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#alleyesonwetsuweten.
An Analysis of the Wet'suwet'en protest on Twitter

Abstract: The present study aims at analyzing Indigenous online activism in Canada by focusing on how the Wet'suwet'en people have recently remediated on Twitter their protest against the 2019 Coastal GasLink pipeline project. The project implied the construction of a 670-kilometre-long natural gas pipeline crossing their ancestral and unceded territories. An investigation of the discursive strategies underpinning the usage of microblogging by the Wet'suwet'en people as part of their online protest is provided through a combination of methodological and theoretical frameworks, that is Corpus Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Media Studies starting from the quantitative analysis of the GTEN Corpus. The research findings show that discourses of solidarity, mobilization and sovereignty intersect in the corpus and that the discourse of Indigenous protests on social media is a decolonizing social practice leading to empowerment, self-determination, and legitimation of Indigenous protests.

Keywords: *Wet'suwet'en*, *activism*, *corpus*, *discourse*, *hashtags*, *Twitter*

1. Introduction

On January 7, 2019, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) entered the Wet'suwet'en First Nation territory in British Columbia in a military-style raid to confront and arrest some of the Wet'suwet'en and ally protesters who were opposing the Coastal GasLink pipeline project onto unceded Wet'suwet'en territory. The project would see the construction of a 670-kilometre-long natural gas pipeline, spanning from east, near Dawson Creek, to Kitimat in the west, for export to global markets. In 2018 and 2019 the company obtained injunctions to prevent Indigenous protesters from blocking the access to the site as a response to the creation of the Gidimt'en checkpoint. The latter included cabins, canvas, tents, and cooking facilities, and soon became a symbol of the resistance of the Wet'suwet'en people to the project. According to the Wet'suwet'en Nation, Coastal GasLink did not receive informed consent for the construction of the pipeline, which stands in violation to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, in 1997, the Canadian Supreme Court recognized that the hereditary chiefs are the title holders over the Wet'suwet'en Nation's ancestral lands, *de facto* stating that the land is unceded and that they have the authority to make decisions about their territories[1]. Regardless of the Supreme Court decision, the UN Declaration and the harsh opposition of the Wet'suwet'en Nation, Coastal GasLink has advanced construction towards the sacred river Wedzin Kwa. Sacred archeological sites were also destroyed. The company was in fact backed up by the RCMP, the provincial and federal government of Canada.

In 2019, the RCMP burst into the Gidimt'en checkpoint. Gidimt'en is one of five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation. The Gidimt'en checkpoint is a Wet'suwet'en group which is controlling access to the territory. At that point, the Gidimt'en checkpoint decided to open an official Twitter account, i.e., @Gidimten (https://twitter.com/Gidimten), in order to share information about the protest and the

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[1] Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson, "Unsettling Canada". In *Truth, and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Canada's Residential Schools. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2015).

violent acts enacted by the RCMP against the Wet'suwet'en people. Through the Twitter account, the protest was re-mediated online, thus allowing the circulation of news from the point of view of the protesters. Concurrently, the digital mobilization gave rise to solidarity and support coming from other First Nations in Canada as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from across the world. The present research seeks to investigate the online discourse of the Wet'suwet'en people and the discursive strategies underpinning their usage of microblogging. The Gidimt'en checkpoint Twitter account, the main official Twitter account of the protest, was monitored for the purpose of the study. A corpus of 2588 tweets posted between January 2019 and November 2021, retrieved in December 2021, was built and named The Gidimten Corpus (GTEN). Given the discursive focus of this research, a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis, Corpus Linguistics and Social Media Studies[2] was chosen as a methodology and a theoretical framework for conducting a corpus-based analysis.

2. Literature Review: Indigenous Digital Activism

Starting with the 2011 Arab Spring in the Middle East, the role that social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube can play, has become central in political struggles against oppression and power abuse, and is now widely acknowledged and investigated. Social media platforms are nowadays seen as networked communication spaces turning into avenues for social mobilization and protest.[3] As opposed to the unidirectionality of traditional media such as press and broadcast, social media are intrinsically characterized by multimodality and user-centrism, which erode the distance between producers and consumers of information and decentralize the production and circulation of discourse. On Twitter, for example, given the horizontal structure of its organization, non-hierarchical communication is possible, which is particularly useful to social movements.[4] In fact, online activism implies that the power to produce and share information is re-distributed, taken away from traditional news providers and scattered across networks of users who tweet about events.[5] Social media networks also offer an alternative platform, opposed to the mainstream ones, where marginalized groups can engage in political processes. Within the virtual space of social media, people can express their ideas and join networks of individuals who promote activities and actions related to those ideas. As Zappavigna remarks, "microblogging services such as Twitter and Weibo are a form of social media allowing users to publish streams of length-delimited posts to internet-mediated audiences".[6] Activists can expand their reach through live-tweeting, retweeting, marking conversations through hashtags etc. The easy and rapid circulation of political opinions, or even dissent, through social media facilitates the formation of communities of actions as social media endorse the identification and connection with likeminded others. These can quicky lead to mediated grassroots mobilization and people empowerment. Therefore, while ideas are disseminated through social media in what may be mistakenly dismissed as a mere virtual dimension (as opposed to the real one), new social movements are established that in some occasions may even blur the boundaries between cyberspace and social

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[2] Paul Baker, *American and British English. Divided by a Common Language?* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2017); Michele Zappavigna, "Searchable Talk. The Linguistic Functions of Hashtags", *Social Semiotics*, 25.3 (2015), 274-291.

[3] Sylvester Senyo Ofori-Parku and Derek Moscato, "Hashtag Activism as a Form of Political Action. A Qualitative Analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign in Nigerian, UK, and U.S. Press", *International Journal of Communication*, 12 (2018), 2480–2502.

[4] Joel Penney and Caroline Dadas, "(Re)Tweeting in the Service of Protest. Digital Composition and Circulation in the Occupy Wall Street Movement", *New Media Society*, 16.1 (2013), 74-90.

[5] Eugenia Siapera, "Tweeting #Palestine. Twitter and the mediation of Palestine", *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17.6 (2014), 539–555.

[6] Michele Zappavigna, "CoffeeTweets. Bonding around the Bean on Twitter", in Philip Seargeant and Caroline Tagg, eds., *The Language of Social Media* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 139.

reality. In this sense, the digital sphere is not separate from the offline sphere. On the contrary, the two work in relation to one another.[7]

A related aspect which has been explored in Social Media Research is how social media may affect a given social process. Social media platforms may have the power to expand the reach of offline activisms. According to McEwan and Fox[8], who propose a framework for considering the influence of social media on social processes, social media can accommodate, amplify/attenuate, or alter social process. When accommodating a process, social media serve as a channel for that process to occur, without affecting its nature or direction. Social media can also amplify social phenomena, by expediting and enhancing them or, on the contrary, they can attenuate the effects of social interaction. One last effect that social media can have on social processes is altering. Altering implies that social processes are not simply amplified and enhanced through social media platforms, but that social media affordances may affect social behaviors.

As Nau *et al.* maintain, "social media needs to be studied as an expansion of daily life, an amplifier, and a catalyst".[9] Campaigns like #idlenomore or #blacklivesmatter, are two examples of movements that were established through and across social media, which enhanced the mechanisms of participation thanks to the much greater dissemination of counter-hegemonic ideas compared to more *traditional* offline movements. They are proof to the fact that a small group of digital activists using information technology can lead to the foundation of widely popular movements crossing the virtual frontiers of the digital realm.

The widening use of new media by Indigenous peoples has become "a creative and empowering tool to combat language death, raise political awareness, and ingeniously create Indigenous networks across various geographies".[10] As Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew, founder of *Drumbeats to Drumbytes*, highlighted, "the digital realm provides Indigenous communities with an autonomous platform to assert an online presence in the face of colonial catastrophe".[11] In this sense, the use of social media technologies by Indigenous subjects can be seen as a decolonization strategy in response to social and political injustices, as well as to the circulation of racist and colonial stereotypes which affect the way Indigenous peoples are still seen today by non-Indigenous peoples.[12] On the other hand, online Indigenous self-representations demonstrate that Indigenous social media users can gain control over their own identities and the way these are presented to the public so as to "challenge forces that define them in terms of what they lack, and to make possible other futures".[13]

Digital media have significantly impacted the way Indigenous peoples interact with each other and create networks of action crossing regional, national and international boundaries, thus broadening their audiences. As Carlson and Berglund explain in their introduction to *Indigenous People Rise Up*,

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[7] Barry Wellman et al., "Does the Internet Increase, Decrease, or Supplement Social Capital? Social Networks, Participation, and Community Commitment", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45.3 (2001), 436-455.

[8] Bree McEwan and Lesse Fox, "Before Methods, Social Media Research Considerations", in Anabel Quan-Haase and Luke Sloan, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods* (London: SAGE, 2022), 27-39.

[9] Charlotte Nau, Anabel Quan-Haase and Lori McCay-Peet, "Defining Social Media and Asking Social Media Research Questions. How Well Does the Swiss Army Knife Metaphor Apply?", in Quan-Haase and Sloan, *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media*, 22.

[10] Menjívar Jennifer Carolina Gómez and Gloria Elizabeth Chacón, *Indigenous Interfaces. Spaces, Technology, and Social Networks in Mexico and Central America* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019), 11.

[11] Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew, "Drumbeats to Drumbytes Origins", http://drumbytes.org/about/origins-1994.php, accessed 7 November 2022.

[12] Anna Mongibello, *Indigenous Peoples in Canadian TV News. A Corpus-based Analysis of Mainstream and Indigenous News Discourses* (Napoli: Paolo Loffredo Iniziative Editoriali, 2018).

[13] Bronwyn Carlson and Ryan Frazer, "'It's Like Going to a Cemetery and Lighting a Candle': Aboriginal Australians, Sorry Business and Social Media", *Alternative. An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 11 (2015), 211-224; see also Bronwyn Carlson and Ryan Frazer, *Indigenous Digital Life. The Practices and Politics of Being Indigenous on Social Media* (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2021).

"social media – Twitter and Facebook in particular – has also served as a platform for fostering health, well-being and resilience, recognizing Indigenous strength and talent, and sustaining and transforming cultural practices when great distances divide members of the same community".[14] When appropriated by Indigenous communities,[15] social media platforms can subvert colonizing systems and generate political mobilization. Against the marginalization and discrimination of Indigenous peoples, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, can be successfully used as counter-discursive spaces of resistance where political and cultural struggles against neocolonial symbolic and political power are enacted. In this sense, social media practices can be understood as forms of counter-discourse since through and on social media traditionally accepted, normative, even commonsensical discourses can be questioned and subverted. However, as Majid KhosraviNik explains, while social media may give the impression that the discursive power of traditional media has been eroded, "the macro/political/industrial and local communicative notions of power are still at play".[16]

Hashtags and hashtagging can be helpful in enacting counter-discursive practices. This is the case of counter-hashtags i.e. when trending hashtags are addressed by means of similar but opposite hashtags that contrast them. An example is the #Resistance150 campaign by Anishinaabe traditional storyteller and teacher Isaac Murdoch, Michif visual artist Christi Belcourt, Cree activist Tanya Kappo and Métis author Maria Campbell while they were discussing the government's planned festivities for Canada 150. The hashtag was created in response to #Canada150, launched for the celebration of Canada's 150th birthday, and it soon became a site of digital resistance to the commemoration of "a history that ignores the tumultuous relationship between indigenous peoples and the rest of Canada".[17] Hashtags have great subversive, transgressive and counter-hegemonic potential when they are used to contrast settler hegemonic power. Twitter hashtags, for instance, were used in campaigns such as #NoDAPL or #StandWithStandingRock, which substantially increased the size and length of the anti-pipeline movement in North America.

Little critical attention has been devoted to the analysis of social media and political protests in Indigenous contexts in a discourse-analytical perspective. Existing literature on the analysis of Indigenous digital activism is mainly qualitative and falls within two research streams. One stream investigates how Indigenous peoples use social media platforms in their political campaigns. For instance, a study conducted by Callison and Hermida[18] focused on the Idle No More movement and uncovered the presence of non-elite actors among the 500 most influential voices of the online campaign. Another study by Raynauld, Richez and Morris[19] employed qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate a sample of 1650 tweets. The research showed that Idle No More tweets included different digital material in their posts and that references to Indigenous cultures played a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of the movement. Another stream in the research on Indigenous digital activism encompasses research work that analyzes the way Indigenous peoples' social

[14] Carlson Bronwyn and Jeff Berglund, eds., *Indigenous Peoples Rise Up. The Global Ascendency of Social Media Activism* (Ithaca: Rutgers U.P., 2021), 2.

[15] Laurel Dyson, "Indigenous Peoples on the Internet", in Mia Consalvo and Charles Ess, eds., *The Handbook of Internet Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 251-269.

[16] Majid KhosraviNik, "Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS)", in John Flowerdew and John Richardson, eds., *Handbook of Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2017), 582-96.

[17] Jackie Dunham, "PM Trudeau lured with selfie, caught on question of indigenous rights", *CTVNews.ca* (2017), www.ctvnews.ca/politics/pm- trudeau-lured-withselfie-caught-on-question-of-indigenous-rights-l. 3245966, accessed 7 November 2022.

[18] Candis Callison and Alfred Hermida, "Dissent and Resonance. #IdleNoMore as an Emergent Middle Ground", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 40 (2015), 695-716.

[19] Vincent Raynauld et al., "Canada is #IdleNoMore. Exploring Dynamics of Indigenous Political and Civic Protest in the Twitterverse", *Information, Communication & Society*, 21.4 (2018), 626-642.

movements are represented online. This is the perspective taken by Popham and Brantford,[20] for instance, who focused on the representations of the Dakota Access Pipeline protests at Standing Rock on Twitter through an ethnographic content analysis of the social media commentary that accompanied an image taken from the protest. The analysis uncovered colonial undertones that diverted public discussion away from the justice issues catalyzing the protest, thus directing the narrative elsewhere. Overall, although there has been a substantial increase in social media usage by Indigenous activists, little critical attention has been devoted to the analysis of social media and political protests in Indigenous contexts in a discursive analytical perspective. To our knowledge, none of the above mentioned studies, combines Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis with elements of Social Media research to investigate the discourse of Indigenous protests on Twitter.

3. Corpus Design and Methodology

In order to undertake the analysis, a corpus of 2588 tweets posted between January 2019 and November 2021 was created and renamed The Gidimt'en Corpus (GTEN_Corpus). All tweets were posted by Wet'suwet'en protesters on the official Twitter account of the protest (@Gidimten). The account was activated in January 2019. By September 2022 it reached 30,7K followers. The tweets were collected in December 2021 through an R script in combination with Search Tweets API (Applications Programming Interface). Content was reviewed in a plain text editor and duplicate posts and embedded encoding was removed. The file was saved in UTF-8-encoded plain text format. The final dataset, the GTEN_Corpus, encompasses 59,191 and 76,795 tokens. It is a small, specialized corpus because it comprises fewer than a million words.[21] The GTEN_Corpus follows Flowerdew's list of parameters[22] according to which a corpus is said to be specialized: it has been compiled for a specific purpose, that is the investigation of the online discourse of the Wet'suwet'en people; it is contextualized, as collected items all come from the Gidimt'en account and have specific participants (the Wet'suwet'en protesters); its genre is well identifiable, i.e., the genre of microblogging.

The study conducted herein draws from quantitative and qualitative techniques, using corpus tools to complement Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA). The combination with a CDA-informed approach is particularly fruitful to interpret the ideological implications in patterns of language. Such an integrated approach, which combines qualitative readings with a corpus-linguistics approach, creates a methodological synergy[23] that has proven to be a reliable method to track down discursive patterns. The synergy between qualitative and quantitative methodologies addresses the limitations of both. In other words, "by using computer software, analysts can deal with much larger quantities of data, and so put forward more convincing evidence in support of their claims".[24] Moreover, in embracing this methodological perspective to conduct our analysis, we agree with KhosraviNik[25] that we cannot see social media merely as a data source. On the contrary, as Bouvier maintains, social media data are not about a virtual realm, but they tell us about actual people and what they do with

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[20] James Popham and Latasha VanEvery, "Representing Indigenous Protest on Twitter. Examining the Social Media Dialogue that Accompanied a Single Image of the DAPL Protests at Standing Rock", *Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice Research*, 149 (2018).

[21] Svenja Adolphs and Dawn Knight, "Building a Spoken Corpus", in Anna O'Keeffe and Michael McCarthy, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 38-52.

[22] Lynne Flowerdew, "The Argument for Using English Specialized Corpora to Understand Academic and Professional Settings", in Ulla Connor and Thomas Upton, eds., *Discourse in the Professions. Perspectives from Corpus Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 11-33.

[23] Paul Baker et al., eds., "A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the United Kingdom Press", *Discourse & Society*, 19 (2008), 273-306.

[24] Deborah Cameron and Ivan Panović, *Working with Written Discourse* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), 81.

[25] KhosraviNik, "Social Media Critical Discourse Studies", 593.

their online writing.[26] This is why understanding and acknowledging the context of production is essential so as to also understand the kind of discourses and the sociopolitical interests connected to those texts.

For the quantitative informed analysis, the online software program *Sketch Engine*[27] was employed as a corpus manager and text analysis software. Our first stage of analysis focused on keyness and collocations. Keyness refers to the level of significance of higher or lower frequencies (keywords). Keyness values were generated automatically based on log-likelihood calculations. Keyword analysis was therefore employed to find out which words were significantly most frequent, by comparing the GTEN_Corpus to the English Web Corpus (enTenTen) a corpus made of texts collected from the internet, consisting of 36 billion words. Given the difference in size between the focus corpus and the reference corpus, the Canadian subcorpus of the enTenTen, which comprises 701,319,389 words, was chosen for our investigation. The analysis of collocates in corpus linguistics is often used to identify discourses, through the investigation of words co-occurring within a pre-set span. Collocational analysis served as a gateway to Critical Discourse Analysis as it provided indications of discourse prosody,[28] i.e. the associations of a given word or phrase with other words or phrases which are positive or negative in their evaluative orientation. Discourse prosody indexes the topics and issues associated with a given key word.

Since the language of microblogging often relies on hashtags and mentions, the analysis herein proposed draws from Social Media Research methodologies. In doing so, we aimed at investigating how semiotic resources like hashtags and mentions are used by the Wet'uwet'en protesters on the Gidimt'en account. Hashtags have recently attracted much critical attention as new communicative affordances or, more specifically, as a special form of user-generated metadata[29] or conversational tagging. Hashtags used for activism position different instances of marginalization "not simply as isolated contemporary phenomena but as long-standing and systematic".[30] The use of the # symbol marks conversations on social media, by saying what a statement is really about.[31] In this sense, hashtags work as social practice in that they aggregate and enable the circulation of discourses around certain topics which may also inscribe evaluative positions of the user, expressing attitudes and emotions. At the same time, hashtags create 'ambient affiliation'[32] and categorize tweets into similar topics.[33] In the Twittersphere, mentions are also very common. The sign @ is used by tweeters mainly to direct messages to other users. Mentions have been theorized in terms of 'addressivity'. According to Werry,[34] 'addressivity' consists in users indicating an intended addressee by typing the persons's name. Addressed messages may be followed by responses directed back to the initiator. Mentions can also indicate a reference, so as to attribute the original text to its author.

Another feature of microblogging is its multimodal dimension in that links, videos and other visual material like photos and memes, can also be attached to the tweet and are complementary to its semiotic agenda. While we do recognize that Twitter discourse is multimodal in nature, however the

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[26] Gwen Bouvier, "What Is a Discourse Approach to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Other Social Media. Connecting with Other Academic Fields?", *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 10.2 (2015), 149-162.

[27] Adam Kilgarriff et al., "The Sketch Engine. Ten Years on", *Lexicography*, 1 (2014), 7-36.

[28] Baker et al., eds., "A Useful Methodological Synergy".

[29] Michele Zappavigna, *Searchable Talk. Hashtags and Social Media Metadiscourse* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

[30] Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa, "#Ferguson. Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States", *American Ethnologist*, 42.1 (2015), 10.

[31] Bonilla and Rosa, "#Ferguson. Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography".

[32] Michele Zappavigna, "Ambient Affiliation. A Linguistic Perspective on Twitter", *New Media & Society*, 13.5 (2011), 788-806.

[33] Ruth Page, "The Linguistics of Self-branding and Micro-celebrity in Twitter. The Role of Hashtags", *Discourse & Communication*, 6.2 (2012), 181-201.

[34] Christopher C. Werry, "Linguistic and Interactional Features of Internet Relay Chat", in Susan C. Herring, ed., *Computer-mediated Communication. Linguistic, Social and Cross- Cultural Perspectives* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1996), 47-63.

analysis of the visual repertoire employed by the Wet'suwet'en protesters on Twitter would require a whole other paper to be discussed, which would go beyond the scope of the present research.

The ultimate aim of this work is to analyze a) the remediation of the Wet'suwet'en protest on Twitter, b) the discursive strategies employed by the Indigenous activists on Twitter, including hashtags and mentions, and c) the social actors included in the narratives. The following research questions will be addressed:

R1: How do the Wet'suwet'en people articulate their protest online?
R2: What key discourses can be detected in the analysis of the Wet'suwet'en digital activism on Twitter?

In addressing the research question, an analysis of self- and other-representation, and therefore of how the Wet'suwet'en people articulate their digital presence is provided. In general, what we are interested in foregrounding are the discursive features and strategies of Indigenous resistance discourse on Twitter, i.e. how an empowered stance is construed. In targeting our goal, we hypothesize that the Wet'suwet'en protesters make use of specific forms of online activism which characterize Indigenous online discourse of resistance as a medium of positive self-representation, negative other-representation, Indigenous sovereignty affirmation, and resistance to neo-colonial practices in Canada.

4. Results

The first stage of analysis is informed with quantitative methodologies. A list of keywords was automatically retrieved from *SketchEngine* using the Canadian subcorpus of enTenTen as a reference corpus. Non words and strings of symbols were deleted, since they were not relevant to the analysis. This step was necessary in order to reveal broad trends in the focus corpus. The top 93 keywords, their frequency in the focus corpus and keyness scores were retrieved. In order to detect discourse patterns in the corpus, the keywords were then coded so as to identify thematic patterns and the prominence of certain themes over others. As a result, we obtained six categories based on the semantic similarities between keywords: 1) hashtags; 2) mentions; 3) social actors; 4) conflict words; 5) place-names; 6) Witsuwit'en words.[35]

Item	Category
#wetsuwetenstrong; #wetsuweten; #shutdowncanada; #alloutforwedzinkwa; #unistoten; #alleyesonwetsuweten; #landback; #reconciliationisdead; #alleyesonunistoten; #thetimeisnow; #notrespass; #wedzinkwa: #bcpoli; #rcmp; #wouldyoushootmetoo; #cdnpoli;	**HASHTAGS**

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[35] Wet'suwet'en represents four communities: Hagwilget, Witset (formerly Moricetown), Skin Tyee, and Nee Tahi Buhn. Wet'suwet'en traditional territory is in the Bulkley River area in northwest BC. There are approximately 3,195 Wet'suwet'en members. The Wet'suwet'en people speak Witsuwit'en, a dialect of the Babine-Witsuwit'en language which, like its sister language Carrier, is a member of the Athabaskan family, http://www.wetsuweten.com/culture/language/, accessed 7 November 2022.

#coastalgaslink; #defendtheyintah; #wetsuwetensolidarity; #cglofftheyintah; #freesleydo; #sovereignty; #solidarity; #indigenoussovereignty; #traditionalgovernance; #nopipelines #weareallone; #shutdownkkr; #gidimten; #standupfightback; #rcmpofftheyintah; #rematriatetheland; #riseup; #repost; #undrip; #climateaction; #covid19; #manrights	
@gidimten; @unistotencamp; @justintrudeau; @jjhorgan; @kkr; @yintah; @coastalgaslink; @russdiabo; @thetyee; @gitxsanjt; @photobracken; @bcrcmp; @likhtsamisyu; @wetsuwetenstrong; @georgiastraight @rcmpgrcpolice	**MENTIONS**
wet"suwet"en; gaslink; cgl; sleydo; woos; wickham; matriarchs; defenders; arrestees; dinï; huson; freda	**SOCIAL ACTORS**
checkpoint; blockades; unceded; injuction; militarized; checkpoint; sniper	**CONFLICT WORDS**
Morice; haudenosaunee; tyendinaga	**PLACE-NAMES**
Masih; misiyh; snecalyegh; cyoh; gidimt"en; yintah; gitxsan; unist'ot'en; wedzin; kwa; yikh; tabï misiyh	**WITSUWIT'EN WORDS.**

Tab. 1: Keyword categories

Expectedly, most of the keywords in our corpus are hashtags and mentions, suggesting that both hashtagging and mentioning are common practices in the discourse of the Wet'suwet'en protest, being also two main features of the genre of microblogging. For space constraints, our analysis will now focus on the keywords pertaining to three main categories in Tab 1., i.e. hashtags, mentions and social actors.

4.1 *Hashtags analysis*

The hashtag category encompasses hashtags that are representative of the discourse of the Wet'suwet'en protest. In fact, they encompass themes like **solidarity**, es. #alleyesonwetsuweten (135); #alleyesonunistoten (83); #wetsuwetensolidarity (27); #solidarity (20); #manrights (12); **mobilization**, es. #shutdowncanada (206); #alloutforwedzinkwa (162); #defendtheyintah (33); #weareallone (18); #shutdownkkr (18); #standupfightback (16); #repost (14); #riseup (14); #climateaction (12); **land claim and Indigenous sovereignty**, es. #wetsuwetenstrong (601); #unistoten (145); #landback (128); #reconciliationisdead (96); #notrespass (70); #wedzinkwa (60); #cglofftheyintah (25); #sovereignty (20); #indigenoussovereignty (19); #traditionalgovernance (18); #nopipelines (18); #gidimten (17); #rcmpofftheyintah (15); #rematriatetheland (14); **corporation and government**, es. #bcpoli (55); #rcmp (44); #cdnpoli (44); #coastalgaslink (34); #cgl (13); **freedom**, es. #freesleydo (23); **urgency**, es. #thetimeisnow (81). The prominence of each theme was established by calculating the frequency of each category as a percentage of the number of hashtag occurrences in each hashtag set, as Tab. 2 shows.

Theme	Frequency	Prominence
Land claim and Indigenous Sovereignty	1246	53,93%
Mobilization	493	21,34%
Solidarity	277	11,99%
Corporation and government	190	8,22%
Urgency	81	3,50%
Freedom	23	0,99%

Table 2: Most frequent hashtag themes and prominence rate

Based on the results in Tab. 2, hashtags vehiculating meanings related to land claim and Indigenous sovereignty account for the 53,93% of the total number of tweets containing hashtags in the GTEN_Corpus. These hashtags, besides functioning as aggregation tools for certain themes, also serve as political slogans, as examples 1 and 2 show:

> **Example 1:** We stand in solidarity with the Wilp Luutkudziiwus! #IndigenousSovereignty #TraditionalGovernance #LandBack

> **Exampe 2:** As Indigenous grassroots people, on the frontlines, we call on you to join us in solidarity from Nov 23-29 as a national call to action to support and respect our sovereignty.

> We are one, we are united, and we will fight, together.
> #LandBack #WeAreOne https://t.co/7kLSfvwysL

Mobilization hashtags have lower prominence in the focus corpus, which contradicts our initial hypothesis that hashtags in protests on social media serve primarily a mobilization function. Corporation and government hashtags occupy lower ranks in this chart, which suggests that the Wet'suwet'en protesters are more interested in granting space to their claims and the call for sovereignty, rather than initiating a discussion over the RCMP and other federal agencies. Urgency and freedom hashtags were not very frequent in this corpus, which may be due to the fact that other hashtags associated with the campaign gained more popularity across Twitter also through re-tweets and mentions, and therefore less space was left to less popular ones.

Overall, the hashtags aim at creating a virtual community that engages in collaborative tagging. As "searchable talk", hashtags allow "online conversation where people actively render their talk more

findable".[36] Based on their clause/content type, the hashtags in the focus corpus can be further classified into declarative and imperative.[37] The hashtags conveying meanings related to the categories of mobilization, solidarity and freedom feature imperatives that are used to persuade the audience to engage in the protest activity. This is the case of #shutdowncanada, #alloutforwedzinkwa, #defendtheyintah, that ask users to enact specific actions as examples 3 and 4 show:

> **Example 3**: In 1990, we (Wet'suwet'en community members) held a solidarity blockade, during #Oka. Our youth passed out pamphlets & read them to vehicle occupants. In February 2020, people #ShutDownCanada

> **Example 4**: Round up of actions so far. Keep up the pressure! #AllEyesonWetsuweten #WetsuwetenStrong #NoTrespass #WedzinKwa #DefendTheYintah #RiseUp #StandUpFightBack https://t.co/tXzUIorLUH

These hashtags have a specific 'reach-out' aim, as they seek to expand the circle of people already involved in the protest by extending the call for support and mobilization outside the Gidimt'en checkpoint, right into the Twittersphere. Interestingly, some imperative hashtags pertaining to the mobilization category include conflict-related words (like *defend*, *stand up and fight back*). The occurrence of these words in imperative hashtags of mobilization suggest that the call for participation is one that aims at attracting people into joining a fight taking the Wet'suwet'en side. They also inevitably create a dialogical tension between the Wet'suwet'en people, the protesters and their supporters on the one hand, and GasLink, RCMP, BC government, investment companies like KKR etc, on the other. Consequently, an opposition is created between an in-group and an out-group, as visible in Example 5:

> **Example 5:** AIMco is one of the new owners of Coastal GasLink - activists went to their Toronto office asking them to drop their investment on Wet'suwet'en lands! Join us today at noon for the rally
>
> #unistoten #wetsuweten #wetsuwetenstrong #landback #nopipelines #defendtheyintah https://t.co/lslpiBJKsX

Here AIMco, an investment company supporting Coastal GasLink stands in opposition to the activists, creating an us/Wet'suwet'en *versus* them/Coastal GasLink divide. A string of hashtags ends the tweet calling the attention onto crucial issues of the protest, i.e. land defense. Hashtags conveying meanings related specifically to land claim and Indigenous sovereignty are declarative, in that they are more informational and summarize the Wet'suwet'en ideas in regard to their land rights (es. #traditionalgovernance; #landback). Declarative hashtags promote searchability and signal important topics in a tweet; this is the case of #sovereignty and #unistoten, the latter being the Witsuwit'en word for sacred land. In tweets where these hashtags occur, they serve the function of indicating that the content of the tweet falls into the wider conversation on sovereignty and the land:

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[36] Michele Zappavigna, "Ambient Affiliation", 804
[37] The classification comes from Ruth Page, "The Linguistics of Self-branding".

Example 6: CGL and RCMP don't care about our ceremonies or our laws. Genocide requires them to turn a blind eye to our authority #Sovereignty #WetsuwetenStrong #CGLofftheYintah https://t.co/GYzcMT6bmK

In Example 6 the opposition us versus them, in-group versus outgroup is repeated (our ceremonies/our laws/ our authority vs. them). Declarative hashtags also contain evaluative meanings, such as #wetsuwetenstrong or #reconciliationisdead. While the former expresses an evaluative assessment which contains a positive endorsement, the latter negatively evaluates the reconciliation attempts promoted by the Canadian government and the provincial government of British Columbia. Declarative hashtags like these tend to occur more frequently in tweets reporting on particularly violent actions by the RCMP, Coastal GasLink and its investment companies, as example 7 shows. Overall, they aim at amplifying the social process to affiliate potential supporters with the values expressed in the tweet (solidarity vs. injection).

Example 7: BREAKING: Police serve injunction to Toronto/Vaughn Rail blockade. Injunction is almost immediately burned in solidarity with @UnistotenCamp, @Gidimten, Gitxan and Tyendinaga.
#ShutDownCanada #ReconciliationIsDead #NationtoNation #NoCGL #NoMeansNo #WETSUWETEN #UNISTOTEN https://t.co/QyCfCzVOub

Contexts of usage were further investigated through collocational analysis. The most frequent hashtags of each topic were chosen to retrieve collocates. The analysis of collocates can provide a helpful sketch of the meaning/function of the node within the particular discourse. In analyzing collocates, the word span was set to 3L/3R in the collocate window. The minimum frequency of a collocate to co-occur with the node was set to 5 (Tab. 3).

Hashtag	Collocates
#alleyesonwetsuweten	#wetsuwetenstrong (105) #reconciliationisdead (84) #shutdowncanada (82) #unistoten (39) #thetimeisnow (21) #sovereignty (20)
#shutdowncanada	#wetsuwetenstrong (134) #reconciliationisdead (85) #alleyesonwetsuweten (84) #unistoten (81) #landback (76) #thetimeisnow (69)
#wetsuwetenstrong	#unistoten (94) #shutdowncanada (92) #reconciliationisdead (89) #alleyesonunistoten (83) #alloutforwedzinkwa (69) #ShutDownCanada (60)
#bcpoli	#rcmp (22) #cdnpoli (19)
#freesleydo	#freethemall (12)

	#shutdowncanada (8)
#thetimeisnow	#landback (69)
	#unistoten (69)
	#shutdowncanada (69)

Table 3: Hashtags and collocates

Tab. 3 shows that, regardless of the category they fall in and of their communicative purpose, hashtags in the focus corpus tend to co-occur in longer or shorter strings, as the analysis of collocates reveals. Solidarity, mobilization and land claim and Indigenous sovereignty hashtags co-occur in longer strings, whereas urgency, freedom and corporation and governmental institution hashtags tend to occur in shorter strings as Example 8 shows:

> **Example 8:** Update: @landbackskyler @LoganStaats and others arrested yesterday have been released. We will not be removing barricades on highway #6 bypass #FreeSleydo

Some of the themes conveyed by the hashtags were also discourses constructed by the hashtags themselves. More specifically, discourses of solidarity, sovereignty and mobilization were leading discourses in the corpus, based on number of occurrences of the related hashtags and their prominence. Discourses of solidarity and mobilization legitimize calls for urgent action justified by RCMP violent intrusions, while discourses of sovereignty legitimize the perspective of the Wet'suwet'en in regard to the protest, since subthemes related to land claims, reconciliation, traditional governance and the necessity to 'rematriate' the land are foregrounded. This last subtheme, enforced by the hashtag #rematriatetheland is particularly significant since it entails a substitution of the common verb *repatriate* with the alternative neologism *rematriate*. The hashtag condenses Indigenous understandings of the land as belonging to the matriarchs of the Wet'suwet'en nation.

> **Example 9:** FROM COAST TO COAST INDIGENOUS NATIONS ARE UNDER ATTACK IT'S TIME TO STOP TALKING AND START TAKING ACTION IT'S TIME TO SHUT IT DOWN #SHUTDOWNCANADA2020 #SDC2020 #MikmaqRights #WetsuwetenStrong #1492LandBackLane https://t.co/RdBr6Zzkzl

> **Example 10:** The RCMP are back on site right now! We are asking if you can't come to the yintah to organize wherever you are and tell your government officials, the investors, CGL contractors that we will not accept genocide anymore. #StandUpFightBack #RematriatetheLand https://t.co/0zfTm1pXSE

In the examples above, discourses of solidarity and mobilization legitimize the Wet'suwet'en call for action due to Indigenous nations being "under attack" and RCMP being "back on site", arresting people showing solidarity. The hashtags in these examples do not just mark the discourses but aim at creating affiliations so that people in the Twittersphere may either show solidarity or mobilize by standing up and fighting back.

Although not being key in the list of top 100 keywords, solidarity is a recurring theme throughout the corpus. With 164 raw frequencies, *solidarity* accounts for 0.21% of the entire corpus. A closer analysis of its concordances shows the recurring pattern *in solidarity with* followed by *#wetsuwet'en* (16) or *Wet'suwet'en* (22) and preceded by nouns or verbs related to actions and taking action, like *action*, *marched*, *join*, *stand*, *block*. This is to confirm that even when *solidarity* does not occur as a hashtag, a discourse of solidarity is still detectable that aims at creating community across the Twittersphere

Example 11: Feet in the streets in downtown #yyj right now stand in solidarity with #Wetsuweten land defenders who are fighting off @CoastalGasLink on their territory as we speak. All eyes on the Yintah, all solidarity with @Gidimten and @UnistotenCamp

#WetsuwetenStrong #NoConsentNoPipeline https://t.co/vxThduEdyJ

Themes concerning Indigenous territory, unceded land and Indigenous consent co-occur in combination with discourses of solidarity as the list of collocates in Tab. 3 shows. These discourses intersect, as solidarity is called for in support of Indigenous land rights and the fight for Indigenous sovereignty.

4.2 *Analysis of mentions*

Moving on to the second category of keywords, that of mentions, the data show that mentions are less used than hashtags in the focus corpus. Mentions may show the level of cohesion in digital communities, including the sense of solidarity that is built among Twitter users. Overall, they provide an insight into the interactions between Twitter users. The mentions retrieved from the keyword list can be divided into the following categories, depending on the reference/addressee, as summarized in Tab. 4:

Mention	Category
@justintrudeau (42); @bcrcmp (13); @rcmpgrcpolice (11); @kkr (23); @coastalgaslink (18); @jjhorgan (30)	Corporation and government
@gidimten (209); @unistotencamp (49); @likhtsamisyu (12)	Indigenous place-names and resistance outposts
@georgiastraight (11); @photobracken (14); @thetyee (17); @russdiabo (18); @gitxsanjt (15); @yintah (21); @wetsuwetenstrong (11);	News and information source

Table 4: Mentions divided into categories

The prominence of each category was then established by calculating the frequency of each category as a percentage of the number of mention occurrences in each mention set, as Tab. 5 shows.

Category	Prominence
Indigenous place-names and resistance outposts	50,19%
Corporation and government	26,65%
News and information source	20,81%
Indigenous clans	2,33%

Table 5. Mentions categories and prominence rate

Mentions in the focus corpus are used in different ways, with addressivity, reference or locational functions.[38] Reading the results in Tab. 5, mentions in the GTEN_Corpus are more prominent when they refer to Indigenous place-names and resistance outposts. These mentions are mainly locational in that they serve to anchor tweets to geographical spaces. This is the case of @gidimten and @unistotencamp. However, since both mentions also refer to the related Twitter accounts, their occurrences in the GTEN_Corpus may also be referential. In other words, they either promote the Twitter account of the Wet'suwet'en protest, in which case they are referential; or they locate the message/the action where it was physically located. This is the case of tweets like the following:

> **Example 12:** Bulldozers moving in @Gidimten #44forever #wetsuwetenstrong #ClimateAction https://t.co/DFby3hXQch

Corporations and government tend to be included in the tweets more frequently through mentions rather than through hashtags. Through interactive mentions, the Wet'suwet'en protesters try to address the Canadian PM Justin Trudeau, BC premier John Horgan, Coastal GasLink, RCMP both at the national and local level, KKR & Co. Inc.,[39] an investment company backing the Coastal GasLink pipeline project, as Example 12 shows:

> **Example 13:** Carrier Sekani land defender Sabina Dennis was arrested Thursday in Wet'suewet'en lands has a msg for @JustinTrudeau "Trudeau I know you're powerless...Your face does not trick us. Your pretty lies do not deceive us. We know we are the power & we will never surrender" https://t.co/gzSPR7q7FW

This is an example of mention with an addressivity function, since Justin Trudeau is directly addressed as the recipient of the message, which also brings an embedded request for an answer/an action to be taken.

News and information sources are mentioned when re-posting extracts from or links to news reports. The news and information source mentions refer to activists working as reporters, independent reporters and photographers, Indigenous peoples involved in the production and circulation of information, and account of blogs/Indigenous information platforms. These mentions are referential in that the tweet is not directed to anybody but makes reference to him/her. Through reference mentions, news and information sources aligning with the Wet'suwet'en positions are endorsed as noteworthy. The absence of mainstream news sources as key mentions suggests that the Wet'suwet'en protesters do not trust traditional news media channels. On the contrary, Indigenous-related news and information sources are preferred:

> **Example 14:** Punishment for Pipeline Protesters, but Not for Pipeline Firm's Violations? via @TheTyee https://t.co/AcBf5GZ970 #WetsuwetenStrong #Wetsuweten #AllOutForWedzinKwa

Following the same research steps used for retrieving hashtag data, the most frequent mention in each category was selected and further investigated for collocates, again setting the word span to 3L/3R in the collocate window (Tab. 6)

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[38] The functions of mentions were elaborated drawing from Courtney Honeycutt and Susan C. Herring, "Beyond Microblogging: Conversation and Collaboration via Twitter", (2009). *Proceedings of the Forty-Second Hawai'i International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-42)*. Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Press.
[39] The KKR account has been suspended for violation of Twitter rules as of October 2022.

Mention	Collocates
@justintrudeau (42)	@jjhorgan (13) " (11) #wouldyoushootmetoo (6)
@gidimten (209)	" (59) . (56) #wetsuwetenstrong (34)
@yintah (21)	IG (18) : (11) https://t.co/JWol9q7cH9 (10)

Table 6: Most frequent mentions and collocate candidates

Political mentions tend to co-occur in the GTEN_Corpus. As a matter of fact, the strongest collocate of @justintrudeau is @jjhorgan, the official Twitter account of BC premier John Horgan. As already showed in Example 13, mentions of politicians have an addressivity function as they are used for addressing federal and provincial leaders directly. The addressivity function of these mentions is further increased by the occurrences of a hashtag (#wouldyoushootmetoo) that was not key in our keyword analysis. The use of direct address also through personal pronouns (would *you* shoot *me* too) creates engagement and makes the conversation sound more personal. The reference to the action of shooting leads back to our initial list of keywords (Tab. 2) where occurrences of conflict-related words were spotted in the identification of keyword categories. Conflict-related words bring a negative discourse prosody since they are associated with war actions. However, the list of collocates does not include any adjective, which makes the identification of discourses surrounding corporation and government keywords harder to spot through mentions.

Turning now to the Gidimt'en mentions, the strongest collocate are inverted commas. This means that @gidimten is statistically more likely to occur in its referential function, rather than as a locational mention. In fact, the co-occurrence of @gidimten with inverted commas means that direct speech is very likely to occur whenever mentions of Gidimt'en appear in the corpus, thus making the reference to the author of the statement clear. Inverted commas signaling direct speech occur one span right of the node (i.e. @Gidimten ") indicating that official statements are shared by the protesters via Twitter through the Gidimt'en account. The key hashtag #wetsuwetenstrong, containing a positive evaluative attribution, seems to stand symbolically in opposition to #wouldyoushootmetoo, as both hashtags are the third most frequent collocates in the collocate list of @gidimten and @justintrudeau. Also collocates of @yintah seem to indicate that the mention is used with a referential function, since they all lead back to either the Instagram account of Yintha or to the official website through a direct link.

4.3 Analysis of social actors

The last category of keywords under investigation is that of the social actors. This category encompasses people who are included in the tweets and are either active or passive participants in the narrative. Here we found keywords referring to **Indigenous peoples,** es. wet"suwet"en (483); sleydo (74), defenders (73), woos (54), wickham (36), matriarchs (31), freda (26), dinï (18), arrestees (14), huson (22); and **corporation and government**, es. gaslink (138), cgl (137). The opposition that was already visible in the examples discussed so far is confirmed. Again, we established the prominence of each category by calculating the frequency of each as a percentage of the number of occurrences in each set. The results are showed in Tab. 8:

Category	Prominence
Indigenous peoples	74,14%
Corporation and government	25,85%

Table 8. Social actor categories and prominence rate

The results in Tab. 8 show that much prominence is given, expectedly, to Indigenous peoples as social actors in the GTEN_Corpus. The category includes Indigenous activists' names like Molly Wickham (Sleydo) Freda Huson, Chief Woos, Chief Dinï ze', references to their function in the narrative (defenders, arrestees) or social function in the community (matriarchs). The representational strategy of nomination is the most frequent in the corpus. As a matter of fact, the most active Wet'suwet'en activists are called by name. In so doing, the narrative is personalized, whereas functionalization is less common.

The most frequent key social actor in each category was further investigated for collocates. Interestingly, these are also the two sides of the polarization Wet'suwet'en vs. Coastal GasLink. The top five collocates were included in the list of collocates. Words co-occurring with social actors are useful for determining self- and other-representations along with discursive patterns and evaluative attributions.

Social actor	Collocates
wet"suwet"en (483)	people (44) with (38) territory (36) land (33) solidarity (32)
gaslink (138)	coastal (144) pipeline (30) RCMP (26) destroy (23) be (17) – (+ material process)

Table 9: Selected key social actors and collocates

Expectedly, the Wet'suwet'en primarily identify themselves as people. Much emphasis is given to their identification in relation to their land, which is unceded, within a discourse of solidarity and mobilization that has already emerged from the analysis of hashtags.

> **Example 15:** Wet'suwet'en people have never given up our rights to our lands. This video shows how Wet'suwet'en clans continue to govern and protect our lands according to our laws. https://t.co/FJmOaPKAmX
>
> #wetsuwetenstrong #Unistoten

A closer analysis of the concordances retrieved for *wet'suwet'en people* shows that within the discourse of solidarity, the Wet'suwet'en are asking tweeters to support them because their actions have been criminalized by the RCMP:

> **Example 16:** During a State of Emergency we are seeing another 21 @BCRCMP landing in Smithers BC to criminalize Wet'suwet'en people on their own lands. #AllOutForWedzinKwa #AllEyesOnWetsuweten https://t.co/T4Iqlc6brd" 12:48pm

Similarly, violent acts against the Wet'suwet'en people are exposed via social media, so that a request for immediate action is justified:

> **Example 17:** It is a human rights violation and a war crime against Wet'suwet'en people. This is just mind blowing. Let your representatives know how you feel about the treatment of Indigenous peoples.

The justification and the legitimation of the Wet'suwet'en protest intersects with the discourse of solidarity and that of Indigenous sovereignty and land claim, as already discussed in the analysis of hashtags. While it is true that to legitimate and justify their actions/their call for solidarity, the Wet'suwet'en refer to themselves passively as being criminalized, being pushed around, harassed, and removed from their land, the concordance strings where *wet'suwet'en* is in object position are 23 (Fig.2), as opposed to 45 line where the key word is subject. This is the case of concordance strings where verbs like defend, block, ask, argue, choose and say occur (Fig. 1):
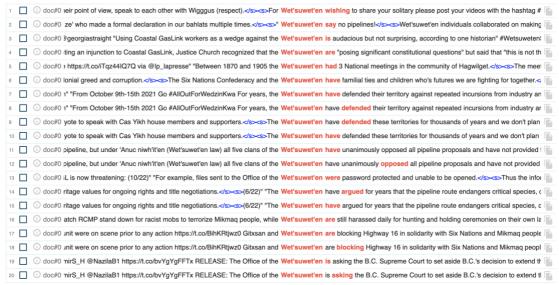

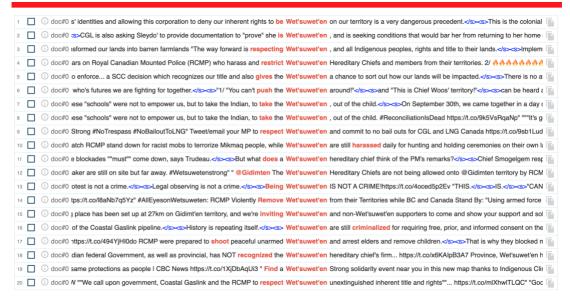Fig. 1: First 20 concordance lines of *wet'suwet'en* as subject

Fig. 2: First 20 concordance lines of *wet'suwet'en* as object

On the other hand, Coastal GasLink is represented in terms of the pipeline project and in association with the RCMP backing up the occupation of traditional land. In Tab. 9, *destroy* features as the third strongest collocate co-occurring with the key word. *Destroy* embeds a negative evaluative orientation and therefore it is further investigated in concordance lines.

Fig. 3: Concordance lines of *gaslink* and *destroy**

As the concordance lines in Fig. 3 show, Coastal GasLink is accused of destroying roads, lands, waters, archeological sites and the red dresses symbolizing Missing and Murdered women. Occurrences of *destroy* in the corpus are always associated with words related to the actions of social actors like *gaslink*, *@coastalgaslinkœ, contractor*, *pipeline* and *industry*. The negative discourse prosody brought about by the verb *destroy* is further exacerbated by verbs like *steal*, *invade* and *block* (#1, #5 and #3 in Fig.3). In #4 Coastal GasLink is framed within a war-like scenario activated by the word *conflict*. Interestingly, in three concordance lines traditional place-names (*Wedzin Kwa*, *Cas Yikh territory* and *yintah*) are also included, so as to boost the opposition Coastal GasLink vs Wet'suwe'ten. A closer analysis of the concordances showed that a discourse of solidarity and mobilization (*share widely*) occurs when references to the destructive actions of Coastal GasLink are made:

Example 17: SHARE WIDELY - RCMP refuses to uphold colonial law while Coastal GasLink contractors destroy and steal our private property with impunity.

Over the weekend Coastal GasLink willfully, illegally, and violently...
https://t.co/mUFSDrOl49

Further investigations into verbs co-occurring with *gaslink* revealed that the key word is used as subject of verbs like *bulldoze, profit, order, harm, pay, push* and *burn*. Material processes like *pay* and *profit off* seem to construct a discourse of finances, which in example 19 occurs in the surrounding of *colonial occupation*:

Example 19: BREAKING: We are inside @KKR_Co in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en - your investment in Coastal GasLink is profiting off of colonial occupation #WetsuwetenStong @unistotencamp @Gidimten https://t.co/vbXAFt9UF5

5. Concluding remarks

In January 2019, after the RCMP entered the Wet'suwet'en First Nation territory in BC to enforce an injunction obtained by Coastal GasLink for the construction of a pipeline on unceded land, a Twitter account (@Gidimten) was opened by the Wet'suwet'en people, thus remediating the protest online. A corpus collecting the tweets posted by protesters through the @Gidimten account was created for the purpose of the analysis, in order to investigate how the Wet'suwet'en articulate their digital presence. The analysis of the GTEN_Corpus was informed by quantitative and qualitative methodologies with the aim of identifying key discourses in the Wet'suwet'en digital activism on Twitter. The study provided analytical insights into the uses of hashtags, mentions and how the social actors were represented in the corpus, so as to identify discourses.

The hashtag analysis revealed that hashtags containing reference to land claim and sovereignty were the most prominent and were also used as political slogans, whereas mobilization hashtags, contrary to the expectations, were less prominent. Mobilization, solidarity and freedom hashtags were also found to contain imperatives meant to persuade the audience to engage with the protest. Some of these hashtags included conflict-related words, thus suggesting that mobilization through hashtags in this corpus consists in a call to join the fight either symbolically or physically. The reference to a war-like scenario also serves the creation of an in-group and an out-group opposition. Other hashtags, like those regarding Indigenous sovereignty and land issues were declarative and evaluative, occurring when a polarization is created opposing us/Wet'suwet'en vs. them/Coastal GasLink. Overall, mobilization, land claim and Indigenous sovereignty and solidarity hashtags co-occurred in longer strings. Through hashtags, discourses of solidarity, sovereignty and mobilization were created to legitimize calls for action and foreground the perspective of the Wet'suwet'en, with the ultimate aim of creating affiliations.

Mentions were not as common as hashtags in the corpus. However, the analysis showed that mentions related to Indigenous place-names and resistance outposts were more prominent and were used in different ways, with addressivity, reference or locational functions, the latter being the most employed.

Two categories of social actors were identified in the GTEN_Corpus: Indigenous peoples and corporation and government, the former being the most predominant group. Indigenous social actors were represented by means of nomination. The analysis of collocates also showed that the Wet'suwet'en people represent themselves as active participants in the narrative, while a positive self-representation is provided through evaluative hashtags (es. #wetsuwetenstrong). However, occurrences of *wet'suwet'en* as object of verbs like *criminalize, push, take out, remove* and *shoot* were also found

in tweets where the discourse of solidarity intersected with that of Indigenous sovereignty and land claim to justify the Wet'suwet'en actions as well as their call for solidarity.

Overall, the analysis confirmed our initial hypothesis, i.e. that the Wet'suwet'en make use of specific forms of online activism which characterize Indigenous online discourse of resistance as a medium of positive self-representation, negative other-representation, Indigenous sovereignty affirmation, and digital resistance to neo-colonial practices in Canada through discourses of solidarity, mobilization, land claim and Indigenous sovereignty.