non-Indigenous researcher. The second chapter offers more background on environmental governance at various levels, the history of predominantly Western-led structures of governance, the influence of power, and an updated analysis of the state of Indigenous inclusion in environmental governance processes. The third chapter explains the study's methodology, which includes the methods used for field work, the theoretical perspectives, research paradigms which have been used in this study, and the process of data analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 offer findings of this research and address the three objectives outlined in the beginning of the thesis. Chapters 4 and 5 are written according to academic journal articles guidelines, with intentions to publish them in academic journals as separate academic papers upon completion of this thesis. Since these two chapters are written as academic articles, they are written with the inclusion of an introduction, background, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion.

Chapter 4 responds to Objective 1 and Objective 2. This chapter problematizes the Western facilitation of inclusion and highlights the role power has in impacting substantive forms of Indigenous Peoples influence in governance processes. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the responses of participants to highlight themes related to barriers, changes in inclusion over time, the purpose and value of different worldviews, and the difference between inclusion and influence in a governance process, and others. Using multiple perspectives and theories of power, this chapter aims to unpack the deeply seeded and exclusive colonial structures of governance and highlights the issue with Western ontologies' habit of trying to address very

complex and multi-dimensional socio-environmental challenges with an unfounded layer of simplicity. The data presented in this study is from 20 semi-structured virtual interviews with Indigenous participants, non-Indigenous participants, and non-Indigenous participants working with or for Indigenous centered initiatives/organizations.

Chapter 5 will address Objective 3. This chapter follows the previous chapter in arguing for the inclusion of multiple worldviews, knowledge systems, and representations of governance. Further, this chapter explores the value of amplifying the social dimensions of conservation and governance to foster stronger collaboration, connectivity, and inclusion. This chapter explains the importance of social perspectives and inclusivity as not only a way to improve equity in governance but influence the efficacy and efficiency of governance decision-making in its eventual implementation. In addition, despite the barriers and ongoing power dynamics in governance processes, this chapter acknowledges the patience, persistence, and determination of the Indigenous Peoples movement to influence governance spaces in which they have been historically excluded. Lastly, this chapter highlights the experiences, stories, and perspectives shared by participants in this research, and will enhance the voices of governance actors from a variety of scales (local, national, and global), geographies, and worldviews. The data presented in this study is from 20 semi-structured virtual interviews with Indigenous participants, non-Indigenous participants, and non-Indigenous participants working with or for Indigenous-led organizations/initiatives.

Chapter 6 is focused on synthesizing the work of Chapters 4 and 5 and will offer conclusions to the study, limitations, considerations, and directions for future research.

1.5 Acknowledgement and Positionality

I would like to acknowledge my position within this research and within the academic institution of Dalhousie University. I am a white, male, settler who was not born in Mi'kma'ki, and I am extremely grateful to be on Mi'kmaw land during my time at Dalhousie University. I am $\frac{1}{2}$ English, $\frac{1}{4}$ Scottish, and $\frac{1}{4}$ Irish, and I have grown up predominantly influenced by Western worldviews. My grandfather's dad was named Edmund (Scottish), and his mother's name was Fannie (English), and my grandmother's dad was named Alex (English), and her mother's name was Gertrude (Irish), my paternal grandmother's parents were both English and my paternal grandfather's parents were both Scottish. The process of conducting interviews, connecting with participants, researching, implementing research approaches (relational accountability and ethical spaces of engagement), and writing have all given me an opportunity to reflecting on my position and ancestry as a settler in Canada, and has led me to question more of my own unconsciously legitimized conceptions of reality. My personal positionality and family history has granted me privileges and ease throughout most of my life. Although I will never fully understand, I am aware of the extractive and unequitable relationship academia has with Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and communities. It is important to me that this research shares useful information, knowledge, and research for the Indigenous participants and partners I have worked with. I am committed to hearing the stories, experiences, perspectives, and opinions of participants in this research to ensure that every stage of this research is respectful, equitable, and honest. I am grateful to have had the generosity of participants' time and willingness to share from a variety of contexts, worldviews, and geographies. The relationships that I have built throughout the research process have allowed me to connect and reflect with incredibly knowledgeable and thoughtful people, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity.

CHAPTER 2 - STUDY AREA

2.1 An Introduction to Environmental Governance

In the 1970s, state-controlled environmental governance frameworks began acknowledging the importance of strengthening collaboration and participation in decision-making about the environment, and how it can be conserved effectively (Bullock et al., 2020). As explained in Chapter 1, environmental governance in this context can be understood as a set of institutions, organizations, and processes “through which societies make decisions that affect the environment” (Bullock et al., 2020, p. 1; Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). Governance can be understood in many ways (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). Throughout this thesis the concept of ‘governing’ is defined as “the totality of interactions, in which public as well as private actors participate, aimed at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities; attending to the institutions as context for these governing interactions; and establishing a normative foundation for all those activities” (Kooiman, 2003, p. 4). Defining governance broadly is important if it is going to acknowledge the value of non-state institutions and actors and the wide range of activities that it undertakes (or is involved in) including norm setting and implementing policies (Richardson, 2009, p. 3). As Indigenous scholars emphasize, a broad understanding of governance is necessary to highlight the role of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and organizations and their own processes and systems of governance (Richardson, 2009, p. 3). In part, this section makes a case for understanding the term ‘environmental governance’ broadly, because of the implications it can have on inclusive processes if conceived narrowly.

The concept of ‘institutions’ is also central in this work, and yet the term is often used “casually” to refer to several different practices and systems within society (Ostrom, 2008, p. 24) which fails to acknowledge the important role it plays in structuring societal interactions. In the

context of this research and given the focus on institutions in relation to the environment and conservation, institutions can be understood as the “rules of the game” in society that can be an effective way of reducing “uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life” (North, 1990, p. 3-4). In other words, institutions refer to both the formal and informal interactions, rules and structures that shape decision-making and policy formation and implementation. Varying forms of environmental governance also “embody” political and economic relationships which guide the “identities, actions, and outcomes” of governance processes and structures (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006, p. 298). Given the influences that frame and guide governance systems, it is no surprise that this holds true for Western-led environmental governance systems as well.

However, there is a growing dialogue in research and practice which aims to put greater value on social perspectives to emphasize “more people-centered conservation research and interventions” (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 2; Bennett & Roth, 2019). Searching for answers to complex environmental dilemmas from a Western dominated natural science lens has led to exclusionary planning and implementation processes, producing significant negative social impacts (Bennett et al., 2017). The most common example of this exclusionary planning and implementation is seen in the enforcement of Protected Areas (PAs), and the displacement of people from land, and justifying these actions in the name of natural science and the conservation of the environment (Adams & Hutton, 2007). The sole use of natural science to diagnose global environmental problems can also detach itself from the “diverse geographies of personal or collective history and culture”, which does not allow for the agency and decision-making power of communities (Hulme, 2010, p. 562). Social dimensions of conservation encourage multiple perspectives and worldviews and includes an “exceedingly broad array” of cultural, social, economic, political, and governance-related topics and considerations (Bennett & Roth, 2019, p.

1). Considering these perspectives at various scales of environmental governance can lead to decision-making, policies, and actions which center “social accountability and safeguards, engagement, equity and empowerment in conservation research and practice” (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 2). The influence of Indigenous Peoples in governance processes and decision-making is part of this social dimension of conservation.

The inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples in environmental governance processes is increasingly recognized as a necessity for the equity of governance processes, the well-being of the environment, and for the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance itself (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021; Brondizio & Le Tourneau, 2016; Bullock et al., 2020; Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022; Klenk et al., 2013; Merino, 2018; Parks & Schröder, 2018; Sheremata, 2018; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). There is no singular definition of “Indigenous Peoples”, partly due to their unique and diverse cultures, languages, traditions, and territories, but broadly the term aims to acknowledge peoples who “have historically belonged to a particular region or country, before its colonization or transformation into a nation-state” (McLean et al., 2012, p. 245). Substantive inclusion and recognition are necessary due to the expertise that Indigenous Peoples have about the environment and because of the increased attention and demand for equity by Indigenous Peoples (Garnett et al., 2018). This demand has led to greater accessibility within governance forums at various scales (international, national, and local) for Indigenous actors to not only be present, but also, to ensure legitimacy, and equity within environmental decision-making (Brondizio & Le Tourneau, 2016). This is a significant shift in the landscape of environmental governance given the power that governance forums have (or can have) on decision-making at the global, national, and local levels and the impacts this has on Indigenous Peoples (Bullock et

al., 2020; Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Despite the broad acknowledgement of equity-deserving groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, what is still lacking is a deeper understanding of what authentic inclusion means and how this manifest in governance forums (Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021).

There are real and significant consequences to not having a better grasp on what inclusion means or how it can be realized. This gap in knowledge threatens the viability and influence of governance forums at various scales. Literature in the field of environmental governance, policy-making, and equitable spaces of decision-making suggests that the planning and implementation of environment governance without the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples is “likely to fail” (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021, p. 19). This failure can occur if the democratic nature of negotiations is not met, and this can lead to a reflection of “existing distributions of power rather than having changed anything fundamental” (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006, p. 312). The structural or social disinclination to include various forms of Indigenous-led knowledge from local and national levels into global environmental governance can make failure mean the oversimplification of global environmental dilemmas (Hulme, 2010). As Hulme (2010) states, the exclusion of multiple perspectives and knowledge systems can “erase” cultural differentiation and will not appropriately do “justice to the plurality of human living” (p. 563). To address this inequity, increasingly, governance institutions aim to increase cooperation among state actors and other social actors (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity) who were previously excluded from governance processes altogether (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). Much of this exclusion is a result of power imbalances, and specifically the lack of power available to Indigenous Peoples, their communities, networks, and organizations. The following

sub-section, I identify the importance that power plays in various scales of environmental governance processes and relationships.

2.2 Understanding Power: Western-Led Governance Grip on Inclusion

Western-led environmental governance systems and processes have been largely influenced by colonial structures of power, and this impacts the way decisions are made today (Arney et al., 2023). Generally, ‘colonialism’ can be understood as “the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods”, and in this context it is the European control and power over Indigenous Peoples, lands, waters, cultures, and ways of being within the environment (Reimerson, 2013, p. 994). In this context colonialism refers to the “ideological legacy” which continues to influence decision-making of conservation issues, policy outcomes, and governance structures broadly (Reimerson, 2013, p. 994).

In conjunction with Western-led environmental governance, conservation decision-making and ways we conceptualize the environment have historically been founded on a Western science model (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Parks & Schröder, 2018; Salomon et al., 2018; Singh & Van Houtum, 2002; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Environmental management practices are determined by who has the power to make decisions, and by what ‘onto-epistemology’ is privileged in that decision-making (Muller, Hemming, & Rigney, 2019, p. 399; Salomon et al., 2018). In fact, environmental management has been called “a tool of colonialism, particularly by privileging Western science, institutions, and administrative procedures” (Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019, p. 399). More value has been placed on Western forms of ‘science’ to reach (or work toward) environmental goals, targets, and climate adaptation tools (Shackleton et al., 2023).

The premises underpinning Western science are rooted in specific cultural ideas that humans are separate from and superior to nature (Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019). This perspective has been promoted as “rational”, “objective”, “universal” and culturally neutral in addressing environmental issues (Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019, p. 401). This worldview aims to separate humans and nature, in a ‘fortress conservation’ model, which offers a binary understanding of the diverse connections between people and the environment, and this thinking often undermines the human rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples (Colchester, 2004; Shaw, 2021).

For example, Western models of environmental conservation prioritized the protection of “wilderness” areas which were seen as something in need of being “preserved for the recreation of the human spirit” (Colchester, 2004, p. 146). Historically, this model of creating Protected Areas (PAs) in conservation was a tool which ultimately excluded Indigenous Peoples from their lands, denied them ancestral rights to land, weakened cultural identities, and many other negative social, political, cultural, and environmental outcomes (Colchester, 2004). To understand the complexities of multi-scale environmental governance processes and their connection to systemic issues, analyzing power dynamics within them should be prioritized (Ba, 2022). Structures of power in environmental governance breed an assumed superiority of the Western worldview which instills a “sense that we have a right to intervene based on that assumed superior knowledge” (Carpenter, 2020, p. 2).

Below I highlight the ways that power is conceptualized and understood in literature. I am specifically focusing on the ways in which power influences environmental governance structures, institutions, processes, policies, and the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and organizations.

Power dynamics in environmental governance influence every scale (global, national, local) and can reduce the effectiveness of processes which aim to be inclusive and can perpetuate deeply rooted power-laden relationships (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 10). There is agreement in the literature about the complexity of power in the environmental governance context, the different types of power, how they can be identified, and the differences in power dynamics between various scales of governance decision-making (Arney et al., 2023; Dean, 2012; Lécuyer et al., 2024; Moore & Tjornbo, 2012; Shackleton et al., 2023). There is little agreement however, on the specific way power should be conceived or defined within a particular context partly due to its acknowledged complexity and multitude of perspectives, theories, and approaches (Gaventa, 2006; Moore & Tjornbo, 2012). Much of the literature on power's influence on environmental policy making at various levels outlines two distinct ways power is studied and analyzed: formally/procedurally or substantively (Ba, 2022; Dean, 2012; Bennett & Satterfield, 2018; Shackleton et al., 2023). Formalist conceptions define power as exercised in accordance with rules and regulations, assuming that legitimate forms of power have been granted to an entity or that their authority has been accepted by society (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 3). This type of power would be exerted through an official title, or role within a formal structure which recognizes that role to hold a certain amount of power (Dean, 2012; Shackleton et al., 2023). Formal theorizations of power have an interest in creating clarity about power, and makes the “exercise of bureaucratic, scientific and professional expertise calculable and comparable” within a given structure (Dean, 2012, p. 109). Substantive approaches aim to understand how power is “exercised by institutions and actors regardless of whether they are formally endowed with authority or not”, which allows a more fulsome and complex analysis of how power exists and operates in societal processes (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 3). Substantive examples of power

are less related to the structures which grant an individual power, but the individual instances and “exemplars” of power exerted based on the ability to influence power (Dean, 2012, p. 114). This perspective argues acknowledging power as singular instances, cases, or examples as their own, but to analyze them by seeking “resemblances and analogies” among them (Dean, 2012, p. 114). Within the substantive realm, Shackleton et al. (2023) identifies four distinct but “overlapping” approaches to understanding power: actor-centered power; institutional power; structural power; and discursive power (p. 3).

An actor-centered approach to viewing power is to perceive it as a personal resource or attribute, such as a formal position or a mandate which can be harnessed and exerted by individuals, social groups, or organizations for the “dominance over subordinated individuals” (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 2018, p. 382; Shackleton et al., 2023). An actor-centered approach to power is common, yet sometimes presents as limiting in practice because of its over simplified nature (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 2018, p. 382). For instance, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation plus (REDD+) is a global multi-level governance initiative with the goal of conserving and enhancing the sustainability of forest ecosystems that has been studied using an actor-centered approach to power (Mohammed & Inoue, 2016). REDD+ decision-making involves a variety of actors including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, climate change negotiators, carbon brokers, national government representatives, which illustrates a complex “array of power relationships (Mohammed & Inoue, 2016, p. 2). In this example, power dynamics have influenced some actors (i.e. funding agencies, NGOs, and private sectors) to hold more weight in decision-making than others (i.e. Indigenous Peoples, and local communities) (Mohammed & Inoue, 2016). In the context of the REDD+ initiative, coercive

financial and informational power by actors has an impact on Indigenous Peoples substantive influence in governance processes (Mohammed & Inoue, 2016).

Institutional power is when individuals, groups, organizations, and social norms create and enforce rules and practices as power (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 4). Institutional power can create similar practical limits as actor-centered power, in that focusing on institutions and actors may miss a “critical” view on power which may be offered more holistically by structural or discursive approaches to power (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 7). For example, the UNFCCC has been pressured to increase their attention to and recognition for Indigenous Peoples and systemically underrepresented voices and perspectives in global climate governance processes (Shawoo & Thornton, 2019). In response, in 2017, the UNFCCC’s annual Conference of Parties (COP) established a ‘Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform’ with the objective of exchanging experiences and increasing inclusion within the UNFCCC processes (Shawoo & Thornton, 2019). Despite these attempts at acknowledging and recognizing Indigenous knowledge and contributions to climate challenges, institutional power often hinders the depth in which Indigenous Peoples have influence on decision-making processes (Shawoo & Thornton, 2019). Scholars have argued that this is because the power Indigenous Peoples have is largely predicated upon the power they have within their respective government bodies, which can be “limited due to histories of marginalization” (Brugnach et al., 2017; Shawoo & Thornton, 2019, p. 2). Institutional power imbalances in this case can manifest in many ways (lack of funding to attend governance meetings; rules; norms; and voting power of non-state actors... etc.) that limit the strength of Indigenous voices (Shawoo & Thornton, 2019).

Structural approaches see power as socially produced and historically significant, and the spaces in which actors aim to exercise power is “constrained by political, cultural and economic

structures, such as entrenched social classes, gender roles, economic relations, or colonial legacies” (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 7). Structural power relations in the context of environmental governance and Indigenous inclusion can be partly rooted in long histories of colonial violence and oppression, for example, settler occupation, land dispossession, enslavement of Indigenous Peoples, exploitation of labor, forced assimilation, and genocide (Depuy et al., 2022, p. 962). The significant distinction to be made is that the examples of historical oppression listed above are not merely ‘events’ displaying power relations, but rather ‘structures’ of power over time (Depuy et al., 2022, p. 962).

While there is agreement that all forms of power are significant and relevant (Moore & Tjornbo, 2012), discursive approaches to power are characterized and mobilized by “certain knowledge, dominant ideas, discourses, and narratives, to govern people and spaces by shaping human and non-human behavior” (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 4). In the context of multi-scalar environmental governance processes, discursive approaches to power recognize that power is exercised ‘through’ various actors, institutions, policies, organizations, governing bodies, norms, forms of knowledge, and ideas about the environment (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 7). For example, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment (GA) was the first global governance assessment to “systematically engage with Indigenous and local knowledge systems and ideas and discourse that concern Indigenous Peoples related to the environment (McElwee et al., 2020, p. 1666). However, Indigenous knowledges and Western science come from distinct knowledge systems, which often present an asymmetrical power dynamic when implemented in governance assessments or processes (McElwee et al., 2020). In this case, the power of Indigenous knowledge systems and ideas were recognized to enrich concepts of nature; assess nature’s

contributions to people; assess the status of nature; monitor trends in nature; and shape target-setting towards global environmental goals (McElwee et al., 2020). Bridging knowledge systems through the IPBES Global Assessment is one way of addressing discursive power asymmetries and improving equitable outcomes of policy implementation (McElwee et al., 2020; Tengo et al., 2017). Within the environmental governance landscape, discursive power is of interest because it helps make visible the impact of Western epistemology. Discursive power is my focus in this thesis, to explore the impacts worldviews and epistemologies have on the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples.

Whether approached substantively or formally, power can exist in different ways that either widen or narrow the decision-making capacities of polycentric governance actors. Power is often understood in negative terms as a “sinister and unchanging” force, however, power asymmetries can both actively limit non-dominant actors from confronting inequitable regulations in governance and can limit the burden on already powerful actors (Mudliar & Koontz, 2021, p. 640; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002, p. 39). Power is context dependent, and can be expressed in ways that range from domination and resistance to collaboration and transformation (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002, p. 39). More recent contributions to the understanding of power in environmental politics and decision-making are the emergence of three distinct expressions of power: power over, power to, power with, and power within (Pansardi & Bindi, 2021; Partzsch, 2017). Mudliar and Koontz (2021) highlight these expressions as empowerment processes (e.g. capacity to act, self-confidence, and solidarity) through which non-dominant governance actors can “respond to domination” (p. 641). ‘Power over’ is considered a win-lose relationship, in that having power requires taking it from someone else, and is typically a negative form of power, and can be associated with repression, wealth,

force, coercion, discrimination and others (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). ‘Power with’ is the first of three most collaborative forms of exercising power, and it is related to building strength among different actors with diverse interests to ensure mutual support and solidarity to reduce social conflict (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). ‘Power to’ focuses on each individual actor shaping their own situation and prioritizing their own unique interests and can be based on mutual support (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). Lastly, ‘power within’ is associated with an individual’s self-worth, knowledge, and worldview, and is based on recognizing the diversity of individuals while respecting one another’s differences (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002, p. 39). Environmental governance at any scale involves power, and it is important to consider the complex ways power-laden relationships can impact the processes and outcomes of decision-making (Morrison et al., 2019).

The following section will highlight literature on environmental governance across various scales, which will provide greater insight into how environmental governance operates and the ways in which Indigenous Peoples have been involved historically.

2.3 Multi-Scalar Interactions: Global to Local Environmental Governance

There is significant focus in the environmental governance literature about multi-scalar environmental governance as necessary to understand the workings of global, national, and local governance systems as interrelated processes which impact the way decisions are made and policies are implemented (Brugnach et al., 2017; Mistry et al., 2014; Wyborn & Bixler, 2013).

The interactions between and among scales of governance also influence the ways in which Indigenous Peoples interact within environmental governance processes (Marion Suisseea, 2022). Indigenous Peoples have lived on, managed, and maintained the health of the local environment around them for millennia (Garnett et al., 2018; Iocca & Fidélis, 2023;

Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson, 2022; Shaw, 2021; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). In gaining recognition of their rights, territories, and their customary ways of living, Indigenous Peoples have been persistent and determined in claiming space within environmental governance processes (Colchester, 2004). As explained above, environmental governance exists in many forms, and this means that actions can be carried out by nation-states, non-governmental organizations, communities, and businesses (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). Below I provide examples of significant environmental governance processes to illustrate the changes that have occurred over the decades in the way in which Indigenous Peoples have been considered and recognized in environmental governance. Further, this section is to demonstrate that regardless of the scale of environmental governance, implementation of decision-making can be significantly impactful to Indigenous Peoples.

An example of an influential governance forum at the global level is the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity opened for signature at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, and it is one of the “most central” agreements focusing on international nature conservation (Reimerson, 2013, p. 1004). The United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) is a governing body of the CBD, which has had 14 ordinary meetings to date (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2023). The creation of the CBD is significant, because prior to its creation, inclusion in global environmental decision-making was only open to state actors (Witter et al., 2015). State actors are government representatives, and 196 governments have formally agreed to and ratified the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2023). Voting rights within these spaces are only available to state actors, but the preamble of the CBD (1992) recognized Indigenous Peoples and their “close relationship with and dependency on biological resources”

for their sustainability practices, traditional knowledge systems, and the role of women in biodiversity (Teran, 2016, p. 2-3). Despite this acknowledgement in the preamble, Indigenous Peoples and organizations were not originally included in biodiversity meetings (Teran, 2016, p. 2-3). Leaving Indigenous actors with a limited capacity to make decisions in the CBD is an example of colonialism and the power of Western-led governance. Reimerson (2013) refers to the CBD as having a history of “conserving colonial power structures” which reduces Indigenous actors’ power to make decisions or express agency (p. 1005).

The 1992 Conference in Rio de Janeiro was important in the creation of CBD and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Witter et al., 2015). The UNFCCC is another example of a global framework within the United Nations that represents a structure for intergovernmental decision-making and collaboration to reduce the threats of global climate change (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2023). The UNFCCC has two main objectives, the first is to “stabilize” greenhouse gas emissions and concentrations in the atmosphere to avoid “dangerous human interference with the climate system”, and the second is to achieve this within a time frame that increases the adaptability of global ecosystems (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2023, para. 4). After increasing numbers of Indigenous governance actors and representatives demanded forums like the UNFCCC be more inclusive to non-state decision-making, the UNFCCC announced the Declaration of the First International Forum of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change in 2000 (Belfer et al., 2019). Then, in 2001 the UNFCCC agreed to recognize Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) “as an official constituency”, which increased their resources within the convention, and granted them “limited speaking rights and designated office space” (Belfer et al., 2019).

Contrary to state-led global governance processes, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a non-state-led network that has created global impacts in the ways biodiversity and conservation is conceptualized and governed.

The IUCN is the “largest and most diverse environmental network” in the world and was founded in 1948 with aims to provide societies, economies, and nature with the tools to “thrive together” (International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 2023, para. 1). The IUCN aims to provide a “neutral space” to bring together governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, scientists, communities, Indigenous Peoples, and IPOs to “solve environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development” (International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 2023, para. 4). The IUCN facilitates and convenes the support of over 16,000 volunteer experts from a variety of disciplines who work within the seven expert commissions within the structure of the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 2024; Zurba et al., 2020). The expert commissions are as follows: the Commission on Education and Communication; the Commission on Ecosystem Management; the Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy; the Species Survival Commission; the World Commission on Environmental Law; the World Commission on Protected Areas; and the Climate Crisis Commission (International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 2024). The Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy is relevant to this study in its collaboration and facilitation of the Learning for Governance network mentioned in Chapter 1.

In September 2003, the IUCN held their 5th International World Parks Congress (WPC) in Durban, South Africa which was the “largest gathering of protected areas experts”, including nearly 3,000 participants (IUCN, 2021, para. 1). This convention concluded with the creation of the Durban Accord Action Plan, which was a historic agreement in promoting the rights and

inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in conservation (Vaz & Agama, 2013). The Durban Accord impacted the “deeply entrenched beliefs” of how biodiversity and conservation is to be achieved and emphasized the importance of equity and inclusiveness in environmental governance (Vaz & Agama, 2013, para. 2). This action plan not only promotes inclusion, but it calls on governments and nation-states to ensure the conditions and means for “the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and other stakeholders in conservation” (Vaz & Agama, 2013, para. 2).

Another major policy forum facilitated by the IUCN every four years is the World Conservation Congress (WCC) (IUCN, 2021). The WCC aims to improve how the environment is managed for the well-being of human, social, and economic development (IUCN, 2021). The WCC believes that this change cannot be attained by conservationists alone and brings together “all parts of society to bring together and share both the responsibilities and benefits of conservation” (IUCN, 2021, para. 2). The WCC is the “highest decision-making organ of IUCN” (IUCN, 2021, p. 4) and hosts two components, a Forum and a Members Assembly (Adeyeye et al., 2019). The Forum facilitates discussions about broad topics, provides information and press releases, workshops and training, and this portion of the WCC is open to all participants of the WCC (Adeyeye et al., 2019). The Member's Assembly is the governance within the IUCN, and aims to debate, discuss, and ultimately vote on the “programme of work for the upcoming four years” (Adeyeye et al., 2019, p. 2). Governing the sessions of the Members Assembly is primarily the role of the IUCN Council, which is made up of member organization representatives, and chairs of expert commissions, who are elected by the IUCN membership to four-year terms (Monge-Ganuzas et al., 2024). Along with setting the “global conservation agenda”, the WCC helps to guide the IUCN Secretariat’s work by passing resolutions to inform the IUCN Programme (Monge-Ganuzas et al., 2024). The IUCN Secretariat works with member

organizations and the seven expert commissions listed above to “implement the vision of the IUCN’s membership” (Monge-Ganuzas et al., 2024, p. 2). The IUCN membership submits draft motions and if they are adopted by the IUCN, turn into resolutions and recommendations (IUCN, 2021). In 2021, the most recent WCC was convened in Marseille, France, where there were over 9,000 participants, representing 1,400 IUCN Member organizations, and members of government, civil society, Indigenous, spiritual communities, private sector, and academia (IUCN, 2021, p. 3). The WCC adopted 137 recommendations and resolutions related to governance of the IUCN, conservation, development, human well-being, and sustainable use of resources (IUCN, 2021, p. 4). The eighth expert commission of the IUCN, the Climate Crisis Commission, was established during the WCC in Marseille, France (IUCN, 2021). The next WCC will be convened in October 2025, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (IUCN, 2023).

This section is not meant to offer a fulsome history or analysis of multi-scalar environmental governance, but rather to exemplify the complex nature of these interactions, as well as the changing landscape of Indigenous inclusion over time. There has been changes in the amount environmental governance processes have come to acknowledge and recognize the value of multiple worldviews, and the need to prioritize Indigenous knowledge in decision-making. Within this changing landscape, from originally denied formal access, to acknowledgement, to language recognizing Indigenous Peoples value decision-making, to attempting to further an understanding of what inclusivity really is and aiming towards equity-centered spaces in environmental governance; it must be recognized that Indigenous Peoples are not “passive recipients of these processes” (Belfer et al., 2019, p. 13). There is also a wide range of examples that foster inclusion in environmental governance and promote diversity of knowledge systems in more and less effective ways. Indigenous Peoples, communities, and networks have

“continued to defend and reclaim livelihoods and sovereignty on local to national levels”, with increasing recognition on international levels (Belfer et al., 2019, p. 13). The precedent for Indigenous Peoples “seeking access to intergovernmental processes” was set originally in the early 1920s, when Chief Deskaheh of Haudenosaunee Nation called on the League of Nations to “to defend the right of his peoples to live under their own laws, on their own land and according to their own faith” (Colchester, 2004, p. 147). In part because of the actions set in motion in 1923, Indigenous Peoples then brought demands for the recognition of their sovereign rights at the United Nations Decolonization Committee in 1977 (Colchester, 2004, p. 147). That request was also denied, but a “special meeting” on Indigenous Peoples was convened at the United Nations by the Human Rights Commission, which since 1983 has allowed Indigenous Peoples “unimpeded access to parts of the UN human rights process to press for a recognition of their rights” (Colchester, 2004, p. 147).

Since then, there has been no shortage of Indigenous-led advocacy and initiatives to improve recognition, inclusion, and influence in environmental governance and international law (Borrows et al., 2023; Engle, 2011). A notable shift in global consensus on Indigenous rights and recognition came in 2007, when the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Engle, 2011). The adoption of UNDRIP was a result of over 20 years of negotiations between Indigenous Peoples and states, originally beginning in 1982 when the Working Group on the Rights of Indigenous Populations was created and drafted a declaration (Engle, 2011, p. 143). The UNDRIP was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly after a majority vote in favour of 144 countries, 11 abstentions, and four voting against (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America) (United Nations, 2007). The governments who voted against the passing of the Declaration were concerned about

the specific language in UNDRIP and its meaning in practice with Indigenous Peoples (Engle, 2011; Lightfoot, 2024). For example, the Canadian government was concerned in previous drafts of the Declaration as they related to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), resource development, and national sovereignty (Lightfoot, 2024, p. 18). The Prime Minister of Canada at the time, Stephen Harper, was tentative to agree to UNDRIP for uncertainty about how the Declaration would impact the Canadian government's "ability to make decisions about resource extraction on indigenous lands" (Lightfoot, 2024, p. 18). Since then, the four countries who voted against, have changed their vote in favour of the Declaration (United Nations, 2007). The Declaration is an international law and policy human rights instrument which outlines both individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples relating to "cultural rights and identity; rights to education, health, employment, language, and others" (United Nations, 2007, para. 4). The passing of UNDRIP is a significant recognition of the importance of upholding Indigenous rights (Engle, 2011). A more recent example of the ongoing acknowledgement and recognition of Indigenous Peoples and those living rurally, in 2018 the UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), which also applies to "Indigenous Peoples and local communities working on the land" (UNDROP, 2019, p. 5).

The road to achieving UNDRIP was not without very long, complex, and difficult negotiations regarding Indigenous rights, and some compromises in the final draft of the Declaration (Engle, 2011; Gilbert, 2007). However, the challenge remains adequately implementing UNDRIP into nation-state legal systems and policies in a way that is beneficial and impactful to Indigenous Peoples (Borrows et al., 2023). As Borrows et al. (2023) argues, Indigenous human rights "present an enigma to theories of Eurocentric law" and leave several

questions about Eurocentric approaches to designing social order, the rule of law, and humanity (p. 16).

The increased awareness of diverse representations of environmental governance; the colonial structures which have negatively impacted communities in their ability to maintain the well-being of human and non-human ecosystems; and the importance of Indigenous governance systems leading conservation efforts have resulted in the increased recognition of the ICCA Consortium. The ICCA Consortium is a global membership-based civil society organization which was established at the 4th World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, Spain in 2008 (ICCA Consortium, 2021). It is a registered non-profit and aims to build upon the work of a large network local level organizations, who have worked towards supporting conservation and sustaining ecosystems through community and Indigenous-led governance models (Apgar, 2017). The term “ICCA” represents a diverse representation of “territorial and biodiversity governance” that focuses on context-specific ways of maintaining the well-being of the environment (Apgar, 2017, p. 17). ICCAs have been a tool used to support Indigenous Peoples in defending their ancestrally managed lands and territories, and to continue prioritizing the well-being of the environment (Shaw, 2021). ICCAs are located around the world, and encompass a large variety of spaces including territories, community forests, sacred natural sites, community- managed coastal and marine areas, wildlife roosting and feeding sites, pasturelands, and others (Kothari, 2015, p. 13-14). From the movement and recognition of ICCAs as important to land tenure rights, traditional livelihoods, and the leadership of Indigenous Peoples in governing their own lands, came the ICCA Consortium. More recently, the ICCA Consortium has shifted this language towards recognizing and supporting “territories of life” (ICCA Consortium, 2019, para. 1). The Consortium acknowledges the often-close association of Indigenous Peoples and specific

territories, land, area, or “body of natural resources”, and states that the term ICCA is used when this association is combined with local governance and the effective conservation of nature (ICCA Consortium, 2019, para. 1). ICCA is not used as an acronym, but rather an abbreviation for “territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities”, otherwise known as “territories of life” (ICCA Consortium, 2019, para. 1). The movement of territories of life collaborating and networking together is a hopeful example of local level environmental governance that prioritizes and implements diverse knowledge, context-specific experiences, and inclusivity through the network of the ICCA Consortium. Relatively recent progress in global environmental governance institutions or networks like the CBD have recognized the value of local systems of governance as effective forms of acting on conservation efforts (Apgar, 2017). The difficulty beyond recognition is creating space for Indigenous ontologies and rights in various scales of environmental governance to influence how policies and laws are created (Apgar, 2017).

In the following sub-chapter, I will provide information about the connection between Indigenous Peoples and various scales of environmental governance, and why inclusivity is necessary for both effective and equitable environmental governance processes.

2.4 Indigenous Inclusion & Leadership in Environmental Governance Processes

Below I highlight literature on Indigenous inclusion in environmental governance at various scales and share a more current account of the interactions between environmental governance processes and Indigenous Peoples. This section aims to acknowledge the gaps in research, analyze how previous literature has discussed including Indigenous Peoples in environmental

governance, and the importance of diverse representations of governance, story-sharing, and Indigenous perspectives in creating governance processes which are equitable and effective.

Information about the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and decision-making power in global environmental governance forums is limited (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). There is a need for research to better understand if and how Indigenous Peoples and organizations experience global environmental governance forums as legitimate and important actors (Brugnach et al., 2017; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021).

Indigenous Peoples, institutions, and organizations have a much different relationship with nature, conservation, and sustainability than the dominant Western relationship so prevalent in governance frameworks (Coscieme et al., 2020). Indigenous worldviews often promote a relationship with nature that is rooted in relationality, kinship-oriented philosophies, and strong stewardship ethics (Coscieme et al., 2020, p. 40). While previous research has documented the increased participation of non-state actors (NSAs) in governance forums, how inclusion impacts decision and regulation-making is limited (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021). NSAs can be understood as participants in governance from “nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), business firms, expert and scientific bodies, associations, and civil society” (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021, p. 1). For example, one study assessed the inclusion of Indigenous and non-state actors and their influence on “official COP-10 negotiations”, which was hosted in Nagoya, Japan (Witter et al., 2015, p. 894). CBD COP-10 was explained as a “highly inclusive event” with a “thickening of participation in global environmental politics” (Witter et al., 2015, p. 895). However, despite the inclusion of Indigenous and non-state actors in the Convention, their ability to be heard and make change remained at the “periphery of decision-making” (Witter et al., 2015, p. 895). It appears the settler-colonial nature of governance forums has and

continues to shape the inclusion and participation of Indigenous actors to remain at a “tokenistic level”, which does not promote multiple knowledge systems, decision-making, authentic inclusion, or collaboration (Moyo, 2022, p. 12). Inclusion is an elusive concept and there is some debate about the difference between participation and influence in multi-scale environmental governance forums (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021).

Historical colonial portrayals of Indigenous Peoples within western-led environmental governance have viewed them as being part of the natural environment and reduced them to an “ecologically noble savage” stereotype that negatively impacted their legitimacy, agency, space for political and environmental action and self-determination (Reimerson, 2013, p. 996). Examples of this ideological legacy associated with contemporary governance conventions exist within previous iterations of CBD Articles. Article 8(j) outlines the provisions for issues relating to Indigenous Peoples and environmental conservation objectives (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2023; Reimerson, 2013, p. 999). Article 8(j) and the preamble of the CBD both use language of “traditional lifestyles”, “traditional knowledge”, and references those “living traditionally” in outlining Indigenous participation in the convention. Language like this in the CBD articles can reinforce the “backwards, primitive, and inferior” portrayals of Indigenous Peoples, despite the recognition that Indigenous Peoples use their relationships with nature in diverse ways to implement their knowledge and practices in ways which have been proven to be effective stewards of land, natural resources, and promote biological diversity (Garnett, 2018; Reimerson, 2013, p. 996). Despite the CBD’s use of language which promotes the inclusion and “effective participation” of Indigenous actors in governance and represents a positive attempt at reducing tokenistic representation of Indigenous Peoples in governance forums; they fail to

acknowledge or address the power dynamics and historical inequities associated with governance (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2023; Reimerson, 2013, p. 1001).

More recently, in December 2022, CBD member states agreed to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2023). This is a momentous agreement which replaces the previous 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2023). The new agreement was drafted in July 2021, during the CBD virtual working groups. The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on Indigenous participation because of their lack of access to these virtual working group spaces (Parks & Tsioumani, 2023). However, the agreement changed significantly from its original draft, and the December 2022 agreement represents a step forward for Indigenous Peoples (Parks & Tsioumani, 2023). The CBD also periodically publishes the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO), which represents a summary report of the latest information, trends, data, and status of global biodiversity which aids future implementations within the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2023). A recent “companion publication” to the GBO is the Local Biodiversity Outlooks 2 (LBO-2) (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020, para. 1). This is a collaborative document aimed at representing grassroots initiatives, case studies, voices, and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) to highlight concerns of the global socio-ecological crisis, and to identify how the CBD can better support and include diverse forms of knowledge and practice (Convention on Biological Diversity 2023, para. 1; Parks & Tsioumani, 2023). This is a positive step in the slow process of Indigenous engagement, inclusion, and decision-making on conservation and biodiversity management at the institutional level.

Along with the research of the importance of Indigenous inclusion at the global level, is the growing body of literature which argues for the increased influence of Indigenous Peoples through the power and leadership of Indigenous-led spaces in governance decision-making arenas (Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson, 2022). The concept ‘Indigenous-led’ can be understood as autonomous platforms or meeting spaces that Indigenous Peoples collaborate in to create or assess proposals, as well as organize “protests or lobbying to influence decision-making processes behind closed doors” (Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 191). Indigenous-led spaces in environmental governance forums can be significant in enabling Indigenous Peoples to “strengthen political capabilities, generate alternative knowledge, and evaluate diverse proposals discussed in formal participatory spaces” (Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 190). Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson (2022) highlight several situations where Indigenous-led space may be useful and beneficial to the effectiveness and equity of governance processes. For example, the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) was drafted by representatives of Indigenous organizations and legal experts within the Indigenous Peoples Working Group, which has been highlighted as an Indigenous-led space (Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson, 2022). An ongoing barrier which inhibits and complicates Indigenous-led spaces in environmental governance is the ability to “establish, scale up and to sustain” them over time (Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 197). There is agreement that moving beyond Indigenous inclusion and moving towards Indigenous-led environmental governance should be continuously supported across local, national, and global processes (Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021; Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson, 2022).

In addition to some positive change in Indigenous engagement at the global level, there is a growing body of literature which highlights the significance of communities and local experience

in “small-scale” societies and their ability to make important shifts in environmental governance and management at the institutional level (Dawson et al., 2021; Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2016). In other words, the communities, individuals, and organizations who are on the ground resource users can provide useful information, experience, and perspective on the state of conservation management practices to promote bottom-up institutional adjustments (Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2016). These smaller scale forms of environmental governance and biodiversity management continue to promote the importance of connecting human beings and nature, not separating them (Friedman et al., 2022). The 2003 WPC (explained above) is an example of the growing recognition of effective conservation management led by Indigenous Peoples (Dawson et al., 2021). Indigenous Peoples have not only promoted a connection to natural systems, but they have exemplified the “reciprocally beneficial relationship between people and the rest of biodiversity” (Friedman et al., 2022, p. 1477).

On the contrary, much of Western-led governance processes focus on biodiversity loss and degradation because of human interactions and aim to reduce human’s “threat to biodiversity” by protecting it (Friedman et al., 2022, p. 1477). This approach ignores what Indigenous Peoples see as an opportunity to “simultaneously” maintain strong biodiversity “as part of human well-being” (Friedman et al., 2022, p. 1477). For example, over the past 12,000 years the areas of the world under Indigenous management continue to prove to be “some of the most biodiverse areas remaining on the planet” (Ellis et al., 2021, p. 7). Territories of life promote human well-being while strengthening biodiversity, instead of protecting areas of wilderness and moving away from conservation frameworks that are centered on “excluding people” (Friedman et al., 2022, p. 1477; ICCA Consortium, 2021). Global governance negotiations, and the strength of global biodiversity, may be positively impacted by allowing for bottom-up approaches which promote

the voices, knowledge, information, and experiences of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and organizations (Dawson et al., 2021; Friedman et al., 2022). Movements like ICCAs are not only positive for the continued promotion of Indigenous rights and leadership in conservation, but governance mechanisms like ICCAs (increasingly known as ‘Territories of Life’) are more effective at maintaining biodiversity locally than larger forms of conservation initiatives (Apgar, 2017, p. 20). These processes can embrace relationships which allow Indigenous Peoples to work collaboratively with current global governance structures to ensure multiple management approaches and diverse forms of biodiversity interventions to help “accelerate the reversal of negative biodiversity changes” (Friedman et al., 2022, p. 1478).

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Perspective

The following section will explain the theoretical perspectives that have influenced my analysis, the ways I frame power as important to this thesis, and the topic of environmental governance broadly.

3.1.1 Conceptualizations of Power in Creating Equitable Spaces

As discussed in Chapter 2, the impacts and influence of power dynamics in any type of governance decision-making process are well known (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Moore & Tjornbo, 2012). Themes throughout this project point to ways in which power manifests in the context of inclusive spaces and decision-making by Indigenous Peoples and governance actors. This thesis is informed by perspectives on power, and the complex ways in which power is more and less visible in various decision-making spaces, and impacts the influence Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and communities have on said governance processes. The way I frame power in this thesis is guided by different ways of understanding and acknowledging power as described below. One perspective on power which will be discussed further below comes from Sociologist Steven Lukes (1974) and Political Scientist/Sociologist John Gaventa's (2006) work on types and dimensions of power.

The concept of power is complex, difficult to define, and heavily contested in literature (Bas, 2003; Carpenter, 2020; Moore & Tjornbo, 2012, p. 1). Despite the contested nature of theorizing about power, there is consensus that the study and inclusion of perspectives on power in analyzing policy, politics, and governance remains fundamentally important (Moore & Tjornbo, 2012). Carpenter (2020) states that there are two "roots" of how power can be theorized, one stemming from Karl Marx, and the other stemming from Michel Foucault (p. 4). Although

sometimes important to acknowledge and discuss the different attributes of these two roots of power theory, I will focus on Foucauldian theories of power as they more relate more heavily to the topics in this research. Foucault's perspective suggests that power and economy are not separate, and that they are in fact "profoundly enmeshed" with economic relations (Carpenter, 2020, p. 5). This perspective sees power as a relation, rather than a resource, and a relation which can be exercised strategically, and not always exercised to accumulate capital (Sherman, 2015). Foucault sees power as being ever-changing and having multiple meanings, rather than perceiving it as "singular and stabilized into a structure" (Carpenter, 2020, p. 12).

Foucauldian commentary on power above offer a greater base of knowledge to begin thinking about power in the context of this research. Throughout this thesis, participants express perspectives, opinions, and experiences which are related to worldviews, power, knowledge, connection, governance, trust, consent, equity, and many other topics which make Foucauldian power an important perspective to explore further (Carpenter, 2020).

Foucault leads us into an understanding of more complex 'discursive' power which was elaborated on in Chapter 2.2 above. Discursive power may be exercised by a large variety of actors or institutions and can be exercised through the "mobilization of certain knowledge, dominant ideas, discourses, and narratives, to govern people and spaces by shaping human and non-human" behaviours (Shackleton et al., 2023, p. 4). This Foucauldian-led perspective about discursive power can be seen in Steven Luke's work on three-dimensional power. Lukes' (1974) wrote a book called *Power: A Radical View*, in which he acknowledges different modes of understanding power and different ideas around how power may work. Lukes' (1974) explains concepts like one-dimensional and two-dimensional power but argues ultimately that these conceptions of power do not offer a comprehensive enough perspective to understand the

complexities of power and how it exists in society. Lukes argues for what he calls a three-dimensional view of power, which acknowledges visible, hidden, and invisible forms of power (Lukes, 2005). Visible forms of power are overt and observable behaviours often exercised through formal institutions, legal frameworks, and explicit rules or regulations and individuals who hold positions of authority and influence within society (Lukes, 2005). Hidden forms of power are less visible, are more covert and operate through social norms, cultural practices, discourses, and ideologies (Lukes, 2005). This form of power is not only used to make decisions but is used to manipulate which options other parties even consider in the first place. The third dimension of power according to Lukes (1974) is invisible, which influences the beliefs and perceptions of other parties to the point that they accept structures of power as legitimate and can be aware of this influence or not (Lukes, 2005). Invisible power operates at a deeper level, and is embedded within social structures, institutions, and cultural norms, making it difficult to identify and challenge (Lukes, 2005). Lukes (1974) believes it is important to acknowledge the various less observable forms in which power manifests, and specifically because “power is at its most effective when least observable” (p. 1). As discussed in Chapter 2, I am interested in discursive approaches to analyzing power, which aim to highlight the complexities of power exerted in visible, hidden, and invisible ways in social interactions, multi-scale governance processes, and in ways that impact the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples.

Gaventa (2006) added to Lukes’ (1974) perspectives on power by analyzing the spaces and forms that three-dimensional power takes in governance decision-making and participatory spaces. Specifically, Gaventa (2006) has theorized power through political science and sociology to better understand the “intersection of power with processes of citizen engagement in governance at the local, national, and global levels” (p. 24). Gaventa (2006) examined how

power can be understood in “relation to how spaces for engagement are created, and the levels of power (from local to global), in which they occur” (p. 25). Gaventa (2006) visualizes these complex dimensions, spaces, and forms of power in something he calls “The Power Cube” (see *Figure 1* below).

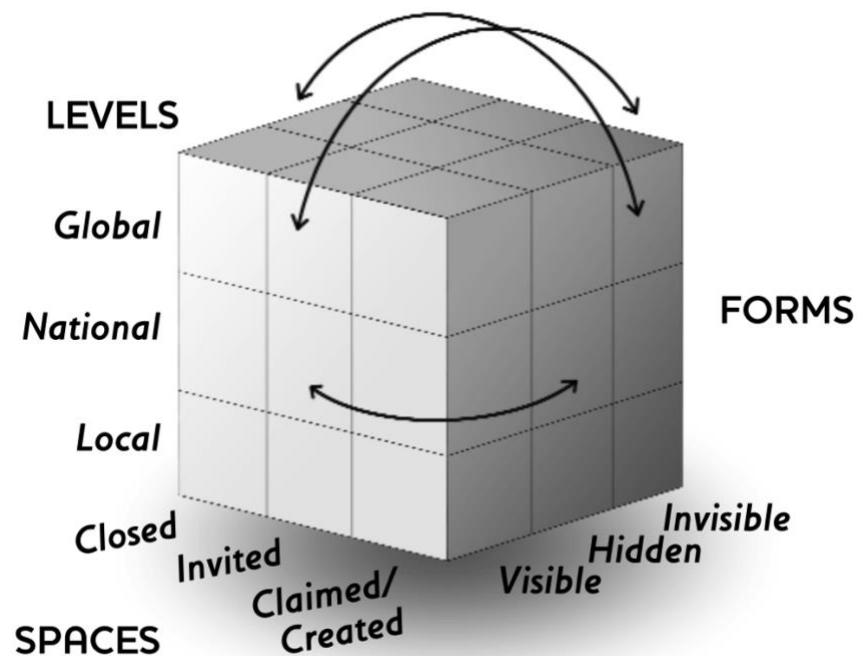


Figure 1. Gaventa's Power Cube Diagram (2006)

As depicted above in *Figure 1*, the cube is a multi-dimensional representation of some of the spaces and forms power that are relevant to this project. Space in the context of this power analysis refers to the “opportunities, moments, and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions, and relationships that affect their lives and interests” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26). These spaces of decision-making are individually complex, and they are shaped in large part by various forms of power themselves (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26). *Figure 1* shows three kinds of space: closed spaces, invited spaces, and claimed/created spaces; and three levels in which power exists: global, national, and local. Previous research by Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor (2022) explores the issue of Indigenous Peoples and participatory multi-scalar

environmental governance spaces as it relates to environmental justice. They build on Gaventa's (2006) conceptual framework to analyze how power exists within multiple scales of environmental governance, and how it impacts Indigenous Peoples ability to participate in or lead those processes (Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022). By using Gaventa's (2006) framework of power, they show the complexity of "participatory spaces" and the advocacy of Indigenous Peoples in challenging dominant discourses (Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022, p. 87). Their research concludes with an acknowledgement of the "deep-rooted mechanisms of domination and exclusion at different scales that have constrained Indigenous attempts to realize more radical change" (Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022, p. 87). This is an important contemporary example of research focusing on Indigenous inclusion in multi-scalar environmental governance processes, and the value of theories of power in understanding the complexity of governance processes and hegemonic discourses in environmental decision-making. The origins of the power cube and the dimensions of power depicted above are a predominantly Western view of power that has been used by Lukes (1974) in fields like sociology, political science, and philosophy. Specifically, the power cube conceptualization offers an accessible way to think about how power can operate in environmental governance landscapes. It captures some of the complexity of power's existence at different scales (i.e. global, national, local) and in different spaces (i.e. state vs non-state actors) and in different forms (i.e. formal and substantive). The creators of the power cube and the practitioners who have implemented it in their analysis of power have made clear that this representation of power is to be employed as a beginning point to lead into deeper "analysis and adaptation and not as a tick-box exercise" (Pantazidou, 2012, p. 23). Despite this acknowledgement by Gaventa (2006), there are limits to this power cube, and risks of the power cube being used as a "mechanistic tool

for programming” (Pantazidou, 2012, p. 23). The objective visualization of the cube in which the perspective on power exists can inadvertently reinforce binary thinking and “tight” definitions about forms of power, levels, and spaces (Pantazidou, 2012, p. 23). This makes the complex spectrum of the existence of power more difficult to acknowledge and analyze (Pantazidou, 2012). Other scholars like Lécuyer et al. (2024) have tried to capture the complexity of power through similar models like their work on the ‘multi-dimensional power framework’ which incorporates four dimensions: arenas of power, expressions of power, spaces of power, and levels of power (see Lécuyer et al., 2024 for full explanation).

My aim in this project is to explore the dynamics of power between actors in governance decision-making, and the barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples in gaining true influence over leadership and decision-making about the environment and conservation. Since many of these barriers and governance spaces have been shaped by Western colonial histories of oppression, this model of power is important to include as a way of assessing the structures created within Western perspectives of power. The power cube was not used as a framework to be the singular tool of analyzing interview data, but rather a more applicable and context relevant guide to draw on throughout analysis and the writing of this thesis. Generally, the power cube was useful in differentiating forms of power and identifying power’s existence in the sharing of participants. Participants shared about diverse local, national, and international environmental governance experiences as they related to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. While analyzing the interview data, I found the power cube to be limiting in parsing out local, national, and international scales of environmental governance. There is often crossover, and it was difficult to box up a participant's experiences as one of the scales. Additionally, it was difficult to draw on in gaining insights about how power interacted with the various scales and spaces. Using Luke’s three-

dimensional view of power was the most valuable part of the cube, to gain greater nuance and insight into what power existed in the sharing of participants, and how it came up in various scenarios.

Rooting this project in perspectives of power dimensions in environmental governance spaces is important in understanding and acknowledging the deeply seeded reasons for a lot of the barriers to equitable inclusion and influence faced by Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and communities.

3.2 Research Paradigms & Approaches

As discussed, in Chapter 2, international decision-making about conservation is shaped largely by “dominant or hegemonic discourses” which are often a product of worldviews that promote a “capitalist view of value” (Parks & Schröder, 2018, p. 142). The dominant Western worldviews that shape international decision-making are the same worldviews that shape our understanding of inclusion in these spaces. This dominant discourse has shaped my worldview throughout most of my education, and influences my understanding, my bias, and my analysis of most issues. The purpose of outlining paradigms and approaches in this project is to assist in the deconstruction of previous ways of knowing and conceptions of truth.

Before elaborating on the research approaches employed in this research, I would like to acknowledge and explain the value of the Two Eyed Seeing (*Etuaptmumk*) approach, along with my rationale for not employing it in this project. Two-Eyed Seeing (*Etuaptmumk*) is a Mi’kmaw worldview which “represents an understanding about the gift of multiple perspectives” (Cullen & Castleden, 2023, p. 342). Two-Eyed Seeing can be employed as a framework that can support complementary alignment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews under a specific context (Cullen & Castleden, 2023). This approach acknowledges and values the multiple

perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing that different worldviews have, and allows for Indigenous and Western-science worldviews to respect and enrich one another (Abu et al., 2019). This approach seeks to engage multiple conceptions of knowledge, and specifically aims to “avoid knowledge domination and assimilation by recognizing the best from both worlds” (Hatcher et al., 2009). Since its origin, this concept has been used as a decolonizing research methodology in multiple fields and has shown results that foster more equitable, inclusive, collaborative, and plural knowledge outcomes (Abu et al., 2019; Cullen & Castleden, 2018; Whiting, 2018).

Along with the notable value and potential benefit of promoting equity in research through this approach, there is also scholarship to caution researchers (particularly non-Indigenous researchers) in employing Two Eyed Seeing in meaningful and rigorous ways when conducting research with Indigenous Peoples (Tremblay & Martin, 2023). Despite my interest in challenging Western worldviews and forms of knowledge, along with embracing Indigenous ways of knowing, I am the primary researcher who is a white settler, and who has been subject to Western knowledges and ontologies for the majority of my life. This is not to say that I was not rigorous in my attempts to appreciate, analyze, and amplify the multiplicity of worldviews shared with me during interviews with participants. However, to ensure I am conducting research authentically, I did not employ the Two Eyed Seeing approach in this project.

The paradigms explained below guide my methodology throughout all stages of this research, to help challenge my predominantly Western worldview as a settler and to contribute to the decolonization of research and the decolonization of environmental governance structures by hearing the experiences, stories, and perspectives of diverse governance actors. The two

paradigms which will be guiding my research are: relational accountability and ethical spaces of engagement.

3.2.1 Relational Accountability

Relational accountability aims to acknowledge and respect the epistemic differences between participants in research and the ideas they share (Latulippe, 2015). The word relationality refers to the understanding that reality around us is shaped by our relationships (McCarty et al., 2022). Relational accountability acknowledges the implications of my own personal conduct, responsibility, and where actions are viewed “in relation to all living things, not in isolation” (McCarty et al., 2022, p. 426). Using this paradigm requires reflexivity and an ongoing process of “self-study” as a researcher, which is known to be an important practice for any research regardless of the topic (Latulippe, 2015). However, this paradigm is included particularly because of my aim to respect the epistemologies and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and because of my own positionality and worldview as a researcher (Latulippe, 2015; Wilson, 2008). As Wilson (2008) articulates in his book, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, my research project may very well meet the criteria by which “dominant system research is judged”, but if I am a researcher who is removed from the perspectives, time, and experiences of the participants in this project, then I have not fulfilled my role of being relationally accountable to my participants and Indigenous research paradigms broadly (p. 101). This research aims to be true to the voices of participants and to continue to “build upon the relationships between the ideas and participants” (Wilson, 2008, p. 101). The relational accountability paradigm “reveals privilege and fosters humility, responsibility, and accountability” (Latulippe, 2015, p. 7). An Indigenous worldview is being relational, and scholars have noted that being open to relationality as a perspective in this work can create

opportunities to restore “fracture connections resulting from ongoing coloniality and oppression” (McCarty et al., 2022, p. 426). Thinking in this way has allowed me to think about and ask questions about my own conception of reality, who I am accountable to, where I am from, and be open to myself and my participants about how positionalities impact worldviews and research. For instance, I am accountable to the numerous people I was fortunate enough to connect with throughout the process of this research project, and it would not have been possible without their willingness to share their time and stories with me (see Acknowledgments and Positionality Statement in Chapter 1 for a more fulsome reflection).

3.2.2 Ethical Spaces of Engagement

Another important perspective I employed throughout the research process is ethical space. Ethical space can be understood as a framework which can examine the diversity and positionality of both “Indigenous peoples and Western society in the pursuit of a relevant discussion on Indigenous legal issues and particularly to the fragile intersection of Indigenous law and Canadian legal systems” (Ermine, 2007, p. 193). Ermine (2007) makes the important point that people with a predominantly Western worldview tend to present a “brick wall of a deeply embedded belief and practice of Western universality” (p. 198). As a qualitative researcher with a Western upbringing, I am committed to collaborating within an ethical space of engagement and unlearning my own worldview to question my own ingrained beliefs. This commitment, and the approach of ethical space in this research aims to combat the colonial institutions and systems which dominate with a “mono-cultural existence” that understands one conception of truth and justice to “trump over all others” (Ermine, 2007, p. 198). An important component of this approach is the relationality of this project and the associated relationships which have been established by my supervisor and co-creator of the LfG network, Dr. Melanie

Zurba. Dr. Zurba has put a lot of time, commitment, and energy into collaborating with a variety of folks working in environmental governance processes and equity spaces and has been an important resource in connecting me to participants of this research. Without her work and engagement, I would not have had the opportunity or resources in a Master's program to hear about global experiences and from diverse perspectives of governance actors. The creation of knowledge, sharing of knowledge, and learning requires relationality (Laurila & Carey, 2022). The ethical space of engagement requires an acknowledgement of subjectivity, along with a relationship that appreciates the complex interactions required to foster teaching and learning, which questions self-identity, purpose, and ethical worldview (Laurila & Carey, 2022). This paradigm supports an inductive-dominant coding approach, as well as using the theories on power outlined above, which highlights an emphasis on the subjective nature of both understanding inclusion and power in this context. I will elaborate on subjectivity and relationality further in Chapter 4 and 5.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The main method used in this study was semi-structured interviews with research participants. Semi-structured interviews are a commonly used method in qualitative research and are specifically important in guiding the results of this study (Seidman, 2006). This project is focused on the experiences and stories of individuals with experiences in various scales of environmental governance, as it relates to Indigenous inclusion and decision-making power. As a method, interviewing provides space for participants to share, reflect, and symbolize their stories through language, transparency, connection, and vulnerability which as Seidman (2006) says, is

“at the very heart of what it means to be human” (p. 8). Additionally, interviews are a way of allowing me to express my interest in the story's others are willing to share (Seidman, 2006).

Conducting semi-structured interviews with research participants supports Objectives 1 and 2. During this study, I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews. In the context of this research, I have separated research participants into the following categories based on their positionality, experiences, perspectives, and worldviews: Indigenous participants; non-Indigenous participants working with/for Indigenous centered initiatives; and non-Indigenous participants. Including non-Indigenous participants allowed for perspectives from a greater diversity of social positions and allowed for more connections to be made between participant responses (Warren, 2002). Interviews in qualitative research are interested in the subjectivity of human realities, rather than the “concrete realities of objects”, which makes the inclusion of diverse ontological perspectives and multiple conceptions of truth an asset in this research (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Of the 20 interviewees, I interviewed 6 Indigenous Peoples; 5 non-Indigenous participants working with/for Indigenous centered initiatives; and 9 non-Indigenous participants with experiences across various local, national, and international governance contexts.

At the beginning of this project, I planned to interview only participants who were partners within the Learning for Governance Network (LfG). As the project advanced, I was presented with several opportunities to connect with and hear from a broad range of governance actors who fit the criteria of this research but were not yet formal partners within the LfG network. The LfG is relatively new and continues to grow and expand with more partners. Although some participants are not formal partners within the LfG, the participants have a strong relevance to the LfG’s initiative and goals. These opportunities allowed me to broaden the scope

of participation to hear experiences and perspectives from Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples globally. Research participants spanned 13 different countries: Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, England, France, Honduras, India, Nepal, Nigeria, Scotland, United States, and Venezuela. Each interview was focused on the individuals or affiliated organizations perspectives and experiences on Indigenous inclusion in governance, and their shares in interviews do not represent the feelings or perspectives of their associated country. See *Table 1* below for an outline of the geographies from which each participant category shared perspectives in interviews.

Table 1. Geographies of Participant Categories

Geographies	Indigenous	With/For	Non-Indigenous
Australia	×		
Brazil			×
Canada	× ×		
Cameroon			×
England		×	× ×
France			×
Honduras		×	
India		× ×	
Nepal	× ×		
Nigeria	×		
Scotland			× ×
United States		×	×
Venezuela			×

3.3.2 Recruitment and Sample

The criteria for including participants in this research was anyone who had experience working in environmental governance decision-making processes (at the local, national, or international level), and who are interested in sharing their perspectives, stories, and experiences relating to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in said governance processes. This study

employed a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a common technique used in qualitative research to deepen understanding on a topic, rather than the breadth of study's sample (Campbell et al., 2020). This sampling technique is used to select or reach participants likely to yield information or experiences useful to the project's purposes (Campbell et al. 2020).

Purposive sampling is also commonly used to identify useful forms of information while using limited research resources (Campbell et al., 2020, p. 654). I was interested in the diversity of participants and their own individual or organizational experiences in local, national, or international scales of governance, which maintained a broad inclusion and exclusion criteria. I was able to connect with participants personally and include them based on their experience and interests or connect with participants through the networks of my colleagues and mentors at Dalhousie University or through Dr. Melanie Zurba's networks.

Some participants are partnered within the LfG network, and the knowledge that comes from this research can be considered by the LfG as it continues to grow. Examples of partner organizations with the LfG that I interviewed include members of the ICCA Consortium, the Center for Indigenous Peoples' Research and Development (CIPRED); the IISAAK Olam Foundation; the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership; Kua'aina Ulu Auamo (KUA); and Mosquitia Pawisa Apiska (MOPAWI).

My supervisor, Dr. Melanie Zurba, helped to connect me with some of the participants who were not already connected to the LfG network. Participants who were not originally connected with Dr. Zurba or the LfG network were selected through connections with previous participants, and other connections I made throughout the research process. In June 2023, Dr. Zurba and I attended a Working Group meeting in Cambridge, United Kingdom, which was convened in collaboration by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN)

Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). The goal of the Working Group was to collaborate on the governance of Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs) led by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). This meeting convened a diversity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples whose experiences and expertise aligned well with the purpose of this research. I spent time connecting with members of the Working Group in Cambridge and reached out to them via email after the meeting to inquire about their interest in being interviewed as a part of my thesis research. Several participants who I connected with in Cambridge agreed to be interviewed for this research.

Each prospective participant was provided with information about the interview process to ensure they were comfortable with the nature of the research and consented to the interviews being transcribed and recorded (see Appendix B). I emailed interested participants and provided them with an overview of the research and an attached consent form that encouraged participants to get in touch with me if they had any questions or concerns. Potential risks and benefits of the research were outlined in the Research Ethics Protocol which was attached to each email to prospective participants (see Appendix B). Digital signatures or verbal consent was received from each participant to ensure their consent in participating in the research interviews. My supervisor, Dr. Melanie Zurba, and my committee member, Dr. Michael Petriello were added to the informed consent document as available contacts for participants to reach out to.

Among other topics, the interviews address the lack of consensus around the idea of inclusion in governance spaces, with the goal of exploring how inclusion is understood from IPOs and Indigenous governance actors in a variety of contexts. It seemed important to broker

the disconnect of inclusion in traditionally Western-led governance by interviewing non-Indigenous governance actors on their perspectives and experiences, to gain a holistic understanding of substantive inclusion or influence in decisive spaces. A copy of the semi-structured interview guide is attached below in Appendix C.

The global nature of this research required me to conduct all 20 interviews online through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Interviews lasted 45-60 minutes, and all interviews were audio-recorded with consent from participants to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. The participants that I interviewed were familiar with online meetings given the nature of their work, and this did not pose a significant barrier to communicating in a meaningful way. At the beginning of each interview, I explained how I came into being interested in this work, and my interest in hearing experiences, stories, and perspectives of participants as they relate to environmental governance and equity. I shared my brief understanding of the current consensus around Indigenous inclusion in environmental governance decision-making and made note that whatever participants had to share during our interview about their experience would be of considerable value to my understanding of this topic. I had an interest in fostering a virtual space that was informal and allowed participants to feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and experiences with me. I had the chance to meet several participants prior to meeting for our interview, which added a layer of comfortability and relationality. Interviews typically began conversationally, with informal and general introductions. I would share my interest in this topic and the ways I became connected to this specific topic, and then I would ask if the participant would mind sharing an introduction to their experience (whether an affiliated with a specific role, organization, or governance process). Based on the participants response, I would begin by asking how (and more importantly, if) they perceived the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in

their experience or context. Follow up questions often related to specific barriers they have noticed whether their experiences of inclusion have changed considerably over time, and a large variety of topics depending on the interest, comfortability, and experiences of the participants (see Appendix C).

3.3.3 Data Verification & Validity

All research participants have had the opportunity to withdraw from the interview process, or the research altogether until November 1st, 2023 (see Appendix B). After each interview, I conducted member checking to ensure each participant was comfortable with what they shared. After each interview was conducted, the completed interview transcripts were sent back to the participants to ensure they were comfortable with the interview's contents, and they were offered another opportunity to change responses, remove responses, or remove themselves as participants in the research. All participants agreed they were comfortable with their interview's contents before analysis began.

3.4 Analytical Methods

3.4.1 Coding & Thematic Analysis

Once the semi-structured interviews were complete, they were transcribed verbatim, and then reviewed and edited as required. All interviews were coded in *NVivo* qualitative data analysis software. The analysis employed an inductive and deductive coding approach, with an inductive-dominant focus to reveal themes from interviews. Inductive coding refers to when data collection is open to highlighting themes and begins in a loosely defined way, which can ultimately create a summary of the “categories, concepts and themes, and provide indications of potential theoretical relationships” (Kyngäs, 2020, p. 14). On the other hand, using a deductive approach to coding focuses on analyzing data based on previous knowledge (Elo, & Kyngäs,

2008, p. 111), which includes theories, models, and literature reviews in the field of Indigenous inclusion in environmental governance forums. Deductive codes were informed by current literature relating to power, and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in governance decision-making. This provided an opportunity to analyze data from the semi-structured interviews to allow themes and concepts to emerge naturally in an inductive approach, while using deductive coding to find similarities or differences in the knowledge shared in the interviews to previous research and theory.

After reading through all 20 interview transcripts multiple times, themes began to emerge from the data inductively based on participants experiences, similarities, or differences in the meaning of their responses, and the connection their responses had to one another. Participants were asked at the beginning of each interview to share about their own work, experiences in this field, interests, and roles. Large segments of transcript text were coded into categories that were easier to interpret, such as “barriers” or “changes in inclusivity” or “worldviews”. After the close reading and initial categories of codes were highlighted, the top-level codes were reviewed closely to refine them into noticeable sub-themes. During this process, other themes became apparent and were categorized accordingly. Deductive coding was useful in identifying specific categories of power, and in what ways it came up in participants' experiences. Additionally, this was related to identifying and analyzing how participants spoke about Western worldviews, dominant ontologies in creating governance structures, and diverse representations of governance. Below, *Table 2* outlines my coding framework, including top-level codes and sub codes (including **inductive sub-themes** and *deductive sub-themes*).

Table 2. Interview Thematic Coding Framework

<u>Top-Level Codes</u>	<u>Sub-Codes</u>	<u>Description/Examples</u>	<u>Example Quote</u>
Barriers to Substantive Inclusion	<i>Hegemonic & Lack of Diverse Worldviews (Arney et al., 2023; Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019)</i>	Referring to the broad Western-dominant ontologies and worldviews which influence how conservation is understood and governed. This also represents the lack of recognition in decision-making of non-Western and diverse ways of governing the environment.	“Indigenous knowledge is something that governments don't know how to deal with or respect... we're just talking two completely different languages. And science is the dominant language” (Anonymous).
	Power Dynamics in Governance Processes	This theme highlights the existence of power in multi-scalar environmental governance processes. Power exists in several visible and less visible ways, and this theme explores participants sharing about how and when power impacts substantive inclusion.	“You can see... power in most cases... It's mostly with the governments, how they shape the decisions, how they push the decisions, how they push the regulatory instrument” (Anonymous).
	Complexity & Scales of Transformative Change	This refers to the incredibly complex nature of environmental governance processes and implementation. Global, national, regional, and local governance systems interacting, and finding ways to implement conservation objectives, makes many processes complex and difficult to access and influence effectively and equitably.	“Your underlying legal framework is broken, but you're still trying to improve the context in the park. So, it's a very complicated situation with lots of different layers. And the reason the governance is broken is for reasons which are really outside anyone's control. They were done in the 1930s” (Helen Tugendhat).
Nominal Inclusion vs. Substantive Influence	Process, Procedure, and Topic-based Inclusivity	This theme is associated with how the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples changes or becomes more complex based on the governance process, topic, or procedure. Participants shared about the level of recognition and substantive inclusion being	“What works in one country might not be true in any other country. We see that people are there on the table. But when the final policy decision is

		different for predominantly “Western science” topics versus issues relating to culture, diversity, and community.	made... their voices are not included” (Anonymous).
	<i>Tokenism (Belfer et al., 2019)</i>	This theme highlights the experiences and perspectives participants shared about Indigenous Peoples, organizations, or communities being present in a governance process, without appropriate power to influence the outcome of said process.	“[I have] observed a lot of international conservation decision making where people are there on the table to take part, I mean, you talk about youth or any different kind of gender involvement in decision and also including indigenous and local communities, what we have observed that this is more kind of a tokenistic approach and especially with indigenous and local communities” (Anonymous).
	Space, Time, and Resources in Decision-Making	Along the way to achieve substantive forms of inclusion in governance, participants highlighted the need for any decision-making to be supported with space, time, and adequate resources. Participants shared experiences where decisions were made quickly, without their knowledge, or where they were included in the final stages of a decision-making process.	“Having space to talk to each other or others in a similar context... so they can consult among themselves to prepare... That means in part, giving them the information that they need beforehand, to understand what on earth is being decided” (Helen Tugendhat).
Changes in Inclusion Over Time	Patience & Persistence	This sub-theme emphasizes participants sharing about the progress and spaces created for greater Indigenous inclusion is a product of the hard work and advocacy by Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and communities.	“It's been hard fought for, and I think that's a really important part to make sure it comes out because it's... it's not passive, it's not inclusion that just... happened. It's more about access and transformation and impact and I think sometimes the word

			inclusion can like tamp down the importance of that” (Anonymous).
	<i>Awareness to Action Disconnect (Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021)</i>	This sub-theme refers to the ongoing disconnect between a seemingly global consensus that Indigenous inclusion and influence is a positive thing for effective and equitable governance, and the missing action and implementation of substantively inclusive space.	“There is a disconnect in terms... of what's said, and what's done. I think it's because the people will say things, because they're good at saying things, they're not necessarily good at doing things... They think that what's talked about ideologically... is being integrated more on the ground” (Kevin Chang).
	<i>Trending Discourses of Diversity (Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflo, 2022)</i>	Participants also shared about the growing narratives in research and practice which advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. The language of this code was informed by the data, and original code was labelled differently around the consensus of Indigenous inclusion in environmental governance as a positive outcome for effective and equitable governance.	“I think that there has been that kind of shift in thinking that an understanding and recognition of just the centrality of social issues in conservation and the importance of social sciences... [and] just realizing that there are a lot of us having these conversations in different places... I really hope that there can be a be a bit of a tipping point” (Anonymous).
Shifting Narratives & Creating Change	Stories & Experiences	This sub-theme explores the shares that related to the overly structured and binary nature of Western epistemologies. This theme includes stories and experiences of participants to highlight the difficulty of fitting human experiences and perceptions of inclusion into narrowly conceived structures of governance.	“There is a whole important backstory and set of actors and interactions that have to go... When I think of a term like inclusion, for me [its] about the quality of governance and the nature of interactions in a much more multifaceted way than just that, that one space

			and space and time and set of words that that are expressed therein” (Dr. Neil Dawson).
	Representation in Inclusion	This sub-theme highlights the issue of representation in inclusion as an important question and pathway forward towards substantive inclusion. Participants mentioned issues around how inclusion is facilitated, included in processes, and left out. This sub-theme also touched on the word Indigenous as overly simplified and homogenized, and to include diverse representations of governance.	“When you were talking about inclusion, it's so important that... Indigenous Peoples themselves speak. What processes have been followed to bring the perspectives from the larger community, not just one or two people who seem to be representing? (Neema Pathak Broome).

CHAPTER 4 – EXCLUSIVELY INCLUSIVE: INDIGENOUS INCLUSION IN WESTERN HEGEMONIC ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

4.1 Introduction

There is growing consensus that the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and diverse representations of governance in environmental decision-making processes is essential for reasons related to equity, well-being, and the efficacy of governance (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021; Brugnach et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2016; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Equity outcomes are increased when the recognition, agency, autonomy, and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples are prioritized (Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Secondly, the well-being of peoples and communities involved in implementing conservation policies increases (Apgar, 2017; Dawson et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2016). Third, environmental governance and decision-making are more effective on the ground when inclusive of Indigenous Peoples, community voice, and multiple worldviews (Garnett et al., 2018). Evidence for this includes the fact that the most biodiverse regions in the world are governed by Indigenous Peoples and local forms of governance (Dawson et al., 2021; DePuy et al., 2022; Garnett et al., 2018). Additionally, Indigenous Peoples are often disproportionately impacted by environmental change, which makes their perspectives and adaptation to change even more important (Adeyeye et al., 2019).

Inherent in equity outcomes is the respect for diverse governance systems (Bullock et al. 2020, p. 841), the consent of Indigenous Peoples to engage in decision-making processes, as well as their autonomy in processes that may not be of their own creation. Beyond these basic criteria, the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples has different meanings to different people (Bullock et al., 2020). Various scholars caution against homogenizing Indigenous Peoples as a collective group of environmental guardians holding “uniform rules, interests, and perceptions” (Bullock et al., 2020, p. 842; Richardson, 2009; Rodrigue-Allouche, 2015). A consequence of

such homogenization is a romanticization of indigeneity as ecologically closer to and more responsible for nature (Bullock et al., 2020). This is an oversimplified and harmful perspective (Rodrigue-Allouche, 2015).

Despite the widespread agreement that Indigenous inclusion is necessary, there remains gaps between acknowledged benefits and the action required to realize on the substantive influence of Indigenous Peoples (Dawson et al., 2021; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021, p. 5). This disconnect, especially at the global level, is attributable largely to the power dynamics that occupy many governance processes (Carpenter, 2020). The term ‘process’ in the context of this research can be understood broadly and encompasses the ways in which local, national, and global governance arrangements “emerge and are enacted” (Cleaver & Whaley, 2018, p. 1). To understand, let alone address the role that power plays in these spaces, the structures within which power-laden relationships govern decisions about the environment must be examined (Carpenter, 2020).

Based on primary qualitative research conducted with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, this paper seeks to problematize the Western-led facilitation of Indigenous inclusion in environmental governance decision-making. Exploring the role of power in facilitating inclusion through the perspectives and experiences of governance actors offers an opportunity to better understand the gap between acknowledging the benefits of inclusion and taking inclusive action. I am hoping to publish this paper in one of the following journals: *Alternative*, *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, or the *ACME: International Journal for Critical Geographies*.

In what follows, I will explore Western-led environmental governance, worldviews, ontologies, and the impact they have on the theory and practice of inclusivity in decision-making about the environment; then I will highlight theories of power, and the impact power can have on

the success of environmental governance processes; lastly, I will elaborate on Western ontologies and the difficulty of oversimplifying complex socio-environmental problems.

4.2 Background

4.2.1 Western Ontologies & Facilitating Inclusive Environmental Governance

Since the 1960s there has been an increase in formal governance institutions that facilitate environmental decision-making at the global, national, and local level (Ivanova, 2005). Global Western-led systems of governing the environment became formally recognized with the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as an outcome of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, when 113 governments reached consensus on the need for “common principles” towards the “preservation and enhancement of the human environment” (Ivanova, 2005, p. 48). Since then, there has been an increase in the number of diverse non-state governance actors seeking participation in decision-making that was traditionally reserved for states (Corson et al., 2019). Although environmental governance frameworks have been historically state-centric, their inability to combat environmental problems efficiently and equitably has led to a push towards governance mechanisms that can broaden engagement and decision-making influence (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006, p. 301). This means striving for a democratization of the governance process, which can create greater accessibility for everyone (Salomon et al., 2018).

In addition to democratization, there has also been efforts to encourage people and institutions towards long term environmental sustainability, without always equally emphasizing equity outcomes (Salomon et al., 2018). Prioritizing social and environmental outcomes separately, can lead to the failure of environmental governance initiatives (Bennett et al., 2017; Salomon et al., 2018; Guerrero et al., 2018), primarily when environmental decision-making is

“inadequately grounded” in the socio-cultural context in which the decisions will be implemented (Salomon et al., 2018). For example, much of the knowledge and communication about climate challenges is facilitated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which is primarily values Western forms of knowledge over others (Brugnach et al., 2017). This has resulted in a devaluing of context specific knowledge Indigenous Peoples hold about the environment, leading to inadequate policy guidance offered by the IPCC (Brugnach et al., 2017). This is because knowledge about the environment and climate challenges is isolated to Western scientific opinion, which does not adequately “capture the diversity of views and preferences that exist in local contexts” (Brugnach et al., 2017, p. 22). Focusing on social and environmental perspectives together can add contextualized knowledge into decision-making processes that can strengthen problem-specific solutions (Taylor & de Loë, 2012). Additionally, the complexity associated with local contexts and the interests of Indigenous Peoples should be embraced, rather than too often “eliminated into simplistic universal solutions” (Hurlbert & Andrews, 2018, p. 165).

The long and complex history of Western-led environmental governance is less important to this study than the worldviews and ontologies upon which they were conceived. This is because many of the management practices and structures of governance that are analyzed today are a result of the ‘onto-epistemologies’, or the interplay between what exists and how we come to know and understand it, that are privileged in deciding them (Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019). Perspectives on understanding conservation have shifted over time, specifically in the ways humans and the environment should be managed (Mace, 2014). For example, prior to the 1960s one characteristic this thinking was the belief that human beings must be separate from nature for conservation to be effective (Arney et al., 2023; DePuy et al., 2020; Mace, 2014;

Murdock, 2021). This perspective on conservation continues to be a dominant ideology today, and is underpinned by Western science, and the focus on intact wilderness areas without human beings (Mace, 2014, p. 1558). Such monolithic Western ‘science’ perspectives have shaped and replaced a diversity of governance systems over the past century, which has further strengthened the “dominion-over-nature worldview” that ground many current environmental management practices (Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019, p. 400). This perspective also creates an uneven power relationship with nature, making it easily perceived as a resource for capitalist exploitation (Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019). In fact, Berkes (2008) argues that this relationship with nature may be related to the inability of state-to-state environmental decision-making to “halt the depletion of resources and the degradation of the environment”, as discussed above (Berkes, 2008, p. 252).

An early example of Western perspectives of nature is the ‘fortress conservation’ model of environmental management (Colchester, 2004). As of the 19th century, this view of nature came into practice in the form of Protected Areas (PAs) and National Parks (Colchester, 2004). Historically, this model suggests that the preservation of the environment can only happen through maintaining “wilderness” spaces that are “set aside for recreation and science but otherwise left untouched” (Colchester, 2004, p. 146). Fortress conservation is an important example of how Western perspectives have been built largely on colonial values and continue to shape our understanding of conservation (Dominguez & Luoma, 2020). Central to colonial values in Africa and Asia was the perspective that cultivation was the only productive form of land use worthy of legal protection by way of ‘individual property regimes’ (Dominguez & Luoma, 2020). Individualized property regimes suggest that offering individuals private titles to land can promote “wealth creation through the use and/or transfer of individual allotments of

land” (Dominguez & Luoma, 2020, p. 3). This model led to the over cultivation of land by settlers and thereby significant ecological damage, which inspired the fortress conservation and ultimately removed Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral lands (Dominguez & Luoma, 2020, p. 3). This worldview of conservation is centered on maximal economic benefit to the land user, without acknowledging the consequences to social and cultural well-being (Dominguez & Luoma, 2020). These climate change-inducing relationships with the environment can be seen as a form of colonialism, as they have impacted the ecological conditions that have supported the “cultures, health, economies, and political self-determination” of Indigenous Peoples (Whyte, 2017, p. 154).

Acknowledging the limitations of some models of Western centric decision-making offers more room for other models of governance and can promote both ethically and ecologically sustainable outcomes (Artelle et al., 2019; Salomon et al., 2018). Indigenous scholars, activists, and environmental movements have advocated for environmental management and human-nature relationships that prioritize connectivity, reciprocity, relationality, and trust in “ethical relationships with all species” (Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019, p. 403).

In this section, I will highlight power as a basis for any discussion about the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in environmental governance, along with how and where Western ontologies impact equity and inclusion.

4.2.2 Power as a Barrier to Inclusive Governance

Many scholars have argued the inextricable link between humans and nature, and the inherent need to emphasize social science and nature considerations while making decisions about the environment (Bennett & Roth, 2019; Guerrero et al., 2018, p. 1). As Carpenter (2020)

argues, conservation decision-making processes continually underrepresent social dimensions of conservation, specifically mentioning “culture, power, and politics” (p. 4).

How (and by whom) inclusion is understood, legitimized, and implemented (or not), are largely a result of deeply seeded power dynamics within governance processes (Brugnach et al., 2017; Carpenter, 2020; Shackleton et al., 2022). Power can be understood in this context as the capacity that various social actors have in influencing decision-making (Brugnach et al., 2017, p. 21). Multi-scalar governance structures led by predominantly Western worldviews at the international stage, leaves power distributions uneven and often excludes local processes and Indigenous Peoples (Brugnach et al., 2017). Power imbalances make the embedded Western conservation paradigm difficult to unpack and leaves little room for Indigenous Peoples and non-Western governance actors to lead their own solutions to conservation (Brugnach et al., 2017).

Theorizing about power and understanding the relationship between power and environmental governance is complicated and lacking consensus (Brugnach et al., 2017; Carpenter, 2020). Some authors argue that power should be conceptualized more explicitly (Gezon & Paulson, 2005), yet others argue that acknowledging the relationality of power is necessary to understand its impacts on social and environmental processes (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 2018; Brugnach et al., 2017; Carpenter, 2020). Specifically, power is often understood as a force which is held or exercised by individuals or institutions to subordinate or dominate others (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 2018). However, Ahlborg & Nightingale (2018) argue that this binary perspective on power can be limiting, and that understanding power in its full complexity can “show how resource governance processes can empower and create new relations of domination at the same time” (p. 382). Indigenous scholars, such as Taiaiake Alfred (2009), theorize power as existing within all elements that make up the universe, and that this

thinking requires us to “respect and accommodate that power in all its varied forms” (Hickey, 2020, p. 15). An attribute of Western perspectives of power is a focus on power as a force of domination, coercion, and oppression which ignores Indigenous scholarship that understands power as balancing the interconnected elements that make up the universe around us (Hickey, 2019, p. 26). One of the first Indigenous scholars associated with Western academia, and critical of Western science and religion, was Vine Deloria Jr (Hickey, 2019). Deloria (2001) explains power as the “living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe” (p. 23). Deloria was also the first Indigenous scholar to challenge the Western preoccupation with objectivity in research methods, and argued that scientific theories are logically consistent, yet they constrict the ability to have conversations about the “human experience and life as a part of processes involving power(s), which are irreducible to discrete objects or things” (Hickey, 2019, p. 24).

Despite the complex web of theories attempting to explain power, Michel Foucault is a foundational thinker that has shaped much of the discourse that relates to power in this field (Foucault 1998; Carpenter, 2020). Foucault viewed power in a “common circuit” with economy, and rather than viewing power as a resource, views power as a relation that is ever changing and strategically exercised (Carpenter, 2020, p. 5).

Lukes’ three dimensional analysis of power offers a nuanced understanding of power as operating through multiple levels and mechanisms within society (Brisbois & de Loë, 2016). Adapted from Lukes’ three dimensional power, Gaventa’s (2006) Power Cube brings together the dimensions of power, in the specific context of their interactions with levels and spaces of governance.

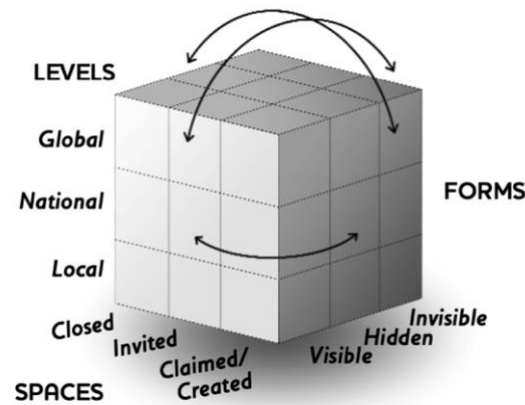


Figure 1. Gaventa's (2006) Power Cube

Figure 1 shows a framework that can be useful in highlighting power within multi-scalar decision-making processes such as environmental governance. The power cube framework brings together forms of power (visible, hidden, invisible); spaces (closed, invited, claimed/created); and scales of governance (local, national, global) (Gaventa, 2006). Lukes' three-dimensions of power is commonly used to understand environmental policymaking (Brisbois & de Loë, 2016). The power cube framework was useful to the analysis in this study in highlighting how (and what forms) power was exercised through the diverse experiences of participants. For example, the participants in this research expanded on their experiences from a variety of personal perspectives (Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and non-Indigenous working with/for Indigenous centered initiatives), scales of governance (local, national, and international), geographies, and spaces. Within the diverse experiences and complex governance structures in which participants worked, the power cube provided one way to highlight examples visible, invisible, and hidden forms of power. Despite its value, the power cube did not prove to be as useful when linking forms of power to scales and spaces in environmental governance. Participants in interviews had a multitude of experiences that often spanned across local, national, regional, and international scales of governance, and across closed, open, and invited

spaces. This made the scales outlined in the power cube overly static in relation to the dynamic and complex nature of human experiences.

The following section will elaborate further on Western worldviews, science, conceptions of truth, and their impacts on the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in environmental governance.

4.2.3 Binary Answers to Complex Problems

Power dynamics in environmental governance are shaped by dominant worldviews that prioritize certain ways of knowing and organizing (Arney et al., 2023; Carpenter 2020; Depuy et al., 2022; Lécuyer et al., 2024). In decision-making processes, dominant perspectives can lead to presenting non-Western, Indigenous, or other ways of knowing as illegitimate (Brock, Reed & Stewart, 2023).

A prominent characteristic of Western political thought is seeing the world through binaries, dichotomies, and polarized perspectives (Coe et al., 2004; Vuorinen et al., 2014). Examples of this thinking can be seen in all sorts of societal encounters, from “... negotiating differences to a conflict of interests, political confrontation, paramilitary engagement and war” (Vuorinen et al., 2014, p. 7). Binary thinking can oversimplify difference as though there are two “contrary poles” (Vuorinen et al., 2014, p. 7). Reifying “difference” is one way that Western ontologies create hierarchies that are used to exclude actors that are not part of the dominant group.

Arney et al. (2023) argues that ‘difference’ has been theorized in two “opposing” ways (2023, p. 1165). The first sees ‘difference’ as a socially constructed concept that creates “hierarchies to justify and advance the superiority of powerful actors” (Arney et al., p. 1165). The second sees ‘difference’ as an important part of personal and collective “histories, ontologies, and values” which should be acknowledged and celebrated (Arney et al., 2023, p.

1165). The socially constructed view of difference has been used to “justify colonialism” and the ongoing actions of the “Western imperialist project in settler colonial nations and beyond” (Arney et al., 2023, p. 1165-1166). This view of difference can lead to creating “narrowly conceived definitions” of terms like participation, rights, recognition, property, actors, knowledge, and other governance perspectives (DePuy et al., 2022, p. 948).

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted purposive sampling for this research, which is a technique used to deliberately select interview participants based on their individual qualities and experience (Tongco, 2007). Sampling was based on connecting with participants based on their experiences in environmental governance processes (at the local, national, regional, or international level), and those who were interested in sharing perspectives and stories relating to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in environmental governance. Sampling criteria was deliberately broad to ensure I was able to connect with voices from different geographies, positionalities, and worldviews. I engaged in 20 virtual semi-structured interviews with participants from 13 countries: six Indigenous participants; five non-Indigenous participants working with/for Indigenous centered initiatives; and nine non-Indigenous participants with experience in a diversity of local, national, and international environmental governance. Participants were asked for their personal and/or organizational perspectives, experiences, and stories about Indigenous inclusion in environmental governance. Depending on the experiences of the participant, interview questions inquired about perspectives on inclusion, barriers to inclusion, power, and whether the participant has noticed changes to the level of inclusion over time (see Appendix C for details). Informed consent protocols were necessary to ensure everyone was a willing

participant in this research and had the opportunity to ensure their data remained anonymous, unquoted, unidentifiable, and unrecorded (see Appendix B). All participants were able to remove themselves from the research altogether before or after the interviews were conducted. The results of this study reflect the consent and naming protocols of participants.

4.3.2 Analysis

Inductive and deductive coding techniques were employed using *NVivo* qualitative data analysis software. An inductive dominant approach allowed the themes to come through the analysis process (Kyngäs, 2020, p. 14). Deductive coding allowed for analysis and comparison of interview data to knowledge and theories already shared in the field (Elo, & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 111). Specifically, deductive coding illuminated the role power plays in the way inclusion is facilitated and understood in various governance processes (Carpenter, 2020; Dean, 2012; Gaventa, 2006; Lukes, 2005). Analysis of the qualitative data in this research was influenced by various perspectives on power. Specific forms of power (visible, invisible, and hidden) were coded deductively to explore the ways in which power was perceived or experienced by participants (see Chapter 3 for full coding framework).

4.4 Results & Discussion

Two top-level themes were identified from the interviews. The first is barriers to substantive inclusion in multi-scalar environmental governance. Sub-themes associated with this top-level theme were acknowledging power to improve governance; hegemonic hierarchies and valuing knowledge systems; and the complexities of multi-scalar environmental governance. The second top-level theme was the differences between nominal inclusion and substantive influence in governance. The associated sub-themes were tokenism; the illusory nature of inclusion; and time, space, and resources in decision-making.

4.4.1 Barriers to Substantive Inclusion in Multi-Scale Environmental Governance

Participants provided extensive insights into the barriers they notice and encounter that impede the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. Virtually all focused-on barriers within specific contexts of their governance work. Since it was impossible, according to participants, to elaborate on all the barriers, some participants categorized them as “intentional”, “unintentional”, or “epistemic” barriers affecting the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples.

Prior to outlining barriers, a few participants highlighted the need to recognize the political climate of a governance context before speaking about specific barriers. Political instability impacts conservation, environmental governance, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples in ways that can lead to re-appropriation and the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples territories, natural resources, and self-determination (Kennedy et al., 2023). For example, Vilisa Morón Zambrano is a non-Indigenous participant in Venezuela who has worked on projects with Indigenous Peoples locally and has focused on improving Venezuela’s Protected Area Network to ensure long-term equity and biodiversity. Vilisa made this important point about political stability and democracy in the context of inclusive governance.

... democracy is not going to secure... inclusion... but [it is] ... a more favourable way to include Indigenous communities of a country... this political regime that we have right now [presents] barriers to the Indigenous community. First is access to justice... if you live in a in a dictatorship, justice... doesn't exist... It's not a fair system (Vilisa Morón Zambrano).

Vilisa was one of four participants to address political stability (hidden power) and the need for democracy as a significant barrier to the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. I felt it was important to highlight political instability in advance of the following sub-themes, to

acknowledge the structural inconsistencies within governments that pose much deeper equity challenges related to power and impact an actor's ability to influence environmental governance outcomes globally or nationally.

4.4.1.1 Acknowledge Power, Improve Governance

Power was featured as barrier that impacts the very existence of environmental decision-making processes and how they operate toward facilitating inclusion (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 2018; Ba, 2022; Brugnach et al., 2017; Carpenter, 2020; Moore & Tjornbo, 2012; Shackleton et al., 2023). An Indigenous participant explained that Indigenous Peoples have been *very hurt by things that have happened in government*, and they went on to reflect on the impacts of power imbalances in governance and suggested that until we *address those emotional scars, it's going to be very hard for people to see the other side (Stan Lui)*. The discussion of power imbalances, and their impacts, were central to many of the participants' responses.

... Governance fundamentally requires acknowledgement of authority in a landscape... if you're not acknowledging authority or power, you can't improve the governance (Helen Tugendhat).

There is consensus in the literature that power dynamics significantly influence the effectiveness of environmental governance, and on the ability to create spaces centered around the voices of Indigenous Peoples (Ba, 2022; Carpenter, 2020). One participant explained this as an unwillingness on the part of *traditional power holders... from colonial legacies* to let go of deeply entrenched power that *“institutions, actors, and decision-makers have held for a couple of centuries (Neema Pathak Broome)*. For example, one Indigenous participant explained the allocation of environmental resources and wildlife management as state actors having done *everything in their power to provide counter arguments and to hang on to the allocations that*

they have and... no... willingness to give... back to Indigenous Peoples” (Anonymous). The impact that power dynamics can have on negotiations at the international level was clearly articulated by one non-Indigenous participant, who works at the international scale as a researcher on environmental negotiations. This participant expressed how challenging it is to enter a governance space that is not led nor created by Indigenous Peoples.

“... I've witnessed instances where... a negotiation... like, 'you can get this text in, but in that case, we're deleting the reference to like Indigenous rights, or like FPIC (Free Prior Informed Consent)' ... That's a pretty violent thing... to get your head wrapped around...like, 'I need to negotiate with someone who's willing to disregard my rights, and... my very identity' ...” (Anonymous).

Indigenous Peoples choosing to take part in Western-led governance forums illuminates the power dynamics and requires Indigenous actors to make difficult decisions about what outcomes are most important to their organizations or communities. The example above highlights visible power, as there is a clear act on the part of more powerful decision-makers to decide what language Indigenous Peoples can influence in a negotiation. Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants mentioned that international negotiations create situations where Indigenous Peoples must compromise heavily to influence decisions within Western-led structures.

The challenges of working within Western-led systems and attempting to make change within local or national contexts in the Global South was discussed by participants. For example, a non-Indigenous participant who chose to remain anonymous working in India at the local, national, and international scale described the power imbalances between partners making

decisions about the environment, and how this leads to decision-making by people from the Global North but impacting people from the Global South negatively.

... Indigenous Peoples and communities and knowledge systems... from Global South, who face the... brunt... of the decisions that happen... are not equal partners in this... there is always a disbalance (Anonymous).

It was clear from interviews that participants perceived power dynamics as an essential part of understanding Indigenous inclusion and shared many examples where more and less visible kinds of power impacted the governance process. There was a sense that every participant was aware of the entrenched and complex nature of power within their various experiences, geographies, and scale of governance.

4.4.1.2 Hegemonic Hierarchy & When One Value Frame Leads

Dominant worldviews and hegemonies were identified as a barrier that shapes the way a lot of environmental governance processes are structured and facilitated, including the undervalued nature of non-Western worldviews. Most participants spoke specifically about barriers to inclusion being a result of much larger epistemological worldviews within Western-led processes. An Indigenous participant shared an experience that represents invisible power by explaining that the valuing of different worldviews shows up as a significant institutional barrier and makes it difficult to implement Indigenous ways of knowing.

... one barrier is clearly different world views. Indigenous knowledge is something that most governments don't know how to deal with or, use, or respect... there's a lot of examples of conflict, because we're just talking two completely different languages... and science is the dominant language in fish and wildlife management. So even though there's

more advocacy and acceptance of Indigenous knowledge... there's still a lot of room and work that needs to be done to have it... utilized (Anonymous).

Another non-Indigenous participant shared that from their own perspective, unless there is genuine valuing of non-Western worldviews, then the effectiveness, legitimacy, and equity of governance policy and implementation will be continuously and negatively impacted.

...when... one value frame... is the supreme over others... it will marginalize others... in marginalizing others, you will have issues with compliance, legitimacy, and all these other things... sustainability cannot happen, if one value system leads, and others are not happy with it (Dr. Emmanuel Nuesiri).

The values exemplified above are embedded in the structures of colonialism that were also identified as a major barrier to valuing Indigenous worldviews. Scholars echo this, as environmental management and governance processes are used to exclude multiple worldviews, and as a tool of colonialism (Dominguez & Luoma, 2020; Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019, p. 399). This is particularly impactful at the international level, when large scale decisions about the environment can have impacts on Indigenous Peoples, governance systems, and communities' conservation efforts. In these decisive spaces, Indigenous Peoples are often physically included, but in ways which may not foster agency or influence in negotiations. One non-Indigenous participant provided an example of this. They explained that Indigenous Peoples do not have voting rights in CBD negotiation spaces and observed that even the physical layout of negotiation rooms can reinforce the ideas that some perspectives and worldviews are inherently more valuable than others. They explained that only governments can sit around the negotiating space, and everyone else, including Indigenous Peoples, are seated on the outer layer of discussions, while state representatives are positioned with their backs to them. This participant

questioned the message that was being sent with the physical layout of a negotiating space, and said it felt like the voices of Indigenous participants counted less than those of the states. This quote shows visible power, when this participant questions:

... what does that mean, for decision-making, and for voices heard in the room... saying that, essentially, 'we can recognize Indigenous sovereignty, but only within the context of national sovereignty' (Anonymous).

This example shows the entrenched nature of inclusion facilitated within a state-centric model of governance, where inclusivity, recognition, and the power of Indigenous Peoples only exists within the limits of state power.

One participant pointed out the colonial roots associated with the construction of governance spaces and the impacts that can have on Indigenous involvement and voice. Eli Enns is an Indigenous participant, and the Co-Founder, Director, and CEO of the IISAAK OLAM Foundation in Canada, which is an Indigenous-led organization working to implement and support the capacities of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) in Canada (IISAAK OLAM, 2024). Eli reflected on his experience as a presenter in a governance space in Montreal, Canada, and the often-unconscious ways time is understood and preference to facilitate Western conceptions of inclusivity.

... you have to submit your presentation, sometimes months in advance, and they even prewrite the questions... this is the colonization of time... I don't think there's any insidious... or malicious intent behind it. I just... kind of realizing, as I go through life... how colonization grips every aspect of our lives, including time, you know, the 24-hour clock... we used to go with the seasons (Eli Enns).

Eli's example aligns with other scholars work on Western ontologies and is a reminder that not all hierarchies of knowledge are explicit or even malicious but represent entrenched beliefs about reality that shape the world and ideas (invisible power) about how the environment should be managed (DePuy et al., 2021). All participants spoke about the significance that the valuing or devaluing of worldviews has, and the ways in which hegemonic systems shape how governance processes are decided upon and how policies are implemented.

4.4.1.3 Complexities & Scales of Change in Environmental Governance

As identified in the literature, participants pointed to the complexity of multi-scalar environmental governance work (Bulkeley, 2005), and how difficult it is to make change happen in a process so vast and interconnected. Themes in this section relate to where change gets seen, and how change happens based on an individual's experience of environmental governance work. Other themes relate to the challenge of trying to make lasting change within systems that have laws or policies that impede progress. For example, Stan Lui is an Indigenous participant who has governance experience locally, nationally, and internationally as the Program Manager at the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), for the Australian government, and the CBD's International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), and many other experiences in consultancy, community engagement, and natural resource management. His vast and multi-scalar experience provides important insights about the tensions and complexities that exist between government and Indigenous actors in considering change making.

I can see... government procedures, it's very hard to go back and change things [laws and policies] ... so, what I think the quick fix for government is this inclusion stuff, right?... because it's very hard to go back to the beginning and start again... so... from government, I can see that, but I can also see from an Indigenous lens, that inclusion is

like, we become another stakeholder... When... really, we're not another stakeholder (Stan Lui).

Furthermore, some participants noted that even when powerful worldviews or social reluctance to accept Indigenous agency pose minimal obstacles, political and legal structures themselves can sometimes be significant barriers to fostering change. For example, Dr. Neil Dawson, a non-Indigenous academic and governance actor at the local, national, and international level, recounts the structural barriers associated with larger scale policy on the ground locally, and the negative ways it can impact community, relationships, and the effectiveness of governance.

...Even when there is a... kind of intercultural respect... you have these political structures that... you would have to go back to the central government to change. You can't even do that at regional state level, or anything to change the status of a national park, that would have to go to the national parliament (Dr. Neil Dawson).

Neil provided an example of working in Brazil at the local level within a National Park that was designated within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples communities. Neil explained that structurally, it was illegal for these communities to live inside the park. Park rangers had the legal authority to enforce this law, and for 16 years the community members and the park rangers existed in a *standoff* and did not interact or communicate with one another about the conflict. Neil explained that,

... you have this completely inappropriate... form of governance... and people living under the threat of eviction in law... obviously... the park managers themselves say, well... 'we're never going to evict anyone'. Well, the people in the park don't... know that

because in law, they're there illegally. And there's been no communication or guarantee that people can have their lands (Dr. Neil Dawson).

This highlights the complexity and challenge of trying to solve issues of equity within systems which are built on values that do not allow more progressive and inclusive ways of governing the environment (hidden power), despite the local willingness to do so. It also speaks to the importance of including a diversity of voices in global and national decision-making, to ensure local Indigenous Peoples are influential in affecting policies which will ultimately impact their reality (Brugnach et al., 2017). Other participants reinforced the need for individuals and state actors to find ways to be open to transformative and inclusive change, but that this ultimately requires the ability to adjust the policies and laws accordingly.

Some participants and scholars in this field argued that stronger inclusivity and collaborations within and among international, national, and local forms of governance must be prioritized to avoid spending time and resources on large scale decisions that will not be implemented effectively on the ground (Newig & Fritsch, 2009; Sidorova, 2020). Research suggests that international decision-making about the environment can value from local knowledge for greater governance quality, effectiveness, and implementation across different scales (Brugnach et al., 2017; Newig & Fritsch, 2009). However, a couple of participants did not believe that lasting and transformative progress in the inclusivity and effectiveness of environmental governance would come from the international scale alone. One example of this sentiment comes from Neil.

... I can remember... the highest person... from the CBD (Secretariat), asked me... what's the key message... that... needs to be put into this CBD? I was like... Wow. You're asking me. Okay... well, to be honest, a lot of it boils down to tenure security (for Indigenous

Peoples and Local Communities), and tenure systems within countries being able to implement these things well... I was... more or less told... that was... completely ridiculous and unrealistic... I guess maybe that kind of conversation is why I've come to the conclusion that the international forums are really paying lip service a lot of time (Dr. Neil Dawson).

This quote is aligned with Sidorova's (2020) findings in relation to Indigenous inclusion in international environmental policymaking, specifically the inclusion and implementation of traditional ecology knowledge (TEK) within the Arctic Council (AC). Several participants called for transformative change in environmental governance to happen 'bottom-up' through local advocacy, or from a collaboration of efforts from local and international processes (Brugnach et al., 2017; Newig & Fritsch, 2009). In fact, none of the participants suggested that their vision for change would come from the international "top-down" changes alone. The quote above details the frustration some participants felt dealing with issues at the international level, and as Stan said, the "clunky" nature of certain global environmental processes.

The lack of trust between Indigenous Peoples and mainstream institutions such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), or the CBD were identified as a barrier to creating inclusive governance. One participant commented on the potential lack of trust Indigenous Peoples have with large international frameworks and explained that the cost of inclusion means choosing to place their power in the hands of a larger institution that can make decisions about local governance structures (Marion Suiseeya et al., 2021).

Dr. Louisa Parks is a non-Indigenous academic who commented on the fact that putting trust into an existing Western-led institution, also means giving up power in ways that might

have consequences. When asked about the advocacy of Indigenous Peoples, and the time spent trying to gain space to make decisions about the environment, Louisa said:

... even banging on the door of an international organisation is a significant political choice for Indigenous communities... By engaging, are you acknowledging or signalling that you believe that this institution has the right to shape your lands, your waters, and your decisions (Dr. Louisa Parks).

Louisa's perspective was unique among interview participants. Others discussed trust or lack of trust, but no other participant shared the cultural or political decision associated with what it means to be affiliated with a global institution like the CBD. This is important because it challenges the sometimes-ingrained perspective that inclusion is an inevitable want, and that being included is an inherently desired goal of Indigenous Peoples and other equity deserving groups. Reasons for not wanting to give power to an institution to make decisions about the environment are complex, yet some research suggests that a lack of trust is in part a result of historical relationships highlighted by dismissive engagement, oppression, dispossession, and inequality (Marion Suiseeya et al., 2021, p. 9). An example of this can be seen in research on the UNFCCC, where despite an ongoing objective of meaningful engagement, credibility, and transparency, these historical relationships have resulted in some Indigenous governance actors to perceive the UNFCCC as "neither a credible partner in governance, nor [...] a legitimate governor" (Marion Suiseeya et al., 2021, p. 9).

A notable limitation to this study in relation to the complexity of governance and scales at which inclusion can occur, is the broad focus of this study on local, national, and international scales from multiple perspectives. The broad focus on diverse governance actors, from various scales of governance and geographies resulted in general themes and few findings specific to one

scale, situation, location, or context. Based on the examples outlined above, finding ways to work through this complexity in governance scales and highlighting more tangible scale or space-specific barriers to inclusion could add value to the literature in this field.

4.4.2 Nominal Inclusion vs. Substantive Influence on Outcomes

The issue of nominal versus substantive inclusion came up in almost every interview, and many participants distinguished current forms of inclusion as something different from influence.

4.4.2.1 Tokenistic Inclusion in Environmental Governance

Tokenism in this context refers to Indigenous visibility within a governance process, which can create the “aura” of influence, without making transformative equitable shifts in governing structures (Belfer et al., 2019, p. 24). One Indigenous participant working with other Indigenous Peoples at the local and national level recalls being consulted for a validation in the final stages of a project led by a financial institution, and explains what they saw as required inclusivity, rather than genuine interest (hidden power) in acting in the interests of Indigenous Peoples.

...they have done this project... all throughout... the Indigenous Peoples was hardly mentioned... But... this validation process... included Indigenous Peoples... We are not there in this whole project... but at the validation just to get this checkmark, you know, like ‘we have included the Indigenous People's opinion’ (Anonymous).

Not everyone that identified tokenism shared the perspective that tokenism was inherently negative. Two participants (one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous) agreed that although tokenistic forms of inclusion are not substantive or equitable, being physically included in any capacity is progress, given that historically that person or perspective was not represented or included. While no one expressed positive feelings about the word ‘tokenism’, the potential

outcome of tokenism may not be as simple as it looks. This refers to the continued advocacy on the part of Indigenous Peoples to be included more substantively in decision-making, and a couple of participants maintained that whether substantive or not, being in the process can be a step forward. Jailab Rai is an Indigenous academic from Nepal, currently working on his PhD in Anthropology, and working with Forest Action Nepal, and additionally as an honorary member of the ICCA Consortium, he explains his perspective on tokenism below.

I take the inclusion, though in many cases it has become tokenistic, very positively, I take it very positively, because... at least Indigenous Peoples are there in the chair, in the position, in the structure (Jailab Rai).

Other participants explained that being physically included can be progress and can move governance instruments towards equity, but if the voices, experiences, and knowledge of the Indigenous Peoples included are not present in the final decision, then progress cannot be made. Similarly, when power imbalances and forms of power are so pronounced that individuals do not feel able to influence the decision-making process, there is a risk of their presence becoming nominal, regardless of whether that person or community was included with the intention of substantive involvement or not. This explains the complexity of tokenism, in that it may be a form of inclusion which changes during the governance process, and Indigenous Peoples' influence on governance processes may be impacted by more structural power relations. Jailab explains this below.

... if the person is not claiming the positions by his own... if he had been brought in the position... by the other external powers... he may become tokenistic, because he cannot speak against the persons through which he came in the position (Jailab Rai).

This perspective was not discussed by other participants. However, this quote helps to explain some of the hidden power dynamics associated with tokenism in governance.

4.4.2.2 The Illusory Nature of Inclusion

As discussed earlier the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples is not a simple or binary act of either having decision-making power or not; rather, there is an ongoing process by which inclusion can change and be experienced differently based on the situation. This remained true for conversations with participants about how inclusion changes based on the topic of discussion, specific process, or procedure. A few participants shared specific examples of how inclusion is not static, and how it can change based on the topic within the same governance structure. This change they argued can be related to the worldviews or preconceived notions associated with ‘who’ has knowledge about ‘what’. This is still related to power, and multiple forms of power can be highlighted as inclusivity changes. An Indigenous participant working at the local and national scale talked about the experiences they have had working in environmental governance, which portrays an example of visible power (Lukes, 2005) when he says:

... I think in our case, it definitely fosters inclusion, because you're automatically included, like, it's there. It's formed, and there's a process and there's a budget that's legitimized (Anonymous).

However, this participants perspective about governance and inclusivity revealed some examples of hidden power (Lukes, 2005). For example, this participant explained that despite a formal governance structure, there remains challenges associated with implementing Indigenous perspectives into practice.

...the bigger challenge is, is getting your voice implemented... it's almost like you can play in the sandbox all you want over here... some people would argue that we weren't included because our advice wasn't actually implemented (Anonymous).

This observation highlights the complexity of seemingly “simple” agreements or frameworks. This is an example of hidden power because it works outside of formal processes and has silenced the demands of Indigenous governance actors before or while decisions are being implemented (Gaventa, 2006; Mudliar & Koontz, 2021, p. 641). In this case, this participant sometimes felt like the voices of Indigenous Peoples are not implemented as substantively as they could be despite the governance structure promoting inclusion.

4.4.2.3 Time, Space, Resources & Information in Environmental Decision-Making Processes

When discussing the difference between nominal and influential forms of inclusion in governance processes, many participants identified the procedural challenges often faced by Indigenous Peoples, communities, or organizations. Participants were clear in sharing that having power in decision-making begins with having the information and resources about what is being decided upon, along with the time and space to deliberate and consent to the decision without external pressure.

For example, one Indigenous participant shared an example of hidden power through their own experience working with communities who were being told about a development by the government. Later in the development, the community members were told that the government would be building an electrical power station, rather than what the community was previously promised, a school and hospital. This participant explained that there can be no inclusion, agreement, or influence over the decision-making process if accurate and transparent information is not consistently prioritized.

... again, you know, it points to that this poor information, there is participation... but wrongly informed, they're not given... full information (Anonymous).

Related to the lack of accurate information, participants were critical about time, and decision-making happening too quickly to have proper input or influence, or that information about the decision was provided in inaccessible locations or languages. An example shared from the national level was when governments conceive of a project and offer a public hearing to inform and consult the public, which as Neema Pathak Broome says can be a *mechanism by which you include the voices of the local communities*. However, often these public spaces or information sessions are not promoted by the government, not provided in local languages, or not facilitated at the right time for there to be meaningful attendance (hidden power). Neema says that these processes can be *very disempowering* and do not offer Indigenous Peoples the possibility of even forming an opinion about it before it moves forward. Participants shared the importance of not only being inclusive but being aware and accommodating to the situations and decision-making processes of Indigenous Peoples.

Another perspective was related to the funding and resources are required to ensure that the identities and rights of Indigenous Peoples are recognized and implemented beyond the declarations, policies, and programs which aim to promote their inclusion. For example, Dr. Isa Elegbede is an Indigenous participant working as an academic focusing on Indigenous environmental conservation and marine coastal resource sustainability, as well as the Deputy Chair of the IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP).

Indigenous participation is still low, very, very low... there is need for the global community to talk about this... There are so many so many initiatives, like the... UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)... there is need for more

resources, more funding... to allow them to really adopt and promote the rights of the people [while] recognizing their cultural, social, and economic... [and] political identities (Dr. Isa Elegbede).

This participant shares the challenge associated with lacking the resources to adequately implement and support the global initiatives that are meant to promote and uphold the rights and recognition of Indigenous Peoples. Broadly, the examples above highlight some of the ways participants experienced and perceived the differences between nominal inclusion and substantive influence. Space, time, and resources are three important measures that came through the responses of participants. Several participants articulated that any actor requires the adequate space, time, and resources built into the governance process to have the opportunity to influence the outcome of a negotiation.

4.5 Conclusion

The substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in local, national, and international decision-making about the environment is required for equitable and effective environmental governance outcomes (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021; Brugnach et al., 2017; Garnett et al., 2018). Unfortunately, there are several reasons why this has yet to become a reality across various scales of governance. In this paper, I highlight some of the deeply entrenched worldviews that perpetuate barriers to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. The purpose of this paper was to identify and problematize some of the current ways inclusion is or is not facilitated and understood in decision-making spaces. This information came from interviews with a diverse group of Indigenous Peoples, non-Indigenous Peoples, and non-Indigenous Peoples working with/for Indigenous centered initiatives from diverse geographies and social locations who talked about their experiences and perceptions of power dynamics,

nominal forms of inclusion, and barriers to substantive inclusion. Despite the diverse geographies, positionalities, worldviews, and daily work of the 20 participants, there was a shared feeling in how power and dominant worldviews were discussed. In addition, power was spoken about as a complicated and inherent part of multi-scalar environmental governance.

This study finds that there is a multiplicity of hegemonic worldviews, power dynamics, complexities, and process related barriers that impede the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples voice, knowledge, and decision-making power in multiscale environmental governance. There is a notable difference between agreement that the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples is necessary, and actualizing their power, agency, and leadership in decisive spaces. Effective and equitable environmental governance requires collaboration and connection between various scales and actors in environmental governance, and a sincere acknowledgement of power dynamics, worldviews, histories, time, and relationships to nature.

Future research should aim to identify solutions for more actionable, process, or scale specific barriers to inclusion. In addition, exploring how other frameworks of power may be useful in understanding power in different ways, and proposing tools or pathways toward responding to some of the barriers explored in this study.

CHAPTER 5 – STORIES FOR EQUITY: TOWARDS INDIGENOUS ACTION AND INFLUENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

5.1 Introduction

A pressing challenge facing human beings is acting on the seemingly “intractable” degradation and changes to the natural environment (DePuy et al., 2021, p. 948). The debate about whether international, national, or local forms of governance are most integral to addressing these changes are ongoing. However, there is growing consensus that more effective, efficient, and equitable outcomes of environmental governance and policy implementation will come from multiple scales of governance (Newig & Fritsch, 2009), along with greater emphasis on the influence of Indigenous Peoples (Merino, 2018; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Broadening space for collaboration and decision-making power can increase equity and effectiveness in environmental governance processes and outcomes (Adeyeye et al., 2019). The knowledge, history, and environmental practices of many Indigenous Peoples have been associated with effective conservation measures and regions of biodiversity, which makes their influence in environmental governance processes necessary to navigate climate challenges (Garnett et al., 2018; Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017; Parks & Tsioumani, 2023; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Additionally, there is a growing understanding of the significant impact Indigenous Peoples have had on deepening ideas about what nature means, as well as leading progress at the community level through “mapping, monitoring, and reporting changes in local biodiversity, including collective evidence of resource over-exploitation, invasive species expansion, pollution, and climate-change impacts” (Reyes-García et al., 2022, p. 85). Prioritizing Indigenous Peoples decision-making power in governance processes is also necessary due to the disproportionate impacts of climate change faced by many Indigenous Peoples (Belfer et al.,

2019). For instance, 28.1% of the world's land area is managed by Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous territories encompass more than 40% of protected areas globally (Garnett et al., 2018, p. 7). Despite this widespread acknowledgement that wider collaboration and the inclusion of Indigenous influence is essential, the knowledge, perspectives, experiences, and power of Indigenous Peoples are disconnected from many governance processes (Belfer et al., 2019).

Solving global environmental challenges may require acting in ways that prioritize and amplify social dimensions of the environment, to see human beings and the environment as two “interacting components of a complex, dynamic, and integrated system” (Guerrero et al., 2018, p. 1-2; Shackleton et al., 2023). Social dimensions of the environment can be applicable in many settings and fields including policymaking, research, education, law, and many others (Bennett et al., 2016). For example, considering social dimensions in conservation can connect environmental challenges with issues of gender, displacement, history, social norms, power, values, worldviews, and emotions (Bennett et al., 2017). The effectiveness and equity of environmental governance can be heightened if social dimensions and the environment are addressed as directly linked to one another (Guerrero et al., 2018).

Social collaboration among a diversity of actors is necessary to support transformative changes in governance processes, and ultimately in the environment (Koch, Gorris & Pahl-Wostl, 2021). Environmental governance processes have been moving towards decentralized and global “multi-actor modes of administrative control” (DePuy et al., 2021, p. 948). Equitable collaboration between diverse actors can influence environmental governance outcomes positively (Koch, Gorris & Pahl-Wostl, 2021). Equity refers to the fair or just treatment of individuals or groups (Law et al., 2018). Specifically, equity can be understood with the following four dimensions: procedural (including all concerned groups in decision-making);

distributional (equitable allocation of benefits, rights, responsibilities, and risk); recognitional (respecting knowledge systems, values, social norms, and rights); and contextual (recognition and respect for past and present social, governance, economic, and cultural contexts) (Law et al., 2018, p. 295). Similar to the diverse dimensions of equity, there is a considerable diversity in the way the environment is understood, which is largely based on worldviews, histories, and cultural contexts (Coscieme et al., 2020). This means that more weight needs to be put on diverse ways of understanding and relating to the environment, and how this diversity shapes equity in the governance space, by amplifying the experiences and stories of individuals and groups in governance processes (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017).

The purpose of this article is to identify the importance of diverse experiences, stories, and social perspectives in environmental governance decision-making to achieve equity and the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, using two objectives: (1) to garner insights from the experiences, stories, and perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants that highlight progress and advocacy towards substantive forms of inclusion in multi-scalar environmental governance; (2) highlight challenges and gaps shared by participants for future research and governance models to prioritize for the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making about the environment.

5.2 Background

5.2.1 Two Ears & One Mouth: Listening to Stories and Experiences to Improve Governance

Environmental governance often occurs within large and complex structures. Nevertheless, governing the environment relies on individuals and groups negotiating, interacting, and collaborating to reach conservation objectives (Koch, Gorris & Pahl-Wostl, 2021). Sharing experiences, perspectives, and stories are an important way of doing this, as they

are a mechanism of “spreading meaning and knowledge” in institutions and social settings (Koch, Gorris & Pahl-Wostl, 2021, p. 4). Ensuring that processes of decision-making include reflexivity, interdisciplinary approaches, and storytelling to better understand the environment can be valuable tools towards collaboration and the development of policy (Harris, 2022; Jacobi & de Souza, 2021).

Previous research has highlighted that ignoring “diverse insights and contributions of social sciences” can lead to less effective conservation outcomes and can create “conflict and active opposition to conservation initiatives at all scales from local communities to global conservation meetings” (Bennett et al., 2017, p. 104). Historically, large scale environmental decision-making structures have been state-led, and largely built on Western and colonial worldviews (Arney et al., 2023). This has not only undervalued social and cultural dimensions of conservation but has led to dominant narratives about human-nature relationships, and how the environment ‘should’ be governed by the global community (Depuy et al., 2021; Salomon et al., 2018). Narratives provide ways of understanding reality and “spatial–temporal coordinates for moving through and manipulating the world” (Veland et al., 2018, p. 42). The narratives about the climate crisis, and ways to navigate and mitigate its impacts, are bound to be more acceptable in society if they align with “already narrated” experiences (Veland et al., 2018, p. 42). The dominant narratives that lead the story about climate change prioritize natural sciences and Western worldviews to guide decision-making (Bennett et al., 2017). These narratives have excluded Indigenous Peoples from formal state-led governance structures (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017). Scholars have suggested that including and valuing Indigenous worldviews and ontologies, particularly through stories and experiences, could lead to the facilitation of valuable “intercultural discussion” (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017, p. 3).

Further, emphasizing the inclusion of diverse decision-makers can provide robust solutions to complex socio-environmental challenges (Green et al., 2015). The narrow value systems, knowledge, and skillset of an individual or relatively homogenous group may not be as beneficial to solving environmental challenges than recognizing the unique skills and perspectives among networks of “pluralistic conservation” communities (p. 386). However, diverse groups experience risk, agency, and belonging differently based on histories that may not align with dominant narratives about environmental challenges (Veland et al., 2018). Acknowledging this requires “unprecedented listening” to experiences about the environment, that are important in navigating change (Veland et al., 2018, p. 44).

The significance of Indigenous ways of governing the environment is attributable to their longstanding relationship with the environment around them, and their perspectives towards it (Berkes; 2009; Brown, 2013; Garnett et al., 2018). Despite commonalities in relationships with the environment, Indigenous Peoples identities are not monolithic, and are fluid and contextual in nature (Paradies, 2006). Specifically, Indigeneity spans across “innumerable types of human identity” associated with race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, class, physicality, and many other identities influenced by socio-historical contexts (Paradies, 2006, p. 356). Within this diversity, a feature that is common among some Indigenous worldviews is relationality, which can mean viewing nature as “an extension of themselves” (Brown, 2013, p. 6). In contexts where oral histories and storytelling is a common practice, Indigenous Peoples have passed down oral traditions through stories and experiences that maintain and promote “biocultural diversity” (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017, p. 1). Indigenous stories are diverse and are based on a “myriad of worldviews and epistemologies” and are often shaped by local socio-cultural contexts (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017, p. 3).

Efforts to understand the environment, promote biodiversity, and mitigate climate change are “underpinned” by relationships with diverse groups of people (Staddon et al., 2023). Sharing (and more importantly, listening to) diverse stories, experiences, and perspectives can foster equitable and effective processes and relationships to navigate environmental change (Staddon et al., 2023). Stories can teach us that fostering relationships between people can “translate in a complex way into actions that regenerate or degrade the natural world” (Brown, 2013, p. 2). For example, Anishinaabe peoples shared stories about migration and the ecological interdependence of wild rice, and this tells us about how some Indigenous Peoples adapted to changing environments by “developing moral relationships, including responsibility, spirituality, and justice, which are at the heart of how we understand resilience” (Whyte, 2018, p. 137). In the following section, I elaborate on resiliency, advocacy, and collaboration by providing a brief overview of Indigenous Peoples’ environmental movement and progress towards creating more equitable spaces and processes in environmental governance.

5.2.2 Indigenous Advocacy & Social Movements

Colonization is an ongoing structure of oppression that assaults the political and cultural autonomy of Indigenous Peoples (Lane & Hibbard, 2005). The institutions, policies, and laws of settler states have negatively influenced the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples (Lane & Hibbard, 2005). Much of this paper echoes other scholars in bringing attention to the continued epistemological, geographic, financial, and resource related barriers that Indigenous Peoples face in Western-led governance institutions, along with the ongoing power dynamics embedded in them (Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022; McGregor et al., 2023; Whyte, 2016; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). Despite this, focusing too heavily on the challenges that remain, can take attention away from the significant intellectual and organizational

leadership that exists with Indigenous Peoples' networks to reach current levels of influence in environmental governance processes, policy, and international law (Whyte, 2016). This section will be brief, and as Whyte (2016) says, "Indigenous environmental movements have achieved too many outcomes to document here" (p. 3). In this section, it is necessary to discuss the environmentalism, activism, and social movements led by Indigenous Peoples to be seen, heard, and recognized in processes from which they were historically excluded.

Indigenous Peoples movements have recognized their colonial oppressors and have led diverse forms of governance, such as creating community protocols for resource extraction and development; engaging in resource monitoring and mapping; pursuing "intensive lobbying in domestic and global environmental negotiations" (Schilling-Vacaflor & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 197). Specifically at the global level, Indigenous Peoples have used collaboration and solidarity to maintain and increase their influence in decision-making bodies (Tormos-Aponte, 2021). Despite the diversity of culture, language, geographies, beliefs, and goals, their collaboration and alliance in pursuing Indigenous inclusion and influence is a tool of empowerment in some governance spaces (Tormos-Aponte, 2021). Due to the significant financial, resource, and capacity related barriers in maintaining a presence in global decision-making bodies, Indigenous Peoples can use connectivity and collaboration among multiple groups, and across multiple scales, to push forward desired change (Reimann, 2023; Tormos-Aponte, 2021). In fact, the global discussion of climate change presented an opportunity for Indigenous leaders to demand recognition of their rights; voice their own stewardship of biodiversity; and their collective message to the global conversation that Indigenous Peoples "are not the ones responsible for the current condition of the environment" (Doolittle, 2010, p. 287).

As Witter et al. (2015) argues, Indigenous Peoples have negotiated and overcome many “power asymmetries” within global environmental governance structures, despite their heavily constrained negotiation and decision-making power (p. 895). Since the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Indigenous Peoples have not had voting rights, but have been active members, activists, and advocates for greater recognition and respect for Indigenous rights and knowledge (Suiseeya & Zanotti, 2019). Indigenous Peoples networks perceived several “threats and opportunities” related to the UNFCCC upon its conception, and in 1999, the Quito Declaration was established, in which more than 24 representatives of Indigenous Peoples and communities agreed that the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol was created without appropriate consideration of Indigenous rights and participation (Suiseeya & Zanotti, 2019, p. 83). In 2000, the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) was formed as a joint Indigenous caucus to participate in UNFCCC negotiations (Ciplet, 2014, p. 84). Another example of Indigenous Peoples’ movement gaining recognition within global governance forums is their continued advocacy within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD is a global environmental policy forum that has “nearly universal participation”, other than the United States, with 196 signatories, with three primary objectives are to conserve biodiversity, ensure sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources (Parks & Tsioumani, 2023, p. 3). At the CBD COP12 in 2014, after considerable lobbying, and considerable resistance on the part of state actors, the CBD adopted the term IPLC (Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities), rather than the previously used term ILCs (Indigenous and Local Communities) (Witter et al., 2015). This is an important distinction, because the addition of the term ‘peoples’ in CBD processes “implies the guarantee of such rights as self-

determination” (Witter et al., 2015, p. 895). Prior to adoption of the word, the recognition of Indigenous personhood was an ongoing objective for the Indigenous Peoples movement, as this recognition comes with it the legal grounds to claim rights to manage lands and natural resources (Reimerson, 2013). This change was difficult to achieve, as the recognition of peoples can problematize an individual state’s sovereign rights to manage natural resources and territory, and ultimately leaves room for the possibility of voting rights and greater influence for Indigenous Peoples within the CBD (Reimerson, 2013, p. 1003).

Global Indigenous activism and change is multi-scalar, ranging across local, national, regional, and global networks (Reimann, 2023). Grassroots, local, and national Indigenous activist groups or networks connect with “bridging organizations” to help create political space at larger scales and increase the mobilization of resources to overcome financial and time related barriers often present at global environmental governance forums (Reimann, 2023). Tebtebba and the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) are examples of two regional advocacy organizations who have used their expertise and multi-scalar structure to bridge the concerns of local Indigenous Peoples to advocate and lobby to include Indigenous Peoples and their priorities within the UNFCCC (Reimann, 2023, p. 1345). Among many other examples, Indigenous Peoples living in South and Southeast Asia have been particularly affected by the impacts of climate change, and often live in rural geographies where “floods, droughts, typhoons and shifts in biodiversity have been most pronounced” (Reimann, 2023, p. 1342). Tebtebba and AIPP have used their network and mission of Indigenous advocacy and environmental issues to amplify the voices of local communities across scales of governance.

Important voices in scholarship continue to amplify Indigenous activism and social movements in fields like geography, environmental studies, environmental justice, political ecology, Indigenous studies, philosophy, and many others (see Norman, 2017). For instance, there is a growing body of literature that identifies Indigenous advocacy “in combatting systemic social, environmental, and climate injustice” (Norman, 2017, p. 539), while continuing to “criticize, reform, envision, create, and participate in many environmental governance institutions” (Whyte, 2016, p. 3). In the face of colonial and/or environmental barriers, Indigenous Peoples have a long history of resiliency, and continue to be leaders in climate justice and conservation (Norman, 2017; Whyte, 2016).

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Research Approaches

This study amplifies the experiences and stories of participants. My hope was to ensure the virtual interviewing space was welcoming to and valuing of the perspectives and experiences of participants. As a settler and non-Indigenous researcher, my own positionality and worldview has been predominantly influenced by Western ontologies and structures. However, my own identity is shaped by a diversity of experiences and beliefs which have impacted my interest in social and environmental justice, and my passion for learning about people, and their stories and perspectives. This research was guided by two research paradigms: relational accountability and ethical spaces of engagement, to help create inclusive space, decolonize research, and provide opportunities to embrace and include a diversity of perspectives and knowledge systems in multi-scalar environmental governance.

Relational accountability is aligned with Indigenous research principles, as it reflects the values, perspectives, and methodologies that are inherent in Indigenous ways of knowing and

being (Wilson, 2006). Relational accountability is meant to acknowledge, respect, and appreciate the epistemic differences between participants in research and the ideas they share (Latulippe, 2015). The word ‘relationality’ refers to the understanding that reality around us is shaped by our relationships (McCarty et al., 2022). Relational accountability acknowledges the implications of the researchers own personal conduct, responsibility, and where actions are viewed “in relation to all living things, not in isolation” (McCarty et al., 2022, p. 426). Using this paradigm requires reflexivity and an ongoing process of “self-study” as a researcher, which is known to be an important practice for any research (Latulippe, 2015). However, this paradigm is included particularly because of this study’s primary aim to respect the epistemologies and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and because of my own positionality and worldview as a researcher (Latulippe, 2015; Wilson, 2008).

Ethical spaces of engagement can be understood as an approach to examine the diversity and positionality of both “Indigenous peoples and Western society in the pursuit of a relevant discussion on Indigenous legal issues and particularly to the fragile intersection of Indigenous law and Canadian legal systems” (Ermine, 2007, p. 193). Ermine (2007) makes the important point that people with a predominantly Western worldview tend to present a “brick wall of a deeply embedded belief and practice of Western universality” (p. 198). Since the conception of this study, I have (and will continue) to work towards breaking through this brick wall by acknowledging my own biases and continuing to be willing to hear, understand, and appreciate the conceptions of truth explored by the participants in this project. Using ethical space aims to challenge the colonial institutions and systems that dominate within a “mono-cultural existence” and understands one conception of truth and justice to “trump over all others” (Ermine, 2007, p.

198). For instance, interviews began with an explanation of my own positionality, my background, and my interest in hearing the perspectives, experiences, and stories of participants.

5.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

During this research I employed purposive sampling (Tongco, 2007) and conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with participants from the following categories based on individual positionalities: six Indigenous participants; five non-Indigenous participants working with/for Indigenous centered initiatives, and nine non-Indigenous participants with experience in a diversity of local, national, and international environmental governance. The participants in this study were from 13 different countries, and all 20 interviews were conducted virtually, lasting 45-60 minutes. Participants were asked a range of questions about their personal and/or organizational experiences regarding progress and remaining challenges to substantive forms of Indigenous inclusion in multiple scales of environmental governance. For example, participants might be asked about their feelings and perspectives on the future of equity in environmental governance, based on their experiences, the most important recurring challenge that needs to be addressed before further progress can be made. Most interviews were conversational in tone, and many conversations centered around reflexivity about worldviews and our own positionalities in this context. My hope was to ensure that every participant felt comfortable engaging in a discussion that amplified their own perspective, and their own experience, to avoid confining their answer to heavily structured questions crafted inorganically. All participants were given information about the research, along with an informed consent document which outlined opportunities for any participant to remain anonymous and ensured their consent and comfort with the interview being recorded, transcribed, and the inclusion of identifiable quotations (see Appendix B).

5.3.2 Analysis

Interview data was inductively and deductively coded using the *NVivo* qualitative analysis program, with an inductive dominant approach. Focusing on inductive coding allowed the participants stories, experiences, and perspectives come through the data to be thematically coded to establish similarities and differences among responses of participants (Kyngäs, 2020, p. 14). Deductive coding was used to understand how interview responses aligned with other literature and knowledge (Kyngäs, 2020, p. 14) in fields related to environmental governance, political science, social justice, social movement, and inclusion. Analysis of interview transcripts was iterative and required multiple sequences of close reading to reveal inductive themes (e.g. the patience and persistence of Indigenous Peoples advocacy; ensuring inclusive governance processes are representative of those who are affected; and the power of relationships, connections, time, and resources). Similarly, deductive themes were identified based on literature related to environmental governance processes, power, collective action, social movement and more (e.g. actions speak louder than words; increasing consensus that Indigenous inclusion and diversity in governance is necessary... etc.) (see Chapter 3 for coding table).

5.4 Results & Discussion

The results of this study fell into three major themes: progress is a long road, shifting perspectives through crafting inclusive narratives for equity, and the power of stories.

5.4.1 Progress is a Long Road

The first major theme spoke to the advocacy of Indigenous Peoples for more influence over governance decision-making particularly at the global level; changes in the level of acceptance and promotion of equity and diversity; and the remaining disconnect between

acknowledging diversity and praxis. The first sub-theme came through coding inductively and is related to change is focused on highlighting the patience, persistence, and advocacy by Indigenous Peoples.

5.4.1.1 Patience, Persistence, and Advocacy by Indigenous Peoples

... there's a quote from an Indigenous Canadian political philosopher, and he said being born Indian in Canada is being born into politics. It's not a job. It's not an occupation. That's our life (Eli Enns).

The acknowledgement, recognition, and progress of Indigenous Peoples' inclusivity within larger scale governance processes is not the result of a sudden gesture of good-will on the part of Western-led of environmental governance structures to embrace diversity. Rather, it is a result of the persistence, determination, and action on the part of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and organizations demanding access to spaces in which decisions about the environment are made (Colchester, 2004; Flodén & Reimerson, 2023; Whyte, 2016). One non-Indigenous participant explained their perspective of progress made at the international level in the CBD.

[Indigenous Peoples have] gotten some incredible texts and provisions through... that is do [to] some incredibly hard work, and big sacrifices on their part... they have fought uphill battles at pretty much like every turn... I don't want to discredit the amazing progress that they've managed to do. But that is not because of the CBD or because of its structure, it's in spite of it (Anonymous).

This sentiment was present in several interviews and was a focal point of many discussions. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants discussed the ongoing advocacy of Indigenous Peoples in creating the current level of inclusivity in governance processes.

Another participant shared experiences from their own work locally and nationally, and the potential for their hard work and persistence in working towards equity and the recognition of Indigenous Peoples to help foster future progress. Osvaldo Munguia is a non-Indigenous participant working as the Director of Mosquitia Pawisa Apiska (in English, the Agency for the Development of La Mosquitia Peoples – MOPAWI), which is an organization working locally in Honduras with and for La Mosquitia Indigenous Peoples. Osvaldo reflected on his journey of advocating for Indigenous rights and territories and remarks on the noticeable difference over time in the acceptance of Indigenous rights and inclusion.

... it has opened the door for other groups to collaborate for instance... other civil society organizations and... other professionals, or individual people... by seeing what MOPAWI has been doing... they themselves have opened their mind to considering acting in the same way (Osvaldo Munguia).

Participants who pointed to Indigenous Peoples' patience and persistence also credited them with this resulting in noticeable change across governance processes. Many participants discussed noticeable change taking time, and the additional advocacy and work on the part of Indigenous Peoples in the years leading up to decisions about global environmental governance agreements. For example, Stan Lui is an Indigenous participant working at the local, national, and international scale as the Program Manager with the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), as a representative of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), has worked with the Australian government, and has many other experiences in consultancy, community-engagement, and natural resource management. The IIFB convenes representatives of “indigenous governments, indigenous non-governmental organizations and indigenous academics and activists” that contribute to participation within the Convention on Biological

Diversity (CBD) and other major environmental forums (International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, 2024, p. 1). Stan talks about trying to make change within the CBD as a member of the IIFB.

... we don't win all our battles. But we're very gracious in our defeat... I think our persistence... has given us some respect as well... our views haven't changed much over the years... we need to be in there, we need to be recognized, we need to be at the table to make decisions... we don't want to take the cities back... we just want to be part of the solution... I think we've come a long way (Stan Lui).

Stan offered examples, experiences, and stories that were hopeful and positive, however, this was not the way all participants spoke about advocacy or hardships in gaining Indigenous recognition. Witter et al. (2015) echoes a similar point to Stan when discussing IPLCs 'moments of influence' in CBD processes and says that influencing the "trajectory" of negotiations without voting power as an Indigenous representative is "hinged on persistence, timing, attention to detail, and, most importantly, the ability to enroll state support" (p. 901).

Whether hopeful or not, participants working at the local or international level provided personal experiences and opinions about the advocacy, activism, and persistence of Indigenous Peoples leading to the further opening of governance spaces and processes. Scholars and activists like Whyte (2016) continue to point to the efforts of Indigenous Peoples' networks in gaining recognition and rights in institutions, laws, and policies.

5.4.1.2 Re-Wording the Future of Inclusive Governance

The second sub-theme was deductively coded and pertained to participants' observations about the increasing and seemingly positive language and recognition of Indigenous Peoples as

important actors in decision-making about the environment (Gustafsson & Schilling-Valcaflor, 2022). These trends and increasing global agreement on inclusion are not to be confused with the concrete action or transformative changes noticed by participants, but rather a widening social acknowledgement for and interest in inclusive governance. Participants' responses varied depending on their involvement in local, national, or international governance, and their own positionalities.

The acceptance and promotion of new terms within governance processes and in written environmental objectives was identified by some participants. For example, Dr. Louisa Parks is a non-Indigenous academic who references the noticeable changes in language used in CBD documents at the global scale which she suggests may have not been accepted previously.

Just the words 'Mother Earth' have something like tripled just by the Kunming-Montreal Declaration. There is a clear increase there in language around Mother Earth's rights, which feels surprising. I don't think it means anything concretely. But it might [be] laying the groundwork for something a few years down the line (Dr. Louisa Parks).

Another example is from Kevin Chang, who is a non-Indigenous participant working as the Executive Director of Kua'Āina Ulu 'Auamo (KUA), an Indigenous-led community-based natural and cultural resource management organization based in Hawai'i. Kevin speaks to the differences he has noticed over time, and the acceptance of words like 'community' and 'culture', along with the pace of change occurring within Hawai'i's local governance context.

... we're seeing... things our folks talk about are becoming more mainstreamed in the field of conservation in Hawai'i, our largest organizations for conservation are now using the word community for the first time... in their entire history... I sometimes realize when I leave and come back, you know... and see what other communities are up to. It

gives me some perspective on actual progress we've made over here... not fast enough, but we have (Kevin Chang).

Kevin's optimism was shared by other participants in the changes they have seen, the progress that has been made and in their perspective that while change is slower than it should be, there are reasons to remain hopeful. However, despite the progress that has been made in the language around inclusion and equity, there remains gaps in turning that discussion into concrete action.

5.4.1.3 Actions Speak Louder than Words

The third sub-theme was coded deductively and follows the previous sub-theme in the increasing consensus around the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, yet this sub-theme focuses on highlighting the notable shortcomings explained by participants when it comes to acting in substantively inclusive ways (Belfer et al., 2019). As Zurba and Papadopoulos (2021) explain, there is growing agreement from “Indigenous communities, academics, governments, and global conservation organizations that social and environmental benefits should be secured through Indigenous participation and collaboration” (p. 2). An Indigenous participant offered a personal example working at the local and national level, and explains that their experience makes them feel that although the process and “obligation” of inclusivity and consultation has heightened, the deeper morale's of decision-makers remain largely unaligned and even deceptive, for example:

... if there was no UNDRIP, and ILO... they will not even bother to... include these people... just to keep the image clean... just to appear more appropriate... now [they] have this obligation... like 'we really care about Indigenous Peoples. We have the safeguard policies. We use these tools for the protection of Indigeneity'. But I think that's

*a deception... because eventually... they're displacing the people out of the land
(Anonymous).*

Participants discussed the complexity associated with understanding this knowledge to action gap. This challenge is not new in the environmental context, specifically associated with research or knowledge outputs not leading to environmental action or implementation and is associated with diverse approaches and recommendations (Roche et al, 2022; Stoeth & Carter, 2023). There is less research specifically identifying the knowledge to action gap in governance processes relating to equity and the inclusion of diverse voices. Participant perspectives were mixed on how to explain this gap. A few participants suggested that while they do not explain the disconnect between agreement and action as necessarily deliberate or malicious on the part of governance processes, they argued it could be a result of power, privilege, and history. An Indigenous participant provides an example from their own perspective on this disconnect between consensus, and sometimes formally inclusive arrangements or agreements, and the gap in action that remains.

... I think there could be a lot more weight, put on [our] advice, like we've spent a lot of time talking about the spirit and intent of [an agreement], but just because you have one doesn't mean the government is going to all of a sudden listen to what you say... it's really tough to [have to] continually negotiate over and over again (Anonymous).

Other participants did see this gap as an intentional way to maintain power and preserve colonial values and power structures (Arney et al., 2023). Dr. Emmanuel Nuesiri is a non-Indigenous participant, working as an academic and the Chair of the Natural Resource Governance Framework (NRGF), which is a knowledge basket initiative within the IUCN's

Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP). Emmanuel is explicit about the role colonialism continues to play at all scales.

... this colonial influence that we're talking about, it's not just at the state-level, because... colonial states are the ones who come to the global level and make decisions... the colonial influence looms large... if they are protecting their colonial heritage at a national level, even when they go to global arenas, they will continue to protect their colonial heritage (Dr. Emmanuel Nuesiri).

Maintaining power and deeply entrenched worldviews (Brugnach et al., 2017) was the explanation used by many participants to explain the lack of actual decision-making power as well as substantively valuing Indigenous Peoples in environmental governance spaces despite the increased uptake in words suggesting the opposite.

5.4.2 Shifting Perspectives: Crafting Inclusive Narratives for Equity

The second major theme spoke to the changes in environmental governance regarding equity and inclusion, and the narratives that participants have both noticed and advocated for to create lasting change. The first sub-theme came through coding inductively and is related to recognizing and valuing the agency, power, and leadership of Indigenous Peoples to improve environmental governance outcomes.

5.4.2.1 Agency, Power, Recognition & Leadership

To move the needle on substantive influence of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes requires greater and more visible recognition of Indigenous Peoples' values and identities (Arney et al., 2023; Parsons, Taylor & Crease, 2021). For example, Dr. Isa Elegbede is an Indigenous academic, governance actor, and the Deputy Chair of the IUCN's Theme on

Governance, Equity, and Rights, within the Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP), and is clear about this being the first step.

... it is important to recognize the values and... identities... until you are able to recognize someone that is when you'll be able to... welcome that person into your activities... after that, we can begin to relate with them on a high level, relate to them with respect, relate to them with seeing them as an entity that are instrumental to proper environmental governance, stewardship, and particularly decision-making (Dr. Isa Elegbede).

Improving current and future governance models to promote substantive influence and equity in decision-making also requires recognizing and acknowledging history and the impact that different worldviews had in terms of power relations and on the way the environment was valued. This greatly impacted previous environmental governance activity. For example, Dr. Neil Dawson is a non-Indigenous academic and governance actor at the local, national, and international level, and he recounts the structural complexity to change within and across scales, and he says:

... [you] have to take account of past interactions and politics that have led... up to this current point. So, when two people are... meeting, maybe a local politician or, [a] manager of a conservation organization, and an Indigenous leader or something, [they] are not just having an equal... debate about how a conservation initiative is going to work... there is a whole important backstory and set of actors and interactions that have to go [with it] (Dr. Neil Dawson).

5.4.2.3 Whose inclusion is that?

The second sub-theme came through the responses and experiences of participants and was coded inductively. Close to half of the participants spoke about the importance of representation when trying to actualize substantive inclusion in decision-making processes. Political representation refers to the “act of speaking on behalf of others” in governance spaces that lead to decision-making about the environment across various scales (Kuyper & Bäckstrand, 2016, p. 61). Kuyper and Bäckstrand (2016) argue that when referring to inclusion, questions need to be asked about who is being included or more importantly, who is speaking on behalf of a community, organization, or group. They emphasized this point in the context of non-state actors specifically referring to studying the ways a participant in governance forums may be accountable to other actors they “claim to formally represent” the UNFCCC (Kuyper & Bäckstrand, 2016, p. 62). This same concern was identified by an Indigenous participant with local and national experiences. They spoke about the challenges and the smoke and mirrors affect with regards to who gets consulted or given voice in decision-making processes.

...whose inclusion are we talking about... let's say... when... development projects are planned... these people... are very selective... not actually really trying to be inclusive... it is not usually the poor, the marginalized and... even in the Indigenous community [there] can be further marginalized groups... the women... the disabled... they're largely overlooked (Anonymous).

This participant was critical about the fact that even when an Indigenous person or perspective is included, there is not enough dialogue about the diverse perspectives which may still be excluded from decision-making. The complexity and contentiousness around the concept and experience of inclusion was clear (Schröder, 2022). Given this complexity, a couple of

participants were tentative to speak on the issue of who represents a community or voice in a decision-making process, and many non-Indigenous participants who had less community level experience chose not to speak about whose voice is representative of an issue, group, or community. Neema spoke of the importance of considering these questions for any decision-making or governance process, to allow for the voices of community to come through authentically.

... it's so important that local communities and Indigenous People themselves speak... not like someone speaking on their behalf, but also who within the community [is] speaking is extremely important... to bring the perspectives from the larger community, not just one or two people who seem to be representing. Those are... very important aspects of inclusion (Neema Pathak Broome).

This is a nuanced perspective on inclusion, and it alludes to the complexity and difficulty of understanding inclusion as an individual being physically present in a decision-making space. The above quote explains the challenge of amplifying the voice or interest of a community through the representation of an individual. Additionally, representing the full interests of an Indigenous community or group is difficult without being provided the adequate resources to participate in and have influence on global climate challenges (Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the connectivity and solidarity among Indigenous Peoples networks to push forward a unified message is in part what adds power to their voice, but this also further complicates the challenges of representing a diverse group of people. A non-Indigenous participant working in India locally, nationally, and internationally with Indigenous Peoples highlights the challenges of representation and voice.

... most of these meetings... these IPs [Indigenous Peoples] ... representatives are... people who you'll see in most of the meetings of CBD or UNFCCC or any other international dialogue or discussion happening, while you don't have enough power of representation of many other communities... I think they should have some kind of stronger participation... beyond these binary answers... that have... become a traditional way of [involving] communities in these meetings (Anonymous).

5.4.3 The Power of Stories

The third top-level code gives space to a few of the stories expressed by participants relating to the value of sharing perspectives and experiences in improving equity and collaboration in governance spaces. As shown throughout this research, there is a strength and power associated with vulnerability and social connectivity in spaces that can lead to decision-making about the environment.

5.4.3.1 Relationships, Connections, Time, and Responsibility

This sub-theme was coded inductively in the responses of participants through broad interview questions. This study asked participants about their broad experience and perspectives of inclusion within complex structures of environmental governance at the local, national, and international scale. Most of the participants connected their own experiences, perspectives, and stories with the past, the present, and the future of environmental governance and the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. This final section gives space for the stories and experiences shared by participants that offer messages of hope, challenge, or areas to prioritize to advance equity in governance processes. Several participants discussed the importance of being reflexive, communicating honestly, and sharing experiences to improve equity in conservation decision-making. Other scholars have argued similarly for the acknowledgement and inclusion of

Indigenous storytelling and reflexivity as a tool to improve conservation effectiveness (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2018; Jacobi & de Souza, 2021); the importance of listening to and sharing narratives, stories, and experiences as a way to increase collaboration and social connectivity to navigate nature-society challenges (Harris, 2022; Koch, Gorris, & Pahl-Wostl, 2021); and many other ways social perspectives can be a valuable mechanism to improve equitable and effective governance at various scales (Bennett et al., 2017).

Stan offered a story of his own experience as an example of how he has seen the landscape change over his life. He reflected on being a keynote speaker at a fisheries conference with a significant representation from the commercial fishery sector, who, he acknowledged, have a complex relationship with local Indigenous Peoples. He explained that he wanted the audience to understand where he was from, so he told them a story of when he was fishing. He recounted that a friend asked him:

Stan, if... you could make anything happen for a minute. And then it would just go back to normal... without any consequences... What would you do?" (Stan). He went on to say that the whole conference went quiet, and "... after about 10 seconds, I turned around, and I said, I think I would make my two dogs understand English. So, I could tell them how much I love them. And... you could hear everybody was [silent] ... And then I said, 'so, that feeling that you've got right now... That's how I feel about my country' (Stan).

Stan explained that after the first day of the fisheries conference he was meeting up with others who attended his opening speech, and he said an audience member walked up to him and said:

... 'we were at the opening thing' ... she says ... 'my husband here, he was crying his eyes out' ... that made a huge impact on people that were at that conference, commercial fishers, fisheries managers, ministers, politicians... I think that has been the icebreaker

for me to be able to get in and talk to people... to make people understand, you don't have to be afraid of Indigenous Peoples... We're here to help. We're here to do look after the country. We don't want to take it from anybody. We just want to look after it. And we just want other people to take responsibility to look after it as well (Stan Lui).

Stan's story is an example of the benefit that sharing experiences and stories can have in a variety of spaces that can impact environmental governance. Stan spoke about the changes he has seen in the last decade, and how his willingness to share and be open with others about his experience has changed since that positive experience he had as the keynote speaker. The benefit of stories and experiences have been researched as a means of social connectivity, as well to influence knowledge about and management of the environment (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2018).

Other stories relate to word choice as a signifier of how narratives can help shape the inclusivity and connectivity of environmental governance. For instance, Kevin shared his perspectives of changes to the landscape of governance and how he has noticed it in his own work locally in Hawai'i. As mentioned above, he explained that words like "culture" and "community" are being used more by government and by structures who would historically not include that language. This is the perspective he shared when asked about how he felt about the future, and where things are heading in the context of inclusivity and effective governance action among community-based and local initiatives.

The Hawaiian language and words are becoming more commonly used concepts. But... there's a word we use called 'kipuka' that my friend Professor Davianna McGregor brought to mind. Kipuka is like an oasis. But it's often used for... when, the volcano lays waste to a landscape. And then, you know [after] 10 [or] 20 years... you start seeing...

'puka's', green spots growing within the lava landscape, and they're all like separated from each other. But in time, they... become a forest. Maybe not in our lifetimes, though. And that's how we kind of see... work we did in our rural Hawaiian communities. Those are the 'kipuka', where maybe the culture and the practice are the strongest... And if we connect the 'kipuka', which is our job... they start to work less [in] isolation and see that they have common goals that they can advance. And if... they keep it up, those 'kipuka' will connect... eventually become our state... that's kind of the way I think about it (Kevin Chang).

Kevin's perspective relates to how some participants spoke about the nature of change in their work, and how noticeable and transformative change happens over a long period of time. Kevin's hope was echoed by many participants who referred to this work as complex, challenging, and beneficial over time. An Indigenous participant, Jailab Rai, provides a comment about the voices, stories, and experience of Indigenous Peoples around the world, and their significance for improving multi-scalar governance decision-making. Jailab is an Indigenous academic and activist working with Forest Action Nepal, and represents the ICCA Consortium as an honorary member, he explains the following:

... there are many Indigenous Peoples... in the different parts of the world... whose experiences, and whose voices, though they are important, [are] not heard by the policymakers, not by the state, or not by the wider audiences. So, appropriate mechanisms that can help... is very important in this context (Jailab Rai).

5.6 Conclusion

The acknowledgement of diverse stories and experiences as they relate to the environment are important mechanisms to creating inclusive spaces to identify and solve a variety of nature-

society challenges (Harris, 2022). The advocacy maintained by Indigenous Peoples through environmental movements require attention, along with the recognition of the significant barriers to substantive inclusion that remain in many scales (local, national, and international) of governance decision-making. In this study, I highlight some of the issues and work that need to be prioritized for future governance models to work towards the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, I tried to honour and value the experiences, stories, and perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples who are working in diverse geographies and in various contexts of decision-making about the environment.

As shown throughout this paper, the diversity of participants, their geographies, and their experiences across various scales of governance strengthens and validates this research. Throughout the interviews, I aimed to focus on the individual or organizational experiences of participants to ensure their stories, experiences, and perspectives were heard. The broad results and diversity of perspectives in this study did not allow me to link findings to a specific governance process, scale (local, national, and international), space, or geography, which represents a limitation of this research.

Future research should focus on the mechanisms by which experiences, stories, and the ongoing challenges outlined by participants can be implemented and addressed within local, national, and international scales. As many participants emphasized, there is a noticeable disconnect between acknowledging Indigenous inclusivity and diverse perspectives and actualizing their influence in governance spaces. Previous research has focused on understanding why research and knowledge on environmental challenges does not always translate into the action and implementation of conservation policy and frameworks (Roche et al., 2022). Future research could add value to this field by investigating this disconnect further in the context of

Indigenous Peoples contributions to knowledge on the environment in governance, to work towards understanding the shortcomings of amplifying the decision-making power of Indigenous Peoples in practice.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of Findings & Considerations

In this qualitative study, I explored the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in local, national, and international environmental governance processes through the stories and experiences of Indigenous Peoples, non-Indigenous Peoples, and non-Indigenous Peoples working with or for Indigenous centered initiatives with experiences in environmental governance. The origins of this thesis were rooted in the idea of equity, stories, and gaining an understanding of the meaning of inclusion to Indigenous Peoples. The original scope of this thesis was focused within the LfG network (see Chapter 1). The findings of this thesis are applicable to the growth of the LfG, as well as broader current and future global environmental governance forums. Broadening the criteria for interview participants has allowed me to speak to 20 participants, from 13 countries, across 6 continents allowed me to compare and analyze multiple worldviews, governance processes, and contexts. The diversity of participation helped to address the original objectives of this research: (1) Explore what inclusion and meaningful participation mean to Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance actors through their stories, experiences, and perspectives to develop insights about the sharing of diverse expressions of governance; (2) Identify ways that this research aligns with and can support the growth of the Learning for Governance (LfG) Network; (3) Draw upon the knowledge gained from Objective 2 to develop principles to inform current and future environmental governance models to operationalize knowledge-sharing, collaboration, learning, equity, and diversity.

The following chapter will focus on four outcomes. First, in the following sub-chapter I will attend to Objective 1, with a brief summary of the key findings, takeaways, and considerations from this thesis in relation to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in governance decision-

making, by providing brief synthesis of the findings of Chapters 4 and 5. Second, I will attend to Objective 3, by elaborating on important considerations for current and future environmental governance models to foster substantive inclusion. Third, I will then attend to Objective 2, by highlighting the ways in which the Learning for Governance (LfG) Network may find value in the findings of this thesis. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the strengths, limitations, and future directions for research.

6.2 The Power Problem & the Strength of Stories

As mentioned in the first paragraph, the first objective of this thesis was to explore the meaning of inclusion and meaningful participation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance actors. Originally, I expected this to result in ‘redefining’ inclusion in a way that would amplify the voices, experiences, knowledge, and decision-making power of Indigenous Peoples in governance processes. However, as I explain in Chapter 4, the search for a binary answer in substantively including Indigenous Peoples in governance is a concept heavily influenced by Western worldviews and may not address the complexity and diversity of governance processes. Instead, Chapter 4 provides insight into the ways in which Western worldviews and colonial structures of power have been entrenched into global environmental governance in ways that undermine and devalue the knowledge systems and rights of Indigenous Peoples. Using only Western worldviews to influence conservation decision-making has not only failed to foster equity in governance processes, but it has also been ineffective for long-term environmental management (Berkes, 2008). Chapter 5 responds to this critique by highlighting the value, in both equity and effectiveness, of Indigenous Peoples’ substantive inclusion. This chapter calls for greater emphasis on decision-making, collaboration in governance, relationships, storytelling, and the sharing of diverse experiences. Research participants offer

dialogue on challenges that can be addressed by governance models and future research to equitably and effectively manage climate crises.

Chapter 4 focused on problematizing the Western facilitation of inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in environmental governance processes. These findings reflected the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance actors, outlining significant barriers to inclusion, how inclusivity has changed over time, and the noticeable differences between inclusivity and influence in decision-making spaces. The analysis was guided by various theories of power (Foucault, 1998; Gaventa, 2006; Lukes, 1974) to explore the impacts power has on governance processes, and the ways in which Indigenous worldviews and decision-making are valued in state-led governance (Arney et al., 2023; Shackleton et al., 2023). A few participants expressed the need to address and acknowledge power dynamics in governance processes for there to be a legitimate opportunity for inclusion. Others explained their experiences which exemplified visible, hidden, and invisible power in decision-making spaces (Lukes, 1974). Throughout Chapter 4, the expression of power as a complex and dynamic entity was clear in participants' responses. The perspective on power as complex, multi-dimensional, and contested in its impact on environmental governance processes is established in literature (Carpenter, 2020; Shackleton et al., 2023).

During 20 semi-structured interviews, participants shared their own experiences, perspectives, and stories which centered the leadership, autonomy, persistence, knowledge, collaboration, barriers, challenges, and objectives of Indigenous Peoples. As significant as the power dynamics that shape many decision-making spaces are to this thesis, equally relevant is an acknowledgement of the progress that has been made by Indigenous Peoples and networked advocacy groups to create space and influence in environmental governance processes. Through

the collaborative and individual strength of Indigenous Peoples environmental movements, there has been significant space created and progress made. Among many other efforts, Indigenous Peoples have been unwilling to conform to oppressive and exclusive policies, negotiations, and governance initiatives; continued to advocate and lobby in local, national, and international scales; highlighting colonialism, capitalist systems, and the commodification of nature in global forums; and have continued to pursue the full recognition and determination of human rights (Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022; Tormos-Aponte, 2021; Whyte, 2016). This acknowledgement, and the exploration of future considerations towards equity and inclusion in governance, was the primary takeaway of Chapter 5.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide space for participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and stories relating to multi-scalar environmental governance (local, national, and international) to highlight barriers and progress in different contexts. Participants shared experiences which exemplify the strength of dialogue and collaboration in governance processes; the advocacy and determination required to make significant change in governance processes; and perspectives on environmental issues which can foster hope for the future.

6.3 Considerations & Takeaways for Global Environmental Governance

As described in Objective 3, the findings of this thesis add to a growing body of knowledge relating to learning, collaboration, equity, and inclusion in current and future environmental governance forums. The conclusions of this research are not an exhaustive or comprehensive list. Instead, they highlight three key takeaways expressed by participants that give insight into more equitable and effective environmental governance decision-making.

The first takeaway for global environmental governance forums is to make the distinction between inclusion and influence. Previous scholars have distinguished the difference between

inclusion and influence in decision-making processes (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021; Fisher, 2010; Witter et al., 2015). Participants in this research argued that if Indigenous Peoples are to be heard and valued adequately in global environmental decision-making, addressing this distinction is necessary. An inclusive process refers to the number, size, or diversity of attendees within a given forum, which does not say anything of significance about the attendee's ability to influence the outcome of a negotiation (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021). In its most basic form, being involved in a decision-making process could refer to attending negotiations as a spectator and sharing views which may not be taken into consideration in the final decision (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021, p. 3). Conversely, influence refers to the impact an actor has on outcomes, and their ability to implement their ideas, perspectives, and knowledge into the decision-making process (Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman, 2021). If there is no opportunity for a governance actor to impact the outcome of a negotiation, it cannot be disguised as inclusion. After specifically studying the inclusion of civil society in global environmental decision-making arenas, Fisher (2010) argues that we require a much more “nuanced” perspective and understanding of participation and influence in environmental governance spaces (p. 16). Based on the outcomes of this research, this distinction is important for reasons related to power, consent, transparency, social justice, and effective decision-making. To further Aguilar Delgado & Perez-Aleman’s (2021) explanation of inclusion and influence, participants found that being included or invited in a governing process does not reflect the consent or interest of the governance actor. If there is no willingness to participate on the part of a governance actor, an influential role in a decision-making process is unlikely. If the concepts of inclusion and influence are weaved together as synonymous, there risks a lacking reflexivity, collaboration, and critical thinking about what influence looks like in each context, the consent of governance

actors, and the legitimacy of a governance process. Lastly, this thinking may risk including Indigenous Peoples in performative ways that blur the lines between being in attendance and being influential.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the distinction between inclusion and influence is heavily related to power. Current power dynamics in global environmental governance value and legitimize Western perspectives on the environment over non-Western worldviews, which creates significant barriers for Indigenous Peoples to have influence on the outcomes of global decisions (Shackleton et al., 2023). Exploring the manifestations of power in environmental governance can lead us to a deeper understanding of how and why certain voices and perspectives have more influence in decision-making than others (Carpenter, 2020; Shackleton et al., 2023). This takeaway is not to say that striving for inclusive and diverse governance processes is not a desirable objective to attain, however, it does caution equating inclusion and influence as one.

The second takeaway from this research is that substantive inclusion is dynamic and requires time, resources, and a sincere understanding of context to be fostered effectively. Multi-scalar environmental governance exists in complex decision-making frameworks, structures, and processes, which makes it seem unreasonable to treat inclusion as a static objective that can be fulfilled the same way across all environmental governance forums. As outlined in previous chapters, several participants discussed situations where decision-making processes do not respect the time and space of Indigenous Peoples, or provide adequate resources for participants to deliberate, discuss, express, and influence the ultimate outcome of any decision. A few participants and scholars are aligned on the value associated with reflexive and critical decision-making processes about environmental challenges (Mah, 2017). Scholars have made the

argument for slowing down collective decision-making to ensure we welcome multiple perspectives to redistribute expertise and promote knowledges and democracy through decision-making processes (Whatmore, 2009, p. 539). Decisions that are deliberately or unconsciously made too rapidly can risk excluding the expertise and perspectives of those who will ultimately be impacted, as Indigenous Peoples often face capacity and structural barriers in attending negotiating spaces (Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021). In relation to the time that effective decision-making can take, adequate financial and social capacities (accessible language translation, financial support, and the norms and procedures of Indigenous Peoples) (Gustafsson & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2022; Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021) are necessary to ensure that diverse governance actors are influential in the outcome of a decision. Lastly, the dominant perspectives that dictate the way decisions are made about the environment are influenced by Western worldviews and epistemologies (Muller, Hemming & Rigney, 2019). As explored in Chapter 4, a feature of these dominant worldviews is binary thinking (Coe et al., 2004; Vuorinen et al., 2014), which can lead to an oversimplification of important contexts that make up environmental governance processes. For example, before decisions are made it is important to reflect on history, power, culture, and the individual and collective goals that led to a negotiation, as well as asking questions about who is underrepresented or disproportionately impacted by the outcome of a decision. Inclusivity in one context may not equate to inclusivity in another context. This takeaway is about valuing the time to ensure that all actors involved in a decision have the appropriate contextual resources to influence the outcome of a decision in a substantive way.

The third, and final takeaway elaborates on the argument about whether ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’ governance will promote transformative and inclusive change. Although some participants were optimistic about the changes that can occur at the international level alone,

many participants argued that responding to the demands of local and grassroots initiatives will ensure the most effective and equitable outcomes. Prioritizing local knowledge, governance systems, and leadership is required to ensure global decision-making is implemented in efficient and inclusive ways. As explored in Chapter 4 and 5, environmental governance processes are complex frameworks of decision-making that rely on collaboration and social connectivity to function effectively. The importance of ensuring international governance processes is responding and attending to the needs of local governance initiatives is because if decisions are made globally that do not align with the perspectives and knowledge systems of those who are often expected to implement them, the effectiveness of governance is at risk (Brugnach et al., 2017). Participants in this research argued that promoting transformative social or environmental change cannot be individually decided upon at the international scale, without the influence of multiple scales of governance. Lastly, diverse perspectives and responses should be embraced and encouraged to solve complex global environmental challenges. Embracing diverse perspectives includes recognizing historically relevant and environmentally effective Indigenous knowledge systems (Garnett et al., 2018; Malmer et al., 2020). In alignment with previous scholars in this field, this research's findings indicate that effective environmental governance hinges on effective and equitable collaboration.

The following section will briefly re-introduce the Learning for Governance network and its importance in the outcomes of this thesis.

6.4 The Learning for Governance (LfG) Online Portal & Network

As explained in Chapter 1, the Learning for Governance (LfG) Network is a global environmental governance learning network, portal, and platform that convenes diverse governance actors (e.g. Indigenous Peoples, academics, researchers, practitioners, members of

non-governmental organizations, and other networks engaged in environmental governance). The goal of convening members of the LfG is to support multi-directional knowledge exchange and power-sharing to magnify and address opportunities and challenges in multi-scalar environmental governance (Zurba & Campese, 2022). Congruent with these objectives, many scholars agree that complicated environmental governance and conservation challenges require transdisciplinary, multi-scalar, flexible, and ongoing dialogue and collaboration among diverse governance actors (Rodela & Gerger Swartling, 2019). The facilitation and growth of the LfG is in partnership with the IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP). The objectives of the LfG are: (1) establish an online global learning platform to facilitate learning and action for governance actors and practitioners; (2) investigate the online portal platform as a tool to bridge scale, region, and value based differences among governance actors; (3) foster relationship building with and recognize capacity for leaders of local environmental governance; (4) create opportunities for dialogue and connectivity among governance actors to learn about effective impacts of existing assessments, frameworks, and other approaches that have emerged locally (Zurba & Campese, 2022).

The following section highlights ways in which my research findings align with LfG's approach and offers considerations for future governance models and networks.

6.4.1 Equity Seeking Practices & Sociality in the LfG

The philosophy, structure and process of the LfG network prioritizes and values social dimensions of governance, by creating opportunities for collaboration, social connectivity, and dialogue among governance actors. As explained in Chapter 5, environmental governance frameworks and processes often undervalue the social dimension of the environment, which includes attending to cultural contexts, local knowledge, meaningful dialogue, connectivity, and

collaboration – all of which is required to maintain the well-being of the environment over the long term. The LfG is an example of a network that was founded on amplifying social dimensions of the environment and intentionally creates space that facilitates learning, collaboration, dialogue, and connectivity among diverse governance actors (Zurba & Campese, 2022). For example, in order to create a global online learning platform, the network facilitates sharing stories and experiences and posts them on the network’s story map tool (see <https://www.learningforgovernance.org/> for details). Their approach aligns with my research findings emphasizing the need for opportunities to share experiences, stories, and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and other governance actors to foster relationships, more equitable governance spaces, and ultimately improve the quality of governance frameworks and decision-making.

Another clear alignment between the findings of my research and the LfG is the recognition and importance of power inequities and its impact on the effectiveness of environmental governance, and the substantive inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. The LfG acknowledges power dynamics and aims to address them throughout their membership in a few ways. First, the voices and knowledge of local rights holders and groups are often not represented adequately in ways that share power, and the LfG aims to ensure that members have input into the design and content of the portal, and that both the learning network and online platform tools are useful to local environmental governance efforts and objectives (Zurba & Campese, 2022). Second, the LfG will require more dialogue related to who has the power to both contribute to and benefit from the learning network and online portal. As participants expressed during interviews, this requires a willingness to understand the specific contexts and interests of each member.

In the following section, I will highlight some considerations that the LfG can draw upon based on the outcomes of this research.

6.4.2 Considerations for the LfG Initiative

Facilitating inclusion is complex and illusory, and often means different things to different people based on the context (Bullock et al., 2020). However, my research offers the LfG and considerations to continue to foster equity. As the LfG network and its partnerships continue to expand, focusing on shared goals, and the coordination of these shared goals among members of the LfG network is important. My participants talked about the importance of collaboration and connection among governance actors, and as explained in Chapter 5, in relation to Indigenous Peoples environmental movements (Tormos-Aponte, 2021), this can lead to greater influence if there is unification and shared objectives among actors. The diversity of Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and other governance actors in the LfG can bring diverse knowledge and expertise to improve and expand learning among the network and positively impact its members. As shown in Chapter 5, diverse voices and representations of governance can complement the efficacy of governance outcomes. There is a growing call for governance networks to improve the individual and collective learning of network members, improve the implementation of environmental governance processes, and provide stronger connection and collaboration for cross-scale actors (Robins et al., 2011; Wyborn, 2015). An essential part of network performance in any field is the unity of diverse actors in collaboration with one another to achieve certain goals or objectives (Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2011). Despite the value of working toward shared goals, realizing this can be challenging within a diverse membership because of the potential for individual actors to also want to “advance their own goals” (Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2011, p. 327). Managing this requires creating space for individuals to

advance their own objectives without derailing the larger network's objectives. An approach to navigating this could be to ensure the objectives of the network are understood and agreed upon by members of the LfG to foster collective benefit and long-term collaboration (Winkler, 2006). Each member of the LfG brings diverse experiences, expertise, knowledge, and understanding of environmental governance contexts, and if communicated and agreed upon in detail can be advantageous to the individual member and collective goals of the LfG. As Winkler (2006) argues, differing goals are an inherent characteristic of strong collaboration, and can complement one another to gain collective advantages (p. 120).

6.5 Research Strengths and Limitations

The most notable strength of this study is the diversity of perspectives. Apart from the diverse positionalities of the interviewees (six Indigenous, nine non-Indigenous and five non-Indigenous working with/for Indigenous centered initiatives), they also ranged in geographic contexts, as they were based in 13 different countries, across six continents. In addition to the geographical and ontological diversity of participants, there were experiences and perspectives shared from environmental governance processes at local, national, regional, and international scales. This provided a unique opportunity to consider how inclusion is perceived, experienced, and manifest across various contexts. A notable limitation within a diverse group of interviewees was representation from participants identifying as Indigenous women. Indigenous women are a consistently underrepresented group in environmental governance decision-making, which increases the importance of their perspectives and influence in research and practice (Hania & Graben, 2020; Prior & Heinämäki, 2017). Hearing the experiences and opinions of Indigenous women in furthering our understanding of substantive inclusion in environmental governance

decision-making is an avenue for future research that could build upon the outcomes of this research.

Hearing from a diverse group of governance actors is also important from an equity perspective. This was an intentional part of the research design, and it was made possible given the opportunity I had to meet, and begin to build relationships with, many of the participants in this research while attending a Working Group in Cambridge UK (see Chapter 1). As outlined in Chapter 4, there were prevalent themes related to power, worldviews, colonialism, and the complexity of governance processes expressed by participants from local, national, and international scales of governance. This allows deeper insights into the future of environmental governance decision-making. For example, as outlined in Chapter 4, despite the diversity of responses, most participants identified worldviews and power structures that uphold Western ideas of nature, conservation, and knowledge as the most significant barriers to substantive inclusion.

Virtual meeting spaces were the most convenient way of communicating with participants in this research, based on the various geographies, time zones, and contexts participants were sharing from (13 countries, across 6 continents). However, virtual qualitative interviews have been shown to have benefits and limitations (Dion Larivière, Crough & Eastwood, 2022; Oliffe et al., 2021). Despite the limitations related to relationship building, the virtual nature of the semi-structured interviews allowed for more conversations to be had with a wider variety of governance actors globally. As Zurba and Papadopoulos (2021) argue, funding and social capacity of many Indigenous-led organizations often present as a barrier in being able to attend governance negotiations and to be heard in-person (p. 7). Offering virtual interviews created an opportunity to hear from international governance actors and partners that may not

have been possible because of social and financial barriers otherwise and thereby helped to facilitate hearing their stories and experiences. The main limitation resulting from online-only meeting platforms is the limits of the nature of rapport and relationship building that is possible to gain an understanding of personal and/or organizational experiences in governance conventions. Specifically, many non-verbal elements of rapport building can help to create a connection with an interviewee, such as “posture mirroring, eye contact, and physical proximity or touch (e.g., handshake)”, and these are very difficult to replicate in a virtual setting (Dion Larivière, Crough & Eastwood, 2022, p. 453). I was lucky to have had the chance to connect with and get to know half of the participants in this research before meeting with them for an interview, which positively impacted rapport between myself and the interviewee.

Other more technical or logistic issues of virtual interviews can limit the depth of the experience for both interviewer and interviewee, such as connection related issues (choppy or inconsistent video/audio streaming) or the potential distraction of the physical space that the interview is taking place in for the interviewer or participant (Oliffe et al., 2021). The importance of trust and rapport building in this context leads back to the value of prioritizing approaches like relational accountability and ethical space, as there is not only a limitation in the interview platform, but also because of the historical colonial power dynamics between researcher and participants. Remaining aware of my own positionality in this work is important to me as is my commitment to critically examine my own worldview to be open to hear participant’s diverse perspectives and experiences.

As articulated, there are clear benefits associated with the diverse contexts, organizations, geographies, and scales of environmental governance decision-making that interviewees discussed experiences from. However, the number of interviews I conducted, my positionality as

a student researcher, and my overall objectives of this research prohibit me from making recommendations about any specific scale, space, or process related to environmental governance and the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples. The scope of this research, and the general nature of interviews and discussions about inclusion do not lend themselves to a conclusion targeted at a specific governance process or structure. Rather, the findings of this research add value and knowledge to the multi-scalar environmental governance space, and lead to future research that focuses on narrowing the scope of governance scales to explore how Indigenous Peoples experience inclusion and influence within a given process/framework.

6.6 Future Directions

As mentioned in the strengths and limitations section of this conclusion, a valuable future direction of this research is to build on what substantive forms of influence mean to Indigenous Peoples in governance decision-making, by intentionally examining a specific scale (international, regional, national, or local) or process to gain more detailed insights for practical governance outcomes. In other words, it would be useful to narrow the scope to explore more actionable and specific takeaways for the future. Much of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 argue that one dimensional and a binary approach to governance and inclusion is problematic. Therefore, focusing on understanding how diverse governance actors experience inclusion (or not) based on attributes related to a specific governance process (e.g. cultural contexts, history and past interactions, power dynamics, the decision at stake, representation, whose knowledge is valued... etc.) may be a useful angle for future research.

Lastly, as explained in previous chapters, some participants in this study identified how difficult it is to work within legal and policy instruments that do not foster inclusive decision-making. This is a challenge particularly because legal and policy circumstances are often

difficult to change quickly, and often leave Indigenous Peoples, governance actors, and community members working to navigate climate challenges within a system that does not align with local contexts (Brugnach et al., 2017). Other participants shared this sentiment by expressing the significance of enabling equitable and effective legal frameworks in the future for transformative change to be recognized. Future directions of this research could explore specific frameworks and instruments that foster equitable and effective environmental governance with Indigenous Peoples and other historically underrepresented decision-makers, to provide directions for governance practitioners, actors, and academics to better navigate and advocate for complex multi-scalar governance spaces equitably and effectively.

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Appendix A: REB Letter Approval

Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board

Letter of Approval

June 07, 2023

Aden Morton-Ferguson
Science\School for Resource and Environmental Studies

Dear Aden,

REB #: 2023-6638
Project Title: Exploring Authentic Indigenous Inclusion in Environmental Governance: Enhancing Indigenous voices through the Learning for Governance Network (LfG)

Effective Date: June 07, 2023
Expiry Date: June 07, 2024

The Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board has reviewed your application for research involving humans and found the proposed research to be in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. This approval will be in effect for 12 months as indicated above. This approval is subject to the conditions listed below which constitute your on-going responsibilities with respect to the ethical conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Bailey
Chair, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board
Dalhousie University

ethics@dal.ca

Funding: SSHRC

Post REB Approval: On-going Responsibilities of Researchers

After receiving ethical approval for the conduct of research involving humans, there are several ongoing responsibilities that researchers must meet to remain in compliance with University and Tri-Council policies.

1. Additional Research Ethics approval

Prior to conducting any research, researchers must ensure that all required research ethics approvals are secured (in addition to Dalhousie approval). This includes, but is not limited to, securing appropriate research ethics approvals from: other institutions with whom the PI is

affiliated; the institutions of research team members; the institution at which participants may be recruited or from which data may be collected; organizations or groups (e.g. school boards, Indigenous communities, correctional services, long-term care facilities, service agencies and community groups) and from any other responsible review body or bodies at the research site.

2. Reporting adverse events

Any significant adverse events experienced by research participants must be reported **in writing** to Research Ethics **within 24 hours** of their occurrence. Examples of what might be considered “significant” include: a negative physical reaction by a participant (e.g. fainting, nausea, unexpected pain, allergic reaction), an emotional breakdown of a participant during an interview, report by a participant of some sort of negative repercussion from their participation (e.g. reaction of spouse or employer) or complaint by a participant with respect to their participation, report of neglect or abuse of a child or adult in need of protection, or a privacy breach. The above list is indicative but not all-inclusive. The written report must include details of the situation and actions taken (or proposed) by the researcher in response to the incident.

3. Seeking approval for changes to research

Prior to implementing any changes to your research plan, whether to the risk assessment, methods, analysis, study instruments or recruitment/consent material, researchers must submit them to the Research Ethics Board for review and approval. This is done by completing the amendment request process (described on the website) and submitting an updated ethics submission that includes and explains the proposed changes. Please note that reviews are not conducted in August.

4. Continuing ethical review - annual reports

Research involving humans is subject to continuing REB review and oversight. REB approvals are valid for up to 12 months at a time (per the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) article 6.14). Prior to the REB approval expiry date, researchers may apply to extend REB approval by completing an Annual Report (available on the website). The report should be submitted 3 weeks in advance of the REB approval expiry date to allow time for REB review and to prevent a lapse of ethics approval for the research. Researchers should note that no research involving humans may be conducted in the absence of a valid ethical approval and that allowing REB approval to lapse is a violation of the University Scholarly Misconduct Policy, inconsistent with the TCPS and may result in the suspension of research and research funding, as required by the funding agency.

5. Final review - final reports

When the researcher is confident that all research-related interventions or interactions with participants have been completed (for prospective research) and/or that all data acquisition is complete, there will be no further access to participant records or collection of biological materials (for secondary use of information research), a Final Report (available on the website) must be submitted to Research Ethics. After review and acknowledgement of the Final Report,

the Research Ethics file will be closed.

6. Retaining records in a secure manner

Researchers must ensure that records and data associated with their research are managed consistent with their approved research plans both during and after the project. Research information must be confidentially and securely retained and/or disposed of in such a manner as to comply with confidentiality provisions specified in the protocol and consent forms. This may involve destruction of the records, or continued arrangements for secure storage.

It is the researcher's responsibility to keep a copy of the REB approval letters. This can be important to demonstrate that research was undertaken with Board approval. Please note that the University will securely store your REB project file for 5 years after the REB approval end date at which point the file records may be permanently destroyed.

7. Current contact information and university affiliation

The lead researchers must inform the Research Ethics office of any changes to contact information for the PI (and supervisor, if appropriate), especially the electronic mail address, for the duration of the REB approval. The PI must inform Research Ethics if there is a termination or interruption of their affiliation with Dalhousie University.

8. Legal Counsel

The Principal Investigator agrees to comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to the project. The Principal Investigator agrees to notify the University Legal Counsel office in the event that they receive a notice of non-compliance, complaint or other proceeding relating to such requirements.

9. Supervision of students

Faculty must ensure that students conducting research under their supervision are aware of their responsibilities as described above and have adequate support to conduct their research in a safe and ethical manner.

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form



Project title: Exploring Authentic Inclusion in Global Environmental Governance: Enhancing Indigenous voices through the Learning for Governance Network (LfG)

Lead researcher: Aden Morton-Ferguson, Dalhousie University (aden.mf@dal.ca)

Supervised by:

Dr. Melanie Zurba, Dalhousie University (Melanie.Zurba@dal.ca)

Funding provided by: SSHRC

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Aden Morton-Ferguson, who is a graduate student at Dalhousie University. Choosing whether to take part in this research is entirely your choice. There will be no impact on you if you decide not to participate in the research. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience, or discomfort that you might experience.

You should discuss any questions you have about this study with Aden Morton-Ferguson. Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have questions later, please contact Aden (aden.mf@dal.ca).

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study

The purpose of this proposed research is to explore perspectives of Indigenous peoples and allied partners within the Learning for Governance network regarding how diverse representations of governance can be meaningfully and substantively included in dialogues that lead to decision-making in governance. This project will offer space for participants to promote diverse representations of governance through story sharing, personal experiences, and frameworks based on traditional ecological knowledge (TEK); to better understand participation, other forms of governance, and to connect the human element of conservation collaboration to traditional environmental governance frameworks.

Who Can Take Part in the Research Study

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a valued governance actor and partner within the Learning for Governance network, and you are familiar with global environmental governance frameworks and conventions. Your experiences, perspectives, stories, and opinions of traditional governance forums, and your own diverse expressions of governance will be important for this study and will help to achieve its objectives.

What You Will Be Asked to Do

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be taking part in an interview lasting 45 to 60 minutes in length. The interview will occur in person at your convenience and at a time of your choosing. You will be asked questions that focus on your experiences of global governance forums, your thoughts on ongoing progress, and your views of challenges and opportunities for more meaningful inclusion and participation.

The interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. You can indicate your consent for this recording within this form. If you do not want your interview to be audio recorded, I will take notes during the interview that reflect your responses. You can keep your participation in the study confidential if you wish (please indicate that on this form). You can withdraw your

participation at any point during the study. This applies after the interview has been conducted and recorded as well. You will be able to withdraw your participation from this research at any point before November 1st, 2023. After that date, data analysis will be completed, and withdrawal will no longer be possible. During the interview process, I will ask you for a member check. This will include myself showing you what you said during the interview and making sure that it is represented as you meant it. This may include quotes (if you consented to being quoted anonymously or otherwise). You can ask me to omit anything you do not want to include in the study during member checks.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts

There are no direct benefits anticipated for the participants in the study. Your participation in this study will contribute to knowledge, insights, and principles on how diverse governance actors are included in global governance forums. Your participation will benefit broader knowledge of the global governance processes and the inclusion of IPOs and diverse governance processes. The risks associated with this study are minimal. The interviews will be conducted through relatively secure and reliable platforms (smart phone app for recording purposes). Best data practices will be used to mitigate these risks wherever possible, but it is important that you be aware of the risks involved to your privacy and understand that it cannot be guaranteed. There are low risks for participating in this research beyond being fatigued during the interview period. You will be offered breaks to reduce this risk and you will be able to pause the interview whenever you want. If you choose to remain identifiable, it may increase your risk associated with this study. You may choose to remain anonymous.

Compensation / Reimbursement

No compensation/reimbursement will be offered. While no financial compensation and reimbursement is part of the study, as a participant in this study, you will be generating knowledge around how to effectively facilitate meaningful Indigenous participation in governance forums, as well as the inclusion of diverse governance frameworks. Your experiences and expertise will contribute to advancing the knowledge around this topic and contributing to supporting Indigenous peoples as governance leaders, to be more substantively included in global governance conventions.

How your information will be protected:

Any identifiable information in your interview will only be known by the lead researcher, Aden Morton-Ferguson. Information you provide will remain confidential. Steps including the de-identification of data provided, omitting identifiable quotes, and using pseudonyms will take place to ensure your decided upon level of confidentiality is upheld. Until this confidentiality process is completed, only the lead researcher will have access to your information. As a researcher at Dalhousie University, Aden has a responsibility to uphold your privacy and confidentiality. All electronic records, which includes the recording or notes from your interview, will be stored on a password-protected computer that will be kept with the lead researcher and will not be accessible by anyone else.

The study will result in the completion of my Master's thesis at Dalhousie University in 2024. The findings will be shared in this thesis and may result in presentations, public media, and journal articles. I will only report group results and not individual results. However, quotes may be used that identify you with your consent. This means that you will not be identified in any way in these findings if you do not wish to be and do not give consent.

Data retention:

Once the study is over your data (transcripts and their analysis etc.) will be retained for 2 years. Only the lead researcher will have access to this secure data retention. After this period, your data will be deleted completely without the possibility of retrieval. The data collected in this study will not be used beyond this study.

If You Decide to Stop Participating

You are free to leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating during the study, you can decide whether you want any of the information that you have provided up to that point to be removed or if you will allow us to use that information. After participating in the study, you can decide until November 1st, 2023, to withdraw participation by contacting the lead researcher. After this time, withdrawal will not be possible due to data analysis and completion of thesis.

How to Obtain Results

I will provide you with a summarized report of the findings when the study is finished. No individual results will be provided and no identifiable information about participants will be shared. However, quotes may be used that identify you with your consent. These findings will be shared through email (provide email address below). The final thesis, academic dissemination, and knowledge products will also help communicate findings of the study.

Questions

I am happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please reach out to me at aden.mf@dal.ca for any comments, feedback, concerns, or questions. You can also contact my research supervisor Dr. Melanie Zurba (Melanie.Zurba@dal.ca) at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study. If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-3423, or email: ethics@dal.ca. If you are calling long distance, please call collect.

Signature Page

Project Title: Exploring Authentic Inclusion in Global Environmental Governance: Enhancing Indigenous voices through the Learning for Governance Network (LfG)

Lead Researcher: Aden Morton-Ferguson, Dalhousie University (aden.mf@dal.ca).

I (the participant) have been invited by the lead researcher to take part in this study exploring stories and experiences of inclusion in global governance forums.

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to take part in an interview that will occur in person at a time acceptable to me. I agree to take part in this study. My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, until 1st November 2023.

Name

Signature

Date

Options (you can still participate in the research if you select no):

I agree that my interview may be audio-recorded Yes No

I agree that direct quotes from my interview may be used that may identify me Yes No

I agree that direct quotes from my interview may be used without identifying me Yes No

I wish to have my interview remain anonymous Yes No

I agree to having the researcher contact me after the interview for clarification Yes No

I would like to receive a summary of the study results

Yes No

Name

Signature

Date

Please provide an email address below if you answered yes to the last two questions.

Email address: _____

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction:

1. Do you mind sharing an introduction to the work you are involved in and what your role is?
2. How long have you been working in that role/context? And has your role or position changed over time?
3. How did you become involved in this kind of work?
4. What country/region do you primarily work/live in?
5. Is your work primarily focused locally, nationally, or internationally? Or is your work multi-scalar in nature?

Objective 1: Explore the meanings of inclusion for Indigenous governance actors in global environmental policymaking through stories, experiences, and perspectives.

1. In the context of environmental governance process, what are your thoughts on the word inclusion?
2. Based on your experiences, do you feel as if the knowledges and decision-making power of Indigenous Peoples are adequately included in governance decision-making?
3. Could you give me some examples that illustrate this?
4. Could you give me some examples that demonstrate what is lacking?
5. Are there specific topics, processes or conversations you notice as more inclusive than others?
6. Do you feel as if the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples has improved over time?
7. Do you have any other specific memories or experiences of global governance forums that you would be interested in sharing that relate to decision-making, inclusion, or voice?

Objective 3: Identify how expressions of diverse stories relating to power and knowledge-sharing can be supported in the Learning for Governance (LfG) Network

1. What would you change to make governance decision-making processes more inclusive of Indigenous Peoples and diverse expressions of governance?
2. What are some significant barriers to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples that you have seen or experienced?
3. If applicable, how do you think the Learning for Governance network can support diverse representations of governance, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing?

Objective 4: Use knowledge gained from previous objectives to develop principles to guide governance models to operationalize knowledge and power-sharing with Indigenous actors.

1. What challenges or barriers do you think inhibit current forms of global governance from appropriately including and representing Indigenous voices?
2. Are there particular processes (ways of doing things) that work effectively in your experiences? What is it? Why or why not?

Conclusion

1. Is there anything else that I have not asked about that you would like to talk about or anything else you would like to share?