

Nationalism and Media Coverage of Indigenous People's Collective
Action in Canada

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Indigenous peoples in Canada have engaged in hundreds of collective action events. The media are the key means through which the general public learns about these actions. However, the media do not simply mirror events. Instead, coverage tends to emphasize certain aspects of indigenous peoples' collective action events while overlooking others. While early research emphasized the tendency of the mainstream media to portray these events as violent and militant, more recent scholarship has focused on nationalism and the ways that coverage of these actions creates an "us" vs. "them" binary. In this paper we build on this latter work by identifying the specific characteristics associated with each side of this binary. We analyze several hundred Canadian newspaper articles about a key set of events that took place during the 1990s. We find that the media repeatedly draws on frames that portray Indigenous peoples' protest as criminal, divisive, and expensive. These assessments are made in implicit contrast with non-Indigenous people, or "good" citizens, as law-abiding, peaceful, and tax paying. Media stories therefore frame Indigenous challengers in a way that make them appear to be less deserving citizens of the nation.

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