

## **Indigenous Feminists Are Too Sexy for Your Heteropatriarchal Settler Colonialism**

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### **Abstract**

Within the creation myths of the United States, narratives portray Native peoples as hypersexualized and sexually desiring white men and women. Native men in captivity narratives are portrayed as wanting to rape white women and Native women such as Pocahontas are constituted as desiring the love and sexual attention of white men at the expense of her Native community. In either of these accounts of settler colonialism, Native men and women's sexualities are read as out of control and unable to conform to white heteropatriarchy. Many Native peoples respond to these images by desexualizing our communities and conforming to heteronormativity in an attempt to avoid the violence of settler-colonialism. I interrogate these images and provide sex-positive alternatives for Native nation building as an important means of decolonizing Native America.

### **Keywords**

Indigenous feminists, heteropatriarchy, settler colonialism, anti-violence.

### **Introduction**

... Sexy futures for Native feminisms.

Chris Finley (2012)

Chris Finley signals a new direction emerging out of the Indigenous anti-violence movement in Canada and the United States. This strand of the anti-violence organizing and scholarship builds on the work of previous indigenous anti-violence advocates who have centered gender violence as central to anti-colonial struggle. However, as the issue of violence against Indigenous women gains increasing state recognition, this strand has focused on building indigenous autonomous responses to violence that are not state-centered. It further complicates the 'healing' paradigm for addressing gender violence to envision what decolonization within indigenous communities might actually be. And finally, it reclaims indigenous sexualities at the same time it organizes against sexual violence.

In this article, I will trace some of the intellectual developments within the indigenous anti-violence movement that have given rise to the current context. As this essay will demonstrate, the anti-violence movement is broad and heterogeneous in its approach and focus. This movement has not just focused on sexual assault and interpersonal gender violence, but has organized around the *logics* of gender violence generally speaking. For instance, many indigenous feminist

## **Indigenous Feminists Are too Sexy for Settler Colonialism: Smith**

organizations have organized around environmental racism and sterilization abuse as forms of gender violence. In addition, this movement is heterogenous with some sectors working in alliance with the State, some sectors working strategically and selectively with the State, and others working completely independently from the State. It is from this broad and heterogeneous context that I will then focus on some of the current interventions within the movement that suggest new non-statist ways for organizing against violence.

My methodological approach emerges from the current trend in Native American studies of 'decolonizing methodology' (Mihesuah, 1998; Mihesuah and Wilson, 2004; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2005). In particular, I am employing what I term an 'intellectual ethnography' to analyze the intellectual production of indigenous anti-violence organizers and theorists (Smith, 2008). That is, rather than render Native people as objects of my study, I wish to position them as subjects of intellectual discourse about gendered colonial violence. Rather than study Native people so that we can know more about them, I wish to illustrate what it is that Native theorists, have to tell us about the world we live in. I believe an intellectual ethnography, besides positioning Native peoples as intellectuals in their own right, also helps to challenge the manner in which Native peoples are homogenized in mainstream ethnographic practice. I feel it is important to resist the homogenizing, essentializing tendency to stereotype all Native peoples' theories as represented by the few who are able to publish books, and instead to attempt to depict them with as much complexity as possible. Thus, I am not seeking to make broad claims about Native organizers. Rather, I hope to present some of the intellectual trends within the Indigenous anti-violence movement that are productive for all those seeking to address the legacy of sexual colonization. Thus, this essay focuses on the intellectual content produced by Native feminist scholars and organizers, both inside and outside of the academy, as well as the ideas I have engaged based on my own 20+ year experience of organizing in this movement.

### **Histories of Anti-Violence Organizing**

There are certainly multiple histories of anti-violence organizing movements within the United States and Canada. And as someone who has been involved in this movement for over twenty years, this telling necessarily reflects my particular experiences as well. In addition, the legal regimes of the United States and Canada differ, thus impacting the types of legal and political strategies afforded by anti-violence advocates. My own work has been primarily focused within the United States. At the same time however, the intellectual production of anti-violence advocates has not respected the U.S and Canada border so it is not possible to tell a story without reflecting this reality. Native organizers within the United States and Canada have operated under different settler legal regimes. And yet the overall settler logics of gender violence within the United States and Canada have been strikingly similar. Consequently, the cross-fertilization of organizing strategies have circulated throughout the United States and Canada.

#### *Historical context*

In the United States and Canada, the public visibility of the Indigenous anti-violence movement has grown significantly in recent years. Amnesty International issued the *Stolen Sister* report in Canada (2004) that detailed the lack of law enforcement response to the hundreds of missing and murdered women. In the United States, the *Maze of Injustice* (Amnesty International, 2007) detailed both the epidemic of sexual violence in Native communities, as well as the jurisdictional gap that allowed perpetrators of sexual violence against Native women to act with impunity. The public outcry from these reports contributed to some government action. In Canada, the federal government offered an 'apology' for Canada's residential school system. In this system, Native children were forced to attend residential schools in which they were systematically abused. After a plethora of lawsuits, the federal government agreed to a settlement that included the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to document this history of abuse. In the United States, Congress passed the Tribal Law and Order Act (2010), which facilitated the ability of tribes to exercise jurisdiction over perpetrators. This Act was followed by the passage of the 2012 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which provided limited tribal jurisdiction for non-Native offenders. Previously, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Oliphant v Suquamish* (1978) that tribal governments could exercise no criminal jurisdiction over non-Native peoples on tribal lands, which allowed non-Native offenders to perpetrate violence with impunity. VAWA provided some limited corrective to this decision.

These hard-won victories were the result of many years of organizing with no support, resources or recognition. Even twenty years ago, there was a deafening silence around the issues of gender violence. To discuss gender violence was to be told you were airing dirty laundry or being divisive. At the same time, as Kimberley Robertson's work demonstrates, Native women were key organizers of the anti-violence movement who helped spawn the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Despite the key leadership played by Native women, however, Robertson argues that Native women did not participate in significant numbers in the mainstream movement (Robertson, 2012). Thus anti-violence advocates had to organize creatively under challenging circumstances. In Minnesota, Native women organized by advertising events through matchbooks at bowling allies. In Chicago, activists distributed anti-violence brochures while offering free blood-pressure testing at Native flea markets.

Eventually, this organizing gained increasing strength, and helped pave the way for the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994. VAWA provides tribal set-aside funds for domestic and sexual violence programs on Native reservations. With this increased funding, the number of anti-violence programs on Native lands began to proliferate. However, as Robertson (2012) further notes, urban Native women were largely excluded from these services. It was presumed that urban Native women would be able to seek support from mainstream anti-violence

## **Indigenous Feminists Are too Sexy for Settler Colonialism: Smith**

programs, even when they generally did not. In addition, these programs largely focused on domestic violence in isolation from sexual violence. In my experience, I found that it was often easier to gain traction on domestic violence because it could be framed as a 'family' issue whereas sexual violence necessarily entailed a critique of patriarchy.

Seeing this exclusion, some anti-violence activists began to focus on sexual violence. Many of these activists coalesced to produce the Maze of Injustice in collaboration with Amnesty International, which detailed both the systemic lack of accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence against Native women. One of the leading coordinators of that project, Sarah Deer, also worked with the Tribal Law and Police Institute to assist tribes in developing sexual assault codes. This work increased the public visibility of this issue sufficiently enough that it was included in the 2008 Democratic Party platform<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, in Canada, Native women collaborated with the Amnesty International to publish *Stolen Sisters* in 2004, which detailed the hundreds of murdered and missing indigenous women in Canada as well as the lack of police response to investigate these deaths. In response, Canada provided funding to the NWAC in 2005 for a Sisters in Spirit campaign that did educational work and maintained a database of missing and murdered women (Trojan, 2012).

The Indigenous anti-violence movement has achieved great successes in terms of gaining greater state recognition and public visibility. At the same time, this success has ironically also placed this movement in a place of danger. To quote from the work of Beth Richie on the Black anti-violence movement, the danger is, will it win the mainstream only to lose the movement (Richie, 2012)? In particular, will this movement be able to center gender violence as a key strategy of decolonization within the context state recognition? This question has thus given rise to new theoretical directions for how the anti-violence movement should proceed.

### *Decolonization*

Many, although certainly not all, Native scholars and organizers have adopted the intellectual and political framework of decolonization. Angela Waziyatawin Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird (2005: 5) have argued that decolonization actually requires a dismantling of the current settler state and its economic system:

Decolonization is the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of your minds, bodies, and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation. . . . But make no mistake: Decolonization ultimately requires the overturning of the colonial structure. It is not about tweaking the existing colonial system to make it more

Indigenous-friendly or a little less oppressive. The existing system is fundamentally and irreparably flawed.

Of course, what 'decolonization' means exactly is contested with Native studies (Teves, Smith and Raheja, 2015). Nonetheless, Native feminisms have often articulated their feminist politics within the context of decolonization. That is, there cannot be gender justice outside of ending settler colonialism itself.

One of the foundational thinkers who provided a framework by which the anti-violence movement could develop was Paula Gunn Allen. Allen was one of the first writers to openly call for an indigenous feminist politic. At the time Allen was writing, it was typically argued that Native women could not be feminists. For instance, one of the most prominent writings on Native American women and feminism is Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey's *American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in North America*. In this article, they argue that Native women activists, except those who are 'assimilated', do not consider themselves feminists. Feminism, according to Native women, is an imperial project which assumes the givenness of U.S. colonial stranglehold on indigenous nations. Thus, to support sovereignty, Native women activists reject feminist politics:

Those who have most openly identified themselves [as feminists] have tended to be among the more assimilated of Indian women activists, generally accepting of the colonialist ideology that indigenous nations are now legitimate sub-parts of the U.S. geopolitical corpus rather than separate nations, that Indian people are now a minority with the overall population rather than the citizenry of their own distinct nations. Such Indian women activists are therefore usually more devoted to "civil rights" than to liberation per se... Native American women who are more genuinely sovereigntist in their outlook have proven themselves far more dubious about the potentials offered by feminist politics and alliances (reference and page #'s).

According to Jaimes Guerrero and Halsey, the message from Native women is univocal - concerns for gender justice must be subordinate to struggles for indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Paula Gunn Allen argued against this thinking, contending that feminism was not 'white', but was an indigenous concept later appropriated by white women. Furthermore, she argued that gender violence was not 'traditional', but the result of the colonial imposition of patriarchy in indigenous communities (Allen, 1986). Allen has since frequently been critiqued for engaging in gender essentializing and homogenizing the gender practices of diverse indigenous nations (Jaimes and Halsey, 1992). However, it is important not to underestimate the impact of Allen's work in providing a theoretical framework for an emerging anti-violence movement. Her writings were circulated frequently among grassroots activists and her claim that violence was 'not traditional'

## **Indigenous Feminists Are too Sexy for Settler Colonialism: Smith**

frequently appeared in the educational materials of Indigenous anti-violence organizing project.

Thus, when the anti-violence movement developed, it did not articulate gender violence as separate from colonial violence. Movement activists argued that violence was not traditional but was the result of the colonial imposition of gender hierarchies through massacres, boarding school policies etc. The anti-violence movement that developed from this analysis centered its work around decolonization. An example of this can be seen in the following brochure produced by the Sacred Circle, a national American Indian resource center for domestic and sexual violence based in South Dakota. Their brochure: *Sovereign Women Strengthen Sovereign Nations* reads:

Tribal Sovereignty:

All Tribal Nations Have An Inherent Right To:

1) A land base: possession and control is unquestioned and honored by other nations. To exist without fear, but with freedom.

2) Self-governance: the ability and authority to make decisions regarding all matters concerning the Tribe without the approval or agreement of others. This includes the ways and methods of decision-making, social, political and other areas of life.

3) An economic base and resources: the control, use and development of resources, businesses or industries the Tribe chooses. This includes resources that support the Tribal life way, including the practice of spiritual ways.

4) A distinct language and historical and cultural identity: Each tribe defines and describes its history, including the impact of colonization and racism, tribal culture, worldview and traditions.

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*Colonization and violence against Native people means that power and control over Native people's life way and land have been stolen.*

*As Native people, we have the right and responsibility to advocate for ourselves and our relatives in supporting our right to power and control over our tribal life way and land - tribal sovereignty.*

Native Women's Sovereignty

All Native Women Have an Inherent Right To:

1) Their body and path in life: the possession and control is unquestioned and honored by others. To exist without fear, but with freedom.

2) Self-governance: the ability and authority to make decisions regarding all matters concerning themselves, without others' approval or agreement. This includes the ways and methods of decision-making in social, political and other areas of life.

3) An economic base and resources: the control, use and development of resources, businesses or industries that Native women choose. This includes resources that support individual Native women's chosen life ways, including the practice of spiritual ways.

4) A distinct identity, history and culture: Each Native women defines and describes her history, including the impact of colonization, racism and sexism, tribal women's culture, worldview and traditions.

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*Violence against women, and victimization in general, means that power and control over an individual's life and body have been stolen.*

*As relatives of women who have been victimized, it is our right and responsibility to be advocates supporting every woman's right to power and control over her body and life—personal sovereignty*

The brochure suggests that sovereignty for Native women occurs within the context of sovereignty for Native nations. But also, sovereignty for Native nations cannot occur without respect for the autonomy of Native women.

## **Indigenous Feminists Are too Sexy for Settler Colonialism: Smith**

### *Contradictions of state recognition*

After the passage of VAWA which resulted in increased federal government funding for anti-violence service, the Native anti-violence movement faced many of the same contradiction as the anti-violence movement as a whole. As many scholars and activists have noted, anti-violence activists often organize within a context where they are primarily funded by the federal and state governments (Incite, 2006; Richie, 2012; Sokoloff, 2005). This funding does provide needed resources for survivors of violence. At the same, it becomes difficult for these groups to organize against state violence without risking the loss of funding. Many shelters and programs also have to abide by funding mandates to receive services, which can include, for instance, reporting undocumented survivors or those with arrest warrants to the authorities. The perils of state funding was evidenced in the previously described Sisters in Spirit campaign in Canada. In 2010, the funding ended for this program. The families that had mobilized under this program then had to form Families of Sisters in Spirit and continue their work without funding. (Trojan, 2012) Based on this experience, FSIS has insisted on doing this work beyond the “nonprofit industrial complex.” (Incite, 2007: page #'s required).

Some scholars have contended that it is possible to organize beyond an ‘either/or’ approach to violence. For instance, Sarah Deer has advocates a two-fold strategy: 1) the short-term strategy of holding the federal government accountable for prosecuting rape cases; and 2) encouraging tribes to hold perpetrators accountable directly so that they will eventually not need to rely on federal interference. This approach can be misread as a simple formula for reform. However, it is important to remember that decolonization is a positive rather than a negative project. The goal is not to tell survivors that they can never call the police or engage the criminal justice system. The question is not, should a survivor call the police? The question is, why have we given survivors no other option but to call the police? Similarly, Deer is suggesting that it is not inconsistent to reform federal justice systems at the same time we build tribal infrastructures for accountability that will eventually replace the federal system.

This strategy was apparent in the 2007 Amnesty International report, *Maze of Injustice*. Amnesty’s work on violence against women has almost solely targeted states with the responsibility to act with ‘due diligence’ to prosecute offenders. The problem with this approach is that it is co-opted by conservative law-and-order advocates to support repressive anti-crime agendas that negatively impact indigenous peoples. For instance, the heralded Violence Against Women Act (1994) was attached to the repressive Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which increased the use of the death penalty, added over fifty federal offenses – many of which criminalized youth of color – and expanded the prison industrial complex by 9.7 billion dollars. This expansion of federal criminalization disproportionately impacts Native communities since Native reservations are subject to federal jurisdiction.



At the same time, it is also true that federal and state officials were refusing to prosecute offenders and basically rendering Native women legally rapeable (Amnesty International, 2007; Smith, 2005). In response, Native feminists organized to shift Amnesty's focus to calling for the federal government to discontinue policies that interfere with the ability of tribes to prosecute offenders. In particular, the report called for a legislative fix of *Oliphant v. Suquamish* (which prevents tribes from prosecuting non-Native offenders on Native reservations) and the repeal of Public Law 280 (which grants states criminal jurisdiction over some tribes). As a result of this report, the Obama administration passed the Tribal Law and Order Act (2010). Unfortunately, some components of this act increase federal presence in Indian country. For instance, the Act calls for the development of federal detention centers in Indian country as well as increased federal prosecution of all crimes (not just crimes involving gender violence). However, other components of this act redress some of the problems with *Oliphant* by increasing cross-deputization among state and tribal police that can allow tribal police to arrest non-Native offenders. This is important because, unlike most other ethnic groups, Native women are most likely to be raped by non-Native offenders. Consequently, this type of approach attempts to attend to the immediate needs of survivors while simultaneously building autonomous structures for accountability.<sup>ii</sup>

Other organizations, adopting an explicit 'indigenous feminist' analytic, have increasingly focused less from working in partnership with the states and move on developing community-based approaches. One such organization is the Save Wiyabi Project, co-founded by Lauren Chief Elk, who has been vocal her critiques of the criminal justice system. She has particularly critiqued Eve Ensler's well-known Vday events on gender violence for supplanting and appropriating the work of indigenous anti-violence organizations and promoting the criminal legal system as the solution to gender violence. (Chief Elk, 2013, 2014)

Similarly, the Native Youth Sexual Health Network has challenged the criminalization regime, particularly as it affects sex workers. Jessica Danforth of NYSHN contends that part of the conditions of government funding for anti-violence organization is that they support the criminalization of trafficking (Danforth, 2013). NYSHN holds that "increased criminalization and incarceration do not actually produce more safety and well-being in communities" (NYSHN, 2013: page #'s required here). Even the World Health Organization has found that anti-trafficking laws negatively impact sex workers. "Rescue raids of sex establishments have exacerbated violence against sex workers and compromised their safety. (year and page #'s here)" One reason is that the primary perpetrators of violence against sex workers are police conducting trafficking raids (IRIN, 2013). In particular criminalization increases danger for women by increasing police interference and violence while negatively impacting working conditions. (NYSHN, 2010).

## **Indigenous Feminists Are too Sexy for Settler Colonialism: Smith**

Danforth builds on the work of Beth Richie who critiques the mainstream anti-violence movement for its investment in legitimacy (Richie, 2012). Danforth argues that we tend to narrate histories of movement success based on when they gain political legitimacy (Danforth, 2013). Consequently, the history of success becomes conflated with the history of accommodation to the colonial State. Rather, argues Danforth, we should consider narrating movement histories through the spaces that remained illegitimate and illegal. First, if we center our analyses in these places, we will have a different assessment of our ‘successes.’ For instance, the success of the anti-violence movement in addressing gender violence looks much less successful if we center the experiences of sex workers. In addition, if we build movements based on these places, then we are more likely to build movements that address the intersecting forms of violence people face. This does not mean that one cannot also organize around short-term legal strategies. Both Save Wiyabi Project and NYSHN were active in organizing around the 2012 VAWA reauthorization. But in this work, the longer term vision of decolonization more dramatically frames the short-term legal advocacy.

### **Healing is Sexy**

In addition to critiquing the reliance on criminalization by the anti-violence movement, some activists are also critiquing the healing paradigm. Dian Million’s *Therapeutic Nations* (2013) traces the co-optation of healing movements within Native communities by settler states such that Native peoples become marked as national wounds requiring healing rather than as nations requiring decolonization. At the same time, Million does not dismiss the importance of these movements. Rather, she details their complex genealogies, including their subversive potentials as well as their tendencies toward being domesticated into settler state imperatives. In particular, she argues that the settler state centers indigenous suffering and genocide as spectacle that, while reducing sympathy, is also predicated on assumption that suffering can never end (Million, 2013). Indigenous peoples are to suffer in perpetuity so that the state can continue to administer to this suffering. This spectacle substitutes for a movement to dismantle the structures that create this suffering. The state, which actually creates the suffering, is now supposed to be the impartial body that will minister to this pain.

Chris Finley and Jessica Danforth (formerly Yee) have also countered this tendency to portray Native peoples solely as perpetual sufferers by declaring that “We are alive, we are sexy, and some of us are queer” (Finley, 2011: page #'s here). Danforth similarly argues that the response of Native communities to their histories of desexualization has been to suppress sexuality and internalize heteronormativity (Yee, 2010). The National Youth Sexual Health Network (founded by Danforth), organizes against sexual violence while simultaneously promoting sexual health. Their interventions focus both on challenging heteronormativity and desexualization within Native communities. As has been circulating recently in social media, “Indigenous feminists are too sexy for your heteropatriarchal settler colonialism (page #'s here)”<sup>iii</sup>

Building on this work Coya Hope Artichoker has argued that a sex positive understanding of indigeneity also forces us to radically rethink how we engage in indigenous organizing. She argues that queering indigeneity calls into question the rigid identity policing within Native communities. In her 'love' letter she wrote in response to cyber-attacks against a two-spirit performer, Artichoker (in collaboration with Paulina Helm-Hernandez) writes:

We strongly believe that part of our work is to fight assimilation and the false notion of "safety" that it breeds. As indigenous communities, we have a long historical legacy of pushing back against colonial and modern governmental attempts to define who we are, what we call ourselves, and whom we call family, kin and beloved community, and it is because of that legacy that we believe in self-determination and the idea that we cannot allow our very identities to be dictated by imposed borders and a "state legitimacy" that reinforces those borders.

We can no longer afford to believe in the borders branded and codified on our bodies, nor can we use tribal enrollment and blood quantum laws, meant to limit colonial "civil rights" to our people, define what it means to be "native." We believe that they were created not only with a divisive intent but to make our people extinct and further minimize the legal claim over our lands. Prior to European contact in our continent, we did not need either of these tools to know who we were or where we belonged, even as distinct nations; no one individual had claim over what defined us. . .

Many more of us stem from communities where such precious knowledge is buried and unknown to us, and it will take our collective will to unearth and reclaim them. What is clear is that those of us whose communities have embraced us as part of the sacred fabric of our community life have a responsibility to make room for others of us for whom the path has been wiped clear in the service of erasing our existence. . .

We want to offer a broader vision and hope. We want to call you family. We want to be in community with you. We want to love and raise our children in our traditional and evolving ways. We want to find strength in each other. We want to throw our arms wide open and welcome you home. We dream of you, of black and brown folks who hold their indigenous identity as a place of sanctuary and solidarity with one another" (Artichoker, 2013: page numbers).

Artichoker's analysis asks the question, what would indigenous nation-building look like if it was based less on the logic of fear and extinction and more the belief in the power of indigenous peoples to change the world. Similarly, Chris Finley states: "Indigenous peoples accepting each other is sexy" (Finley, 2013: page # here).

## **Indigenous Feminists Are too Sexy for Settler Colonialism: Smith**

### **Anti-Violence and Nation-Building**

As the work of Finley and Danforth suggest, decolonization requires not just a strategy for dismantling current colonial structures, but a vision of what these will replace these structures. To challenge criminalization is to simultaneously ask the question, by what other means will we address violence within our communities? As I have argued elsewhere there has been much debate about the efficacy of restorative justice models for addressing gender violence (reference?). However, increasingly more indigenous feminists are organizing around the concept of 'transformative justice'. Unlike the restorative justice model, transformative justice is primarily a political organizing approach. Transformative justice does not presume a romanticized notion of community that is not sexist, homophobic or otherwise problematic. It does not presume a community even exists to begin with. Rather, transformative justice focuses on creating communities of accountability<sup>4</sup> The criminalization approach is based on a nation-state form of governance based on violence, domination and control. Thus, the indigenous feminist critique asks the question, if we are going to think outside a criminalization regime, what forms of governance would support an alternative approach?

Within the indigenous context, it is not possible to engage transformative justice without also engaging a radical critique of the settler colonial state that is based on violence and domination. At the same time, as Dian Million argues, it is not sufficient to simply call for "sovereignty" or "decolonization" without asking what this will actually be. Many Native communities for instance engage in heteropatriarchal practices under the name of self-determination (Million, 2013). Leeanne Simpson similarly argues that it is not sufficient to simply "include" women in indigenous nation-building, we must critically interrogate how heteropatriarchy may unconsciously structure our visions of nation-building given that sexual violence and the imposition of heteronormativity was a key strategy of colonization. In her blog post, Simpson (2012) writes:

The idea that "we just need more women" also makes the assumption that rather than interrogating biopower as logics of colonial power – race, gender and sexuality, all we need to do to combat evil colonial patriarchy is to add more Indigenous women and stir, and poof problem solved. Yet, we have overwhelming evidence that this kind of Indigenization doesn't work

So what do we need to do to make sure heteropatriarchy is NOT a building block of our resurgence movements or a cornerstone of our Indigenous nation building projects? It is not enough for us to say "patriarchy was not part of our traditions" because the pervasive and insidious nature of heteropatriarchy means that for hundreds of years Indigenous children have been taught to uphold these systems. Thanks to imperialism and conquest, heteropatriarchy is a world-wide phenomenon. It is impossible for Indigenous communities to be completely immune from it.

I see the expression of heteropatriarchy in our communities all the time – with the perpetuation of rigid (colonial) gender roles, pressuring women to wear certain articles of clothing to ceremonies, the exclusion of LGBQ2 individuals from communities and ceremonies, the dominance of male-centred narratives regarding Indigenous experience, the lack of recognition for women and LGBQ2's voices, experiences, contributions and leadership, and narrow interpretations of tradition used to control the contributions of women in ceremony, politics and leadership, to name just a few.

This simply cannot be a part of our nation-building work. This is not resurgence.

Similarly, the Taala Hooghan Infoshop in Flagstaff Arizona subscribes to an expansive and intersectional understanding of indigenous politics. The ground rules of their organization dictate (reference and page #'s here): "This community space maintains agreements which are based on respect and mutual aid. They include, but are not limited to...No drugs, alcohol, racism, heteropatriarchy, colonialism, neoliberalism, hierarchy, capitalism, drama..." This organization incorporates transformative justice and community accountability strategies for addressing gender violence within its community without going through the criminal legal system. Similarly to Families of Sisters in Spirit, this organization also attempts to build a politics around decolonization rather than recognition through its critique of the non-profit industrial complex: "This is not an office. Please refrain from any activities that may be related to or are directly connected to the non-profit industry, vertical administration (hierarchy), organizational capacity building (and not community building), foundation brown nosing, free market capitalism, and/or just plain capitalism." These grassroots projects relocate the work of anti-violence from state institutions and funding streams to grassroots organizing.

### **Conclusion**

As the Indigenous anti-violence movement has gained strength and legitimacy within the United States and Canadian contexts, these structures of legitimation have also forced this movement to a crossroads. Should organizing focus on greater collaboration with law enforcement and professional health authorities? Or should it in some ways return to its grassroots beginnings? What are the costs involved in each direction? And how can we strategically move forward navigating all the political possibilities? In this article, I have traced those strands that are not necessarily abandoning short term legal and political involvement, but are focusing on building grassroots movements for decolonization that center gender justice as central to that struggle. These strands suggest that ending gender violence in Native communities will not happen simply through a government-funded program but through political organizing that transforms the conditions of colonialism that enable gender violence in the first place.

## **Indigenous Feminists Are too Sexy for Settler Colonialism: Smith**

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<sup>i</sup> See <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=78283>.

<sup>ii</sup> The provisions of the TLOA can be found here: <http://www.narf.org/nill/resources/tloa.html>.

<sup>iii</sup> See for example: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/352477108307000503/>.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see [http://www.transformativejustice.eu/?page\\_id=16](http://www.transformativejustice.eu/?page_id=16).