Indigenous Experiences with Online Voting

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71ed89gqMCU
Report Scope & Background

• Examine the opportunities and challenges online voting presents for participation and governance in First Nations in Canada
• Draws on the experiences of three First Nations: Tsuut’ina Nation, Wasauksing First Nation, and Nipissing First Nation
Argument

Online voting is a key tool for:

1. Modernizing community institutions and governance;
2. Improving community connectedness;
3. Enhancing self-determination as part of an iterative path to self-government
Indigenous Governance & Technology

• Indigenous communities face a number of interrelated challenges
  • i.e. local governance and community engagement: colonization, the residential school system, the Indian Act, etc.

• Lack of insight into the strategies and innovations being Indigenous communities are taking to increase governance capacity.

• Small but growing literature that explores ICT use in Indigenous communities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TYPE OF VOTE</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td>Whitefish River First Nation</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Referendum</td>
<td>MRP Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td>Nipissing First Nation</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Referendum</td>
<td>Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td>Shawanaga First Nation</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Agreement Vote</td>
<td>Land Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td>Mississauga First Nation</td>
<td>2014 &amp; 2015</td>
<td>Election/Referendum</td>
<td>FNEA/Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td>Batchewana First Nation</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Referendum</td>
<td>MRP Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Huu-ay-aht First Nation</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>General Assembly</td>
<td>General Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Squamish First Nation</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Referendum</td>
<td>Membership Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Okanagan Lake First Nation</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Election</td>
<td>Election</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our Approach

Community-Based Participatory Research Approach:

• Collaboration

• Community Participation

• Building Capacity
Community Profiles
### Total Counts in WFN Land Code Ratification Vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Votes Received</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper (76 Received by Mail)</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Methods

• Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) methodology that included:
  
  • Surveys via AskingCanadians platform
    • Paper voters, N=66
    • Internet voters, N=15
  • Semi-structured interviews
  • On site participant observation
Findings: Innovation & Community Modernization

• Online voting part of broader approach to modernize governance through the deployment of digital technology
• Online voting cheap and effective avenue to engage community members
• Can modernize governance, but not replacements for traditional structures
Findings: Community Connectedness

- Online voters more likely to live off-reserve, paper voters on reserve

- Remote voting methods clearly desired by the community
  - 2/3 of votes cast remotely

- Paper voters support the change
  - 28% “in all circumstances”
  - 35% “in special circumstances”

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<tr>
<th>Vote method</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>251</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: Community Connectedness

- Online voting and social media tools to improve connectedness
- Created participatory opportunities
  - With local government;
  - Between members
- Networks & information exchange essential to vote success

I think digital technology is a really good communications tool. It used to be when communities were smaller, word of mouth was the way to get everything out, and we still rely on that quite a bit but because we’re a little bit more spread out, we have a set number of community members that live here on reserve and then off reserves are fairly spread out. It gives us that opportunity to be able to connect with them and make them feel like they’re part of the reserve and they’re still part of the voting processes and they’re still part of the governance of the reserve and the community and their people.
Findings: Self-Determination & Self-Government

• Community consultation significant challenge
• Online voting helped consult with community members
  • Enabled quorum
• Enactment of self-government in its own right

“The UN Declaration guarantees our inherent rights. We're taking back jurisdiction on many fronts and developing laws, and asserting our rights but we'll need digital tools to do this.”
Conclusion and Implications

- Advancement of self-determination and community well-being
- Part of iterative approach to self-government
- May not be successful in all Indigenous communities
  - Introduction must be directed by the community
  - Consistent with broader political goals
For more information: www.digitalimpactfn.com

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Governance Structures of First Nations Elections in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative framework</th>
<th>Number of nations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian Act election system</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nations Elections Act</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom election codes</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-government agreements</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>